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Journal of Gender and Power is aimed at providing an international forum for discussing various issues and processes of gender construction. It is a scholarly, interdisciplinary journal, which features articles in all fields of gender studies, drawing on various paradigms and approaches. We invite scholars to submit articles and reviews reporting on theoretical considerations and empirical research.

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Editor's Preface

In contemporary societies present globalisation is a common sense concept, used in attempts to understand and explain the multidimensional social, cultural, economic, environmental and technological change. But of course we must be aware that it is not only diagnostic tool and it does not give ideologically neutral insight. It is always terrain of struggle for meanings; it is always full of values. And there are two prevailing approaches to globalisation, both are full of ideological assumptions. Proponents of the first one are convinced that globalisation is a vehicle of progress and having a huge impact on quality of life. They believe that due to globalisation the discoveries of mind can improve the conditions of life of people living in the all the parts of the world. They also suppose that thanks to globalisation even the smallest cultures can include their own traditions and values into the world culture. On the other side many people criticise globalisation as a more or less mechanical instrument of westernisation or even Americanisation. It is assumed in this approach that through powerful culture and technological devices globalisation dissolves indigenous identity and life. Even if the Author of these piece of writing supports more the second approach, the situation is not so simple. In the context of Journal of Gender and Power profile, one can ask the several questions. Is the globalisation the source of women's emancipation in traditional, very patriarchal cultures as it provides with more rights, more education and more opportunities for women there?; Is globalisation only a simulacrum of emancipation which replaces the traditional patriarchy by more sophisticated version of western androcentrism? It is not easy way to answer these questions. And the picture of the cover of this Journal of Gender and Power issue can be a symbolic representation of the complicated relationship between globalisation and women's identities.

Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik
Editor-in-Chief



ARTICLES



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Towards a feminist theatre in Nigeria: Julie Okoh's *Closed Doors* examined

ABSTRACT. Okoh is a prolific playwright whose feminist inclination is not anyway in doubt. In her plays, especially *Closed Doors*, she addresses issues bordering on the woman question. Such issues include generally sexual injustices against women such as pedophilia, rape, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and unrequited love. *Closed Doors* focuses on the psychological crises of subaltern women whose lives have been vexed by a complex array of disturbing and thwarting personal relationships, particularly their relationships with their 'treacherous' lovers. The play is an expose on the vulnerability of women as a result of unbridled patriarchal arrogance. The main aim of this study is to situate *Closed Doors* as a feminist theatre. To achieve this, the salient characteristics of feminist theatre shall be teased out to serve as a tapestry against which this study shall posit whether *Closed Doors* is or is to become feminist theatre. The literary and sociological methodical approaches are adopted here; sociological because the point is established here that there is a dynamic and complex relationship between a work of art and the social realities under which it is produced.

KEYWORDS: Close doors, Feminist, Theatre, Feminist theatre, Okoh

Introduction

Sexual domination obtains as the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concepts of power.

(Kate Millet)

The human being is the masculine gender. The human being is a boy as a child and grown up he is a man. Everything on earth is for the human being, which is man ...

(Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends*)

Feminist writing directs the attention of the readership to the inequalities and injustices girls and women experience in society. The challenge of the feminist scholar therefore is to find the ground to argue effectively

for the end of oppression of all women. Nigeria has produced many feminist playwrights. Julie Okoh is arguably one of the most visible feminist playwrights in Nigeria. Her feminist plays among others include: *In the Fullness of Time*, *Edewede* which treat her condemnation of female circumcision; *Mannequins* which treats among other themes the gender issue of Vesico Vagina Fistula, *Our Wife Forever*, which focuses on the social injustice and psychological trauma widows experience in society; *Aisha*, *Closed Doors*, the focus of this paper, *The Trials*, *Who Can Fight the Gods* and *Mask*. Her feminist inclination through her plays is not anyway in doubt. In her plays, she addresses such sensitive and vital issues bordering on sexual injustice against women such as rape, forced abortion and unrequited love among others. A close scrutiny of her plays reveals an ideological continuity in her approach to the woman question. The main aim of this paper is to analyze one of her magna opera, *Closed Doors* in order to situate it as feminist theatre. Various conceptual views of feminist theatre have been collated in this paper. These views will be used as a backcloth to serve as a guide to make critical standpoints.

Mapping Out the Concepts: Feminism, Feminist Drama, Feminist Theatre

Feminism: One of feminism's unique characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, is its persistent defiance of being constrained by definition. Charlotte Witt observes that this reflects the "contested nature of the "us" of contemporary feminism... and is a part of, on-going debates within feminism over its identity and self-image... in the final analysis, the result of debate within feminist philosophy over what feminism is, and what its theoretical commitments should be, and what its core values are." This constraint is the subject of one of the more lively debates in feminism, that which Nannerl Keohane has called the "perpetual oscillation between essentialism and nominalism (constructionism) in feminist theory." Briefly, "to essentialise is to reduce a complex idea or object to simplistic characteristics, thereby denying diversity, multiple meanings and alternative interpretations" in the words of Joan Marler an opponent of essentialism in feminism.

Bell hooks also notes in "Feminism; A Movement to End Sexist Oppression" that "a central problem within feminist discourse has been

our inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or accept definition(s) that could serve as points of unification" (Kemp & Squires, 1997, p. 22). This dissatisfaction is implicitly, angrily conveyed by Carmen Vasquez in her essay, "Towards A Revolutionary Ethics", when she says:

We can't even agree on what 'Feminist' is, never mind what she would believe in and how she defines the principles that constitute honor among us. In consonance with the American capitalist obsession for individualism and anything goes so long as it gets your want, "feminism in America has come to mean anything you like, honey. There are as many definitions of feminism as there are feminists... (Kemp & Squires, 1997, p. 23).

Despite their diversity, feminist critics largely agree on a threefold purpose of feminism:

1. to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices
2. to promote discovery and reevaluation of literature by women
3. to examine social, cultural and psychosexual contexts of literature and criticism (Guerin et al., 1992, p. 184).

Hooks, however, defines feminism as:

a struggle against sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives. Most importantly, feminism is neither a life style nor a ready-made identity or role one can step into (Hooks, 2003, p. 51).

In Barbara Berg's "The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism", she defines feminism as a 'broad movement embracing numerous phases of woman's emancipation'. Expanding on her definition, she adds:

It is the freedom to decide her own destiny: freedom from sex determined role; freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action. Feminism demands the acceptance of woman's right to individual's conscience and judgment. It postulates that women's essential worth, stems from her common humanity and does not depend on the other relationships of her life (Kemp & Squires, 1997, p. 24).

Feminism comprises a number of social, cultural, political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequi-

ties and equal rights for women. The main aim of feminism therefore is not only to challenge as Bell Hooks suggests, but to dismantle the seeming insidious patriarchal institution. In all the various feminist ideologies we are familiar with, this goal is expressed subtly or with acerbity. Feminism, like Burkean methodology, has refused to separate art from life or literature from politics. Instead, by analyzing the sexual images and stereotypes in literature, by relating history and biography to literature, by examining the relation of literary structure to content, or by analyzing rhetorical strategies of the feminist movement itself, feminist criticism has always attempted to integrate art and life (Hooks, 2003, p. 9).

The undergird behind Burke's theory of literary form is the idea that a rhetorical or persuasive motive inspires the symbolic art which is literature. In his words, "Literature is purposeful response, a strategy for responding to some human situation. It is always purposely designed to meet this situation":

Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situations in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are strategic answers, stylized answers. ... So I should propose an initial working distinction between "strategies" and "situations" whereby we think of poetry (I here use the term to include any work of critical or imaginative cast) as the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations. These strategies size up situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them. This naming is the work itself: a symbolic act (Hooks, 2003, p. 2).

Feminist Play: A feminist play in the opinion of Helen Michie in "Flesh" is "anything that foregrounds the inequities of representation, even if this is an admission of the impossibility of moving into a safe space beyond it, is feminist; anything that struggles against these inequities is essential (Michie, 1999, p. 150). In Laurin Porter's "Contemporary Playwrights/ Traditional Forms" a similar view is expressed: "any play which moves women to the center of the narrative, foregrounding women's experience and concerns, can be considered feminist" (Porter, 1999, p. 196). In "Feminist Theory and Contemporary Drama" Janet Brown posits that "in the twentieth century, a drama that is feminist in intention has exhibited a commitment to telling the stories of silenced and marginalized women, celebrating women's community and sense of connection through group protagonists, and expressing the moral

concerns and criticisms that arise from women's experience" (Brown, 1979, p. 155).

Ann Taylor offers the following definition of a feminist, after Karen Offen: any person who recognizes

The validity of women's own interpretation of their lived experience and needs, protests against the institutionalized injustice perpetrated by men as a group, and advocates the elimination of that injustice by challenging the various structures of authority or power that legitimate male prerogatives in a given society. Another way of expressing this concept is that a primary goal is to correct androcentric bias (p. 43).

According to Laurin Porter, a feminist play is one that exposes patriarchy as a controlling force and the culture as defined, determined and shaped by men, thus limiting women's development and range of life's choices, makes the case more forcefully and moves toward more radical conclusion (Porter, 1999, p. 196). Such drama might, nevertheless, express feminist thinking in what Kenneth Burke would call its "rhetorical motive." In the view of Burke, the feminist impulse is expressed dramatically in woman's struggle for autonomy against an oppressive, sexist society. When woman's struggle for autonomy is a play's central rhetorical motive, that play can be considered a feminist drama. In evaluating a play with a feminist rhetorical motive, the critic considers whether the play's strategies are as rhetorically sophisticated as necessary to encompass the situation of woman in a sexist society. A play that shows this degree of rhetorical sophistication can be considered a successful feminist drama (p. 5).

The challenge of the feminist scholar therefore is to find the ground to argue effectively for the end of oppression of all women. This task is succinctly articulated by Gayle Green and Coppelia Kahn:

Feminist scholarship undertakes the dual task of deconstructing predominantly male cultural paradigms and reconstructing a female perspective and experience in an effort to change the tradition that has silenced and marginalized us (Green & Kahn, 1985, p. 1-2).

Feminist Theatre: Lizbeth Goodman, in her entry in Microsoft Encarta Premium Suite 2004 defines feminist theatre as: "theatre written by women, about women and also primarily for women, which is politically aligned to the ideas of the post-1968 women's movement" (Brown,

1979, p. 16). Goodman further posits that the term: "... usually refers to theatre written, directed and performed in the theatre since 1968. The term tends also to be restricted to use in discussion of English language theatres... the word and its range of meanings are Western in origin and primary association (Brown, 1979, p. 16). Feminist theatres began to emerge in America from 1968, some of the earliest being "Caravan Theatre" in Boston (1968); (Omaha Magic Theatre" in Omaha (1968); "Women Inter-art Theatre" in New York (1969); "New Feminist Theatre" in New York (1969); "It's Alright to be Woman" in New York" in (1970); "Washington Area Feminist Theatre" in Washington D.C. (1972) (Udengwu, 2006, p. 32).

Steps towards a completely feminist theatre were taken in 1972, when a group of women playwrights, Rosalyn Drexler, Maria Irene Fornes, Julie Bovasso, Megan Terry, Rochelle Owens and Adrienne Kennedy formed the Women's Theatre Council, which though initially not professing feminism, sought to create a professional theatre which would develop the talents of women in all areas of the theatre (Leavitt, qtd. in Okoh, 2007, p. 62).

Feminist theatre has created the enabling opportunity for women to reclaim their silenced voices. Throughout history, women had always struggled against male domination and suppression; be it political, religious, economic or social. The term feminist refers to the agents of feminism fighting against female subjugation and oppression. Feminist theatre therefore is an ideological campaign calling for the inclusion of women in all spheres of knowledge. To be a feminist is to accept that there is social injustice against women, identify these injustices and seek to reverse the situation in order to establish a gender balance. A feminist writer is expected to use his or her writing to correct the false image of women in order to affect a change of attitude towards the female gender. Feminist theatre is mainly aimed at addressing problems unique to women and which they may not, for some reasons, discuss before men.

The demand for woman's autonomy figures frequently in definitions of feminism. Aileen S. Kraditor, in her introduction to *Up from the Pedestal*, describes the "something" which the feminist writings she anthologized have in common: "This fundamental something can perhaps be designated by the term "autonomy." Whether Lerner's feminist's demand has been for all the rights men have had, or for some but not all of the rights men have had, the grievance behind the demand has always seemed to be that women have been regarded not as people but as female

relatives of people. And the feminists' desire has, consistently, been for women to be recognized, in the economic, political, and/or social realms, as individuals in their own right" (Lerner, 1992, p. 14).

Gerda Lerner, in *The Female Experience*, intones this commonality:

This process of creating feminist consciousness has something, but by no means everything to do with the quest for women's rights, equality, and justice – it has a great deal to do with the search for autonomy Autonomy means moving out from a world in which one is born to marginality, to a past without meaning, and a future determined by others – into a world in which one acts and chooses, aware of a meaningful past and free to shape one's future" (Lerner, 1992, p. 14).

Lerner goes on, however, to outline phases or variations in the feminist ideology. The initial stage in attaining a feminist consciousness, Lerner says, is woman's coming to self-consciousness, becoming aware of a distortion or a wrong in her own societal status as woman. At this point she sees men as the enemy. The second step questions tradition, and tentatively moves in new directions. The third step is a reaching out for others, a search for sisterhood, often involving organized groups of women. Arising out of this quest for union is the fourth step, feminist consciousness, defined as the search for autonomy (Lerner, 1992, p. 14).

The goal of feminist theatre was not merely to entertain, but to improve the quality of life in the society. Feminist theatre is based on the principles of feminism and refers to any dramatic work that centres on the struggle of women for equal opportunities with men, and to be accepted as human beings, instead of being cast into gender stereotypes. Feminist theatre examines the actual day to day experiences of women. It is persuasive and basically excites an audience to act decisively and to transform their lives and the society that oppresses them.

This persuasiveness of feminist theatre is corroborated by Nathalie:

Feminist drama is a persuasive message designed to influence the beliefs and convictions of both the members of the audience and the members of the theatre ... By using the stage as a speaking platform, feminists argue against their own oppression, seeking a change in their identity as lesser human beings and their subordinate position in society. (Okoh, 2007, p. 50).

According to Keyssar, feminist theatre is firmly anchored on a:

recognition of others and a concomitant transformation of the self and the world." (xiv) The purpose of transformation is a decipherable element in

feminist theatre. It intends to transform existing cultural traditions and beliefs, with the vision of creating an equitable environment where men and women can enjoy equal rights. (qtd. in Okoh, 2007, p. 64).

Feminist theatre was influenced by the ideology of social transformation propounded by Bertolt Brecht and Paulo Freire. Conscientization is a feminist methodology of subverting what Freire called a “culture of silence”. The dramatic discourse in feminist theatre is centered on the problems women encounter in society and the decisions they make based on their personal values and beliefs. According to Okoh, “the action in feminist theatre circulates around female protagonists who generally, do not readily accept the traditional role of women as decided by society.” (Okoh, 2007, p. 69).

She goes on to copiously articulate the indices of feminist theatre thus:

- Be woman-centered, identify their problems
- Question gender roles and strategies
- Examine patriarchal traditions
- Question the status quo, hierarchies and power relations
- Challenge assumptions, and social norm
- Increase our knowledge, and raise consciousness
- Aim to improve the condition of women
- Talk about the experience of women in the present economic crisis and the coping strategies of women in relation to men in the household
- Bring about the transformation of women
- Aim at social transformation in the direction of greater gender equity
- Use innovative dramatic methods to convey central message
- Project invisible women playwrights (Okoh, 2007, p. 32).

Ngoz i Udengwu also enumerates the following as characteristics of feminist theatre:

- There is the element of collectivity. Women write feminist theatre, not individual women. Even when one person writes a feminist play, it represents collective experiences of real women contributed during an interview or at a workshop.
- It is a theatre about women. It is primarily aimed at representing women’s peculiar experiences in society.
- Feminist theatres perform exclusively for women audiences. The main purpose of feminist theatre is to raise women’s consciou-

ness about themselves, about their rights in the society as well as encourage them to reclaim their voices, which have been silenced for ages.

- Feminist theatres reject existing theatre conventions. They strive instead to create an alternative theatre that is as opposed to the existing conventions as women are to men (Udengwu, 2006, p. 32).

Analysis of *Closed Doors* as Feminist Theatre

Abused and frustrated females
 To all those females who
 Have been frustrated and
 Abused in one way or the other;
 And to those who are trying to
 Give them reason to live
 Life is a continuous struggle

The dedicatory note is prognostic of the atmosphere of sobriety we are going to encounter in the play. The setting of the play is the Reception hall of Goodwill Nursing Home. The picture presented in the play is one of patched humanity, and psychically paralyzed voices of the female subaltern. *Closed Doors* x-rays the appalling experiences encountered by girls in contemporary Nigeria, the psychological trauma suffered by the victims, and how they could overcome their predicaments and assert themselves in life. Amina a thirteen year old girl was raped by an Imam. She was also sexually abused and abandoned by cattle herdsman. According to her:

AMINA: Before, I been dey help my mama sell *guoro* and *culli-culli* when I return from school. One day, de Imam dey alone for im house. E tell me to give am something from inside im room. Small time, e don come meet me. E put my back down for bed and e do something very bad to me. After, e take all my *guoro* and e give me plenty money (Okoh, 2007, p. 28).

Amina's case is a very pathetic one. She was raped by a religious personage whom she trusted, who by his insidious action turns out to be a charlatan. She refused to disclose the rape incident to her father because the father was an employee of the Imam and she didn't want the father to be sacked. The pathetic case of Amina recalls a similar experience narrated in Fatima Dike's "The Sacrifice of Kreli" which addresses

the brutal rape of a seven year old black girl by a migrant worker in 1974, in South Africa. Rape in this text and context is viewed as a patriarchal weapon to intimidate and rob women of their right to express their own sexual desires and so on. Later Amina ran away from her parents' house to forestall the kind of injustice Bariya experienced:

EKI: Oh, Bariya Ibrahim Magazu! She was a girl of thirteen found pregnant and brought before the Sharia Court in Zamfara State. Although she said that three men forced her to have sex with them on different occasions, she was sentenced to be publicly flogged 100 strokes of the cane for premarital sex (Okoh, 2007, p. 28).

It is therefore this fear of the penalty she was likely to face from the Sharia penal code that led Amina to run far away from home to the Nursing home, an accommodation for bruised female subjectivities.

Tracy's problem of self-insulation is as a result of the fact that she was betrayed several times by those she trusted and loved dearly. Her dream was to become a medical doctor, married to a medical doctor, possibly Michael her secondary school lover but this dream was painfully shattered. She was also a victim of unjust admission policies in the country. The dialogue involving Tracy, Amina, Belema and Bola is revelatory of these policies:

TRACY: You see, for three years I couldn't get an admission into any university. Not that his JAMB scores were better than mine. I had about 50 points above his. Even in the secondary school, I used to beat him quite often too. Yet this boy got an admission into the university before me. Do you know why?

AMINA: Tell us now.

TRACY: It is because of the unjust laws in this country.

BELEMA: Which one exactly?

TRACY: Laws which implant tribal sentiments in our mind right from childhood. I'm sure you all know that stuff about JAMB admission policy.

BOLA: Certainly, they are discriminatory laws which exalt mediocrity over merit.

TRACY: Although Mike and I were born and raised in the same town, attended the same school, experienced the same environmental conditions but because of my ancestral roots, I was discriminated against despite my personal merit. He was given preferential treatment because his parents and grandparents were once from an educationally disadvantaged area. So, for three good years I struggled to meet the JAMB cut off point recommended for candidates from my state of origin to study medicine. Once they seized

my result, for no reason known to me. I have never cheated in any examination. The second time, my result was released, but biology was cancelled for the centre where I took the papers (p. 35–36).

Tracy, however, after a second attempt passed the University entrance examination and was admitted into pre-medicine basic studies. While in school, Tracy's problems became compounded when she followed her friends to a birthday party. There she fell in love with a man she didn't know was married. She got impregnated by him who abandoned her and her baby. On discovering that she was pregnant, her father drove her away from the house. She went back to her lover's office but was equally driven away by two hefty men who we are told were hired assassins asked to terminate her life. Tracy's encounter with the nymphs purges her fear of the society and after that she is able to tell her story which she refused to share ever since she arrived the Nursing home. The song of the nymphs serves as a care-giver and antidote to the depressed soul of Tracy:

No matter how turbulent the sea may be
 No matter how weak your limb may be
 No matter how low your spirit may be
 Just hang on there and keep on trudging.
 Trudge; trudge to rise above the tide.
 For after rain comes sunshine... (p. 42).

In the end Tracy herself attests to the therapeutic effect of this ritual cleansing. Like Osofisan's Altine in *Altine's Wrath*, the hitherto mute Tracy regains her voice, imbued with consciousness and realizes and boldly declares that:

TRACY: ...Yes, I am born again! I am now a different person; a person fully in touch with her body, mind and soul; a person with a better grasp of the world around her and a keen insight of human behaviours; a person eager to start life all over again with a new consciousness and vision. Oh yes! I am born again! (p. 48).

Tracy becomes a new woman who in the words of Judith Stephens is one who:

does not consider herself merely as an appendage to man." Gail Cunningham sees her as a heroine, "who refused to conform to the traditional feminine role, challenging accepted ideals of marriage and maternity, chose to

work for her living, or who in any way argued the feminist cause ... (Brown, 1979, p. 184).

Like Tracy, Belema's story is one of deceit and betrayal from her lover. Belema was a virgin who was deceitfully impregnated by her school teacher, a seemingly respectable man who is supposed to mould the lives of those under his care. Belema, for fear of the reaction of her parents had to run away from home, landing in the Nursing home, "an abode of whores and rejects." She is also confronted with the stigmatizing effect and public opinion of being the mother of a fatherless baby:

It matters a lot. Imagine the humiliation and rejection! Just because of one silly mistake, one is treated like an outcast everywhere. Suddenly one is no longer a human being, but a butt of scorn. I can't see myself in that situation. Oh, I am tired. I feel like giving up (p. 26).

Bola is equally a victim of betrayal. She was raped by her boss in the bank where she was working. She got pregnant and when she told him about it he recommended abortion, reminding her that she would be sacked in line with the bank's policy which says: "For the first five years, get pregnant, get fired." Since she could not bear the thought of abortion she had to settle for adoption.

Eki was a victim of the patriarchy. The death of her father made them to lose all their properties to her father's relatives. In most West African societies that are rooted in patriarchal ideology, once the husband dies, the relatives acquire all their brother's properties, especially if the woman is opposed to marry a brother of the late husband. Eki narrates the gory experience she, her mother and her siblings encountered on the death of her father thus:

EKI: ...You need to understand that you are not the only one with ugly experiences. When my father died, my uncles took all his properties including our house. We moved into a one-room apartment. Life was hard on us. I am the first out of eight children. My mother couldn't cope with feeding and paying school fees. Worst of all, one of my brothers died because we couldn't buy for him the prescribed medicine. When the second one was sick, I had to look for a way to help my mother. I went to look for a part time cleaning job in a hotel but ended up sleeping with men. One day, I was arrested. While in the cell, I was raped several times by the policemen on duty. Whom should I tell? Who will listen to me? Is it the police or the magistrate? Hunh! Waste of time! Yet I have survived. Haven't I? (p. 31).

Closed Doors is a feminist play in that it tells the stories of sexually oppressed women, psychologically and emotionally bruised women with broken dreams and unrequited love. As a feminist scholar, Okoh demonstrates through this play that she is an agent of feminism fighting against female subjugation and oppression. She identifies social injustice against women and seeks to reverse the situation in order to establish a gender balance.

Feminist theatre is mainly aimed at addressing problems unique to women and which they may not, for some reasons, discuss before men. *Closed Doors* depicts young women struggling against difficult circumstances, caused not only by their sex, but by their poverty and lack of education. It x-rays the appalling experiences encountered by vulnerable young women in Nigeria who share their experiences behind closed doors, solely for their edification. The male perpetrators of the crimes against these women are only mentioned in the individual narratives of the victims. The only possible male characters are the Policemen who come to arrest the proprietor of the Nursing home and their accomplice, Chioma in the Epilogue. *Closed Doors* is feminist theatre to the extent that it is woman-centred. Its primary aim is to represent women's peculiar experiences in society in order to raise their consciousness about themselves.

According to Janet Brown," feminist theatre is any theatre based on the "feminist impulse". In her words: "This feminist impulse is expressed dramatically in women's struggle for autonomy against an oppressive, sexist society. When woman's struggle for autonomy is a play's central rhetorical motive, that play can be considered a feminist drama." According to her, the feminist impulse could be radical, inspiring a rhetoric of confrontation against the domination of and denial of power to women.

In *Closed Doors*, there is a collective struggle for female autonomy, even if the feminist impulse is not radical, invoking a rhetoric of confrontation against the patriarchal ideologues. Tracy is used as the female agent to realize this autonomy against the socio-sexual hierarchy represented in the world of the play. In the end, the female characters in the play are in agreement that men are the cause of the problems and are able to encompass their situations in the sexist society represented both in text and context. This collective awareness of the women coheres with the opinion of Myrna Lam that "there is no single correct way to present women in drama, but ... that reaching a final awareness is mandatory for a protagonist in a feminist drama." (Leavitt, qtd. in Okoh, 2007, p. 64) The play shows, in the words of Brown, "an agent or agents, who repre-

sent woman seeking autonomy, often through unity with other women, in an unjust socio-sexual hierarchy" (Brown, 1979, p. 109). The women are united by the anthem of solidarity:

From restlessness and roaming
 From loneliness and longing
 In the wild wilderness
 Come united all those that
 Were once lost and scattered
 But brought together by fortune.

Two vital elements in the achievement of autonomy, sisterhood and self-realization, are symbolically united in the anthem of solidarity and the song of the nymphs. Autonomy is both physical—in the closure of the illegal home and the freeing of the inmates—and spiritual. The spirituality of the play's resolution is manifested in the ritual cleansing of the victims, represented by Tracy, by the nymphs, who, in the words of Mary Daly, are "agents who confront their 'non-being' in the fact of their 'non-existence' as persons in the unjust hierarchy.

It is this communal nature of the struggle that paves the way for a successful resolution to the search for autonomy. The play finds a solution in women's solidarity rather than following one individual's solitary struggle for autonomy. This is in line with a recent emphasis placed on group solidarity in the feminist movement, and the avoidance of movement "leaders." Through Tracy and her fellow patriarchally manacled inmates, Government's attention is drawn to the illicit operations of the Nursing home and in the epilogue, the home is closed down and the operators arrested by the Police. These women are in the words of Leland Griffin:

perversely goaded by the spirit of hierarchy, moved by the impious dream of mythic new Order... inspired with a new purpose, drawn anew by desire... they are moved to act... moved, ingenious men (human beings) ('inventors of the negative') to rise up and cry No to the existing order... and prophesy the coming of the new (Brown, 1979, p. 5).

In the opinion of Lizbeth Goodman, reiterated by Udengwu, one of the key characteristics of feminist theatre is that it is usually the product of a workshop session organized by women to specifically discuss women's issues. It is a theatre written by women, about women and for women audiences alone. It is against this backdrop that Udengwu in her

article, "In Search of a Feminist Theatre in Nigeria" posits unequivocally that there is no feminist theatre in Nigeria. In her view, only such plays as *Fefu and Her Friends*, by Maria Irene Fornes, *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine*, by Caryl Churchill are classics of feminist theatre because they are products of collective experiences. However, it is my view that Julie Okoh's *Closed Doors* satisfies almost all the requirements of a feminist theatre. The only points against this claim are that it is not a product of collective experience, written by women and directed by women for women-only audiences. This lacuna notwithstanding, the play clearly is a theatre that is metamorphosing into a true feminist theatre in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Closed Doors lays bare a vortex of mistreatments of women in the hands of men. The play is a blueprint for a true feminist theatre. *Closed Doors* is in the process of becoming a feminist theatre if going by authorial viewpoints, it has not become. The play depicts young women struggling against difficult circumstances caused not only by their sex, but by their poverty and lack of education. Julie Okoh has through this play demonstrated that the female victims are, in the words of Mary Daly, "agents who confront their non-being' in the fact of their non-existence' as persons in the unjust hierarchy." The female victims, represented by Tracy succeed in replacing the socio-sexual hierarchy represented by the male 'victimizers' like Imam, Michael and the politician among others.

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Horses, toy sabers, toy soldiers—a few words about boys' patriotic toys of the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century

ABSTRACT. Children's toys of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were determined by several criteria: age, gender and social background of the child. They fulfilled several basic functions: ludic, socialization/preparatory, educational and educating. Boys' patriotic toys influenced the formation of patriotic feelings, both preparing the child for future military service, and developing a love for the history of the country.

KEYWORDS: children's toys, patriotic boys' toys, horses, soldiers and drill

Introduction

Toys were and still are an inseparable element of childhood, accompany the child every day; they are his friends and the most-anticipated gifts. The child being in the other reality (the reality of play) (Sułkowski, 1984), is capable of using everything to play with, and then every object becomes a toy. However, it is primarily an object deliberately made for play. Such was a dictionary definition of a toy in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Linde, 1814, p. 592).

A toy played a few basic functions: ludic, socialization, educational and educational as well as preparatory, and its selection was in that period of interest for us determined by three main criteria: age, sex and origin. Łukasz Gołębiowski in the source book "Games and Fun of Various States" published in 1831, clearly differentiated the fun of girls and boys, when he wrote: „Girls' games are less buzzing, they do not entail noise, they are more peaceful, of virginal grace, pleasant to be liked and willing to please" (Gołębiowski, 1831, p. 26). This fact was also emphasized by pedagogues and publicists of the nineteenth century. They pointed out that the differences between toys and games of boys as well

as girls, result first of all from the different social roles that society expects from them. For example, let us use the statement in "Dziennik Domowy" ("Daily Journal") in 1835: "From the cradle to the grave the destiny of a woman entails love and sacrifice (...) The boys hack on a wooden pony, with a bullwhip in hand, play football or in experience and develop their strength while wrestling. When the girls sit calmly, engaged in conversation, a doll or a wreath for a father or mother, a playful boy runs in, interrupts their fun, spoils everything ..." ("Dziennik Domowy", 1835, p. 350).

Hence the doll together with the world of the girl became the most important friend of a girl, and the horses and soldiers—the dearest objects of boys. Representatives of both genders, having fun, imitated the adult world, which they transferred to the time and space of play, on the one hand learning socially acceptable behavior in this way (frequently with a help from adults), and on the other hand—using the layers of imagination to create a new play reality.

The aim of these considerations is an attempt to show whether and how boys' toys influenced the formation of patriotic attitudes in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The issue will be dealt with in two aspects: the direct impact of toys on the development of certain elements of military drill/education during play and learning about the history of the country and its traditions, for example, while playing with toy soldiers. In the discussed period, both aspects were combined, becoming an important way to promote patriotism in the family. The horses, toy sabers and soldiers were to prepare the boy for the role of a soldier, a warrior, ready at any moment to take up the fight for his homeland (both during the First Polish Republic and during the Partitions), but also through the knowledge of tradition, language and native history to shape national consciousness, Polishness. However, this issue only seems to be obvious, because "The problem of researchers lies in the fact that in the absence of the state, and the existence of hostile institutions towards Polishness, such as schools or armies of partitioning countries, we still do not know enough about the mechanisms of making this bond, which we call the national feeling" (Nieuważny, 2007, p. 3). Let us add, it was a diverse bond, as it was created in families from various social spheres. In this discussion, detailed analysis of shaping patriotic attitudes at the turn of the 19th and 20th century will be omitted, and attention will be focused primarily on boys' toys affecting military skills and a sense of patriotism.

It seems that boys' patriotic toys in the Polish lands, were identified by Jan Bujak primarily with war toys (Bujak, 1988, p. 34)¹, which was influenced by several factors. Firstly, they resulted from geopolitical conditions—Poland, which was territorially located in the central part of Europe, was the area of many fights. “Because of the character of their country, Poles were an agricultural nation, and due to their geographical location they had to constantly fight against their neighbors who were pressing at us from all sides. (...) No wonder that the Poles highly valued the horse to which they owed their victories in peace and prosperity in peace. It carried them to fight, it faithfully accompanied in the hardships of war, it cultivated the land and brought it harvest (...) Living with a horse and saber began from the early childhood and lasted until old age (...)” (Dyakowski, 1911, p. 10). Boys, especially young noblemen, imitated the behavior of their fathers and uncles as they were wagging on ponies, waving sticks and battling.

Secondly, the political situation after 1795 undoubtedly influenced educational ideals, carried out primarily in the family, which in the period of national captivity became the basic place of patriotic education, which was influenced by both the political atmosphere and philosophical assumptions and social changes (the turn of the 19th and the twentieth century) (Bocheński, 1971). However, it should be remembered that the understanding of these changing educational ideals was mainly recognized by „the enlightened”². And patriotism, identified above all with national uprisings, has changed in favor of everyday patriotism (Sochoń, 2007, p. 263), implemented in social activities, organic work, etc. This view corresponds to the words of Andrzej Zwoliński, according to which “War, partitions, and slavery are extreme situations for the nation, which most often force emotional and instinctive behaviors to survive. For the time of peace, however, a more rational patriotism is needed, in which love for the homeland can be expressed in the ability to sacrifice political ambitions, give up planned profits that are too burdensome for the poorest social group, and also bring social rules into Christian life, with patience and persistence, despite adversity. Because patriotism mani-

¹ Dozens of research on toys divides patriotic toys into three groups. The first one included small-size figurines of knights and soldiers, along with all military hinterland and weaponry, the second one contained dolls usually depicting boys—dressed in uniforms, which are a copy of military uniforms. The third group consists of uniforms or their fragments, in which children can dress themselves (Bujak, 1988, p. 35–36).

² Nieuważny, 2007.

feasts itself not only in love as a certain intention and inclination, or even a gesture, but also in the whole practice of life, in work for the common good and in a solid concern for the nation" (Zwoliński, 2015, p. 362).

Thirdly, patriotic toys were influenced by family ideals of individual social spheres, the more so that "Polish society therefore expected from the family that it would raise the young generation in the national spirit, prepare the youth for the fight for a free homeland, and then work for its good. Women played a special role in shaping the patriotic attitudes of the young generation..." (Kalinowska-Witek, 2014, p. 178–179). According to Stefania Walasek, "On the basis of the accounts of the authors of the memoirs, it can be concluded that both parents, grandparents, siblings, as well as distant relatives had influence on patriotic education of children and adolescents." (Walasek, 1994, p. 132), and the choice of methods used by family members depended largely on the political situation in the partition. Common ways of influencing the young generation were: historical reading, magazines, stories about the history of the family and family history, geographic and historical tours, and in Galicia—participation in the celebration of national holidays (Walasek, 1994, p. 132). It seems that boys' toys that shape patriotic attitudes can be added to this list.

Finally, it seems that the willingness to use military toys was influenced by centuries-old traditions of a man—a warrior who must fight and win.

The whole issues of the so-called patriotic toys in Polish historiography has not been fully elaborated, although the themes of toys have permanently inscribed in contemporary historical and pedagogical research³, while becoming part of the "social history of education" (Jakubiak, 2016, p. 13). The characterization of patriotic toys was presented in the study "Toys in Europe" Jan Bujak, according to whom "patriotic functions were primarily designated for war toys" (Bujak, 1988, p. 34). In addition, there are several texts that selectively analyze this issue⁴, and some references to the problem in the book by D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, I. Gomułka, K. Kabacińska-Łuczak, M. Nawrot-Borowska, "The history of children's toys in the Polish territories up to the beginning of the 20th century". These reflections do not exhaust the subject, as they merely

³ Comp. work D. Żołędź-Strzelczyk, K. Kabacińskiej-Łuczak, M. Nawrot-Borowskiej, detailed bibliography in: Żołędź-Strzelczyk et al., 2016, p. 437–457.

⁴ Ryś, 2010; Pilichowska, 1997; Lauda, 2016; Kania, 2017; Kabacińska-Łuczak, 2018.

outline the most important of his problems, how the fun of horses has aroused feelings of patriotism? How did the toy soldiers teach the history of the country, which along with language and traditions influenced the formation of national consciousness?

The following analysis uses written sources (diaries, pedagogical press, family, socio-literary, beautiful literature addressed to adults, as well as intentionally directed to children, ABC's), iconographic (drawings, press graphics, photographs), as well as material sources (museum objects). From the catalog of written sources, texts placed in the press and addressed to children deserve attention. The first group includes articles published in the pedagogical press ("School"), family press ("Domestic Journal"), socio-literary („Kłosy”—„Ears of Wheat”), in which the horse was described as a typically boy's toy, but criticism was also raised over that popular toy. The issues of boy's toys discussed on the one hand describe play reality, on the other hand—especially addressed to mothers, parents—as seen as postulative. Texts addressed to children at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (published both in the press and in primers, or separately in the form of books), due to their purpose and method of transmission, are quite specific sources. They are characterized by didacticism, moralizing, simple plot, which is why the way toys are written in them is adapted to the age and development possibilities of the addressee. For example, in primers, the illustrations of boys on horses were used to describe the immediate reality of the child. In literary texts, there are descriptions of playing with horses, toy soldiers, etc., with an appropriate didactic commentary. An important place in the group of written sources is occupied by diaries⁵ (men's diaries), in which the authors mentioning their own childhood, gave an example of play with horses, soldiers, etc. Unfortunately, boys' toys, like toys in general, were not often mentioned attributes of childhood. A valuable source also includes written novels and stories of the so-called literature of the mirror, which was used to describe the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. In these short texts you can find descriptions of various boys' games.

In addition, in the present considerations, iconographic materials were used, especially press graphics from magazines addressed to chil-

⁵ This term covers a very large area of a specific writing, based mainly on memory and containing the author's own experiences, after: Deresiewicz, 1976, p. 245; Żołędź-Strzelczyk et al., 2016, p. 39.

dren, which were most often an illustration of the described history, as well as graphics by Michał Stachowicz and photographs depicting a child on a rocking horse.

These considerations are conducted from the historical and pedagogical perspective, which is why the preparatory function of boys' military toys and their influence on patriotic education were emphasized above all. Attention was paid to two aspects of the preparatory function of military boy toys. First of all—to prepare for the role of a warrior, or to train skills during military games, and secondly—to promote patriotic feelings by learning about the history of the country.

Preparation for the role of a warrior— insurrectionist patriotism⁶

It seems that ponies, sabers and other accessories of playing with drills, as well as soldiers, reflecting military attributes adequate to the era, influenced the formation of patriotism, which “In almost every age (...) meant something different” (Tazbir, 2004, p. 48) —from the medieval loyalty of the dynasty (ruler), through loyalty to the Polish Republic (the times of elective kings), through sacrificing property and living for the homeland (Enlightenment), to participation in underground groupings and uprisings (in the era of national misery) (Tazbir, 2004, p. 48) and painstaking work to improve the economic and educational needs of Poles at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The most important functions of boy's toys consisted in social, educational and upbringing impact. „A military toy, as Jan Ryś claims, is definitely intended for boys as potential soldiers” (Ryś, 2010, p. 138), whom it prepared for practical military service. Playing with drills, riding a horse, fencing (swords and sabers) influenced specific (e.g. skillful, agile) skills of boys (e.g. riding skills), who were learning to issue commands as well as to perform them, e.g. during marches. They were especially important in shaping the so-called insurrectionist patriotism, or maintaining the tradition of regaining independence during the armed struggle. From this point of view, it was necessary to prepare the boy from the earliest years that his soldierly / military skills could be used in armed operations.

⁶ The term taken from the article Winnicki, 2012.

Toy horses

What a doll for a girl meant, a toy horse was for a boy⁷. Being aware of the impact of the child's gender on the toys he received (*de facto* the differentiation introduced by adults), Henryk Wernic, a well-known 19th-century educator, believed that "If children acquire some practice in walking, they should be provided with toys that would keep them moving and in a way forced them to do so—thus a ball, a wooden horse, a cart are completely in their right place here. (...) These toys are equal to all boys and girls, the only difference being that girls give preference to dolls over ponies; as for the sister, the doll also completely replaces the a fridging pony. A pony horse, sometimes disobedient, needs encouragement in the form of a threat or a request; the doll is not always slow to the sister's orders, it must be admonished, rebuked, cared for, etc., and both must be provided with food, food and rest" (Wernic, 1881). It sanctions the division of toys into a girl's doll and a boy's horse, while showing the common features of playing with these objects—both a doll and a horse, "animated" in playful reality, must be fed, given rest. So the boys were not only supposed to be on horseback, but also to learn to look after them and care for them.

There is no doubt that—as Łukasz Gołębiowski claimed—the first fun of the boys was a toy horse and a toy whip (Gołębiowski, 1831, p. 26). Toy ponies, like other toys, on the one hand reflected the reality of adults, on the other they created it. Horses on a stick, rocking horses, etc. imitated (in appearance, poses) their animal prototypes. The horse has been an inseparable companion of man for many centuries. "It was an invaluable help in human work, accompanied man on holidays and every day, it wore whole armies on his comb, and his strength and beauty ignited the imagination of artists" (Lisiewicz, Łysiak-Łątkowska, 2017, p. 7; comp. Sawicka, 2002). That is why it also became an important boy's toy.

The ponies were very diverse toys: sometimes they were ordinary sticks ridden by small boys, and also sticks completed more or less accurately and decoratively made head of the horse (adornment reflected the financial possibilities of the family), there were rocking horses, skids, and figures of horses dressed mostly from wood by grandfather or fa-

⁷ Compare: Toy horses "for riding"—on a stick, poles and wheels, in: Żołędź-Strzelczyk et al., 2016, p. 233–246.

ther. What the boys were interested in depended on their age: little boys galloped on horse skates and rocked on stable horses on platforms or two skids, while the older ones usually rode real horses, which was also dependent on the financial wealth of the family. In peasant families, the most common was a stick, while soldiers were stones. The heroes of the novel A. Dygasiński, entitled *In the Wilderness*, rode on such horses. "Now all three boys sat on wooden sticks and began to parade; Maciej rode ahead, loudly bumping his bare feet and pretending that his wooden horse was bending" (Dygasiński, 1898, p. 117), Janek, the main character of *The Orphan's Fate*, received an ordinary paper horse on wheels from his mother (Prus, 1974, p. 116).

To the early interest of ponies in small boys, attention was drawn in "Kłoso", where we read: "The boy cannot speak well yet, and already sits on a stick, as if on a horse, wriggles with a stick in his hand, which has a saber" (E.J., 1885, p. 395). This statement corresponds to the statement of Bogdan Dyjakowski: "The first games of the boy were associated with the horse first with fictional, then real. The boy barely learned to walk on all fours when he crawled over to his father's or other man's knees, climbed on to them and sat straddling them, he played it more slowly, as if on a real steed. These children like this fun the same way, and just like in the past, the song is sung to them:

A man is riding
on a horse all by himself.

And when the boy could walk and run about his own strength, then the father's knees were replaced with a stick, which presented this superiority, that one could move from place to place and play on it, pretending to be a horse's thumping with loud stomping. Also, the boy harnessed four, three or a pair of peers, stitching them with a thread or twine and rushing with them like wind, through meadows and fields. When the boy grew up, he was put on a real horse and henceforth he never parted with it again (...) It is also not surprising that starting to practice horse riding from the earliest childhood, every youngster had all the secrets of equestrian art (...) A young man, trained in a horse-riding ride, enlisted under a banner and on horseback served the homeland, winning the fame and title of a bachelor" (Dyakowski, 1911, p. 10). This fragment shows how important it was to teach attachment to a horse, and how valuable riding skills are gained during play.

Older boys rode horses on their own, for example Edward Raczyński liked riding a lot: “He also rode horses on small Cossack ponies, mostly without a saddle, but only on a rug” (Raczyński, 2009, p. 124).

The importance of a horse as a toy may also be demonstrated by the prayer of the little Henia—the hero of the novel by Adolf Dygasinski entitled *The New Mysteries of Warsaw*. The boy, living with his grandmother in a poor apartment, prayed to God with these words: “My God, how good are you, do me a favor, give me a horse the same as Kazio from this high tenement! Give me a toy whip that this little Adam from the Kolski family has! You know, God, this little whip with stars at one end!” (Dygasinski, 1887, p. 152; comp. Kabacińska-Łuczak, 2016).

Toy horses on a stick

„The boy himself, if he has a whip and a stick, transforms into a rider; his horse is unbridled, he is restless, the boy tames him and makes him slow, happier when it sniffs down the sisters before him, when tied on a rope, mounted on a rope, he moves his horse (...) or when sitting on a rocking horse he slaps it with a whip” (Gołębiowski, 1831, p. 12). Józef Rulikowski recalls this kind of fun in his diary, writing: “I once used to play with my peers on a berth replacing horses” (Rulikowski, 1862, p. 102).



Figure 1. M. Stachowicz. *Boys on toy horses* (early 19th century).
Muzeum Okręgowe w Rzeszowie

This description fully corresponds with iconographic shows of riding on a stick. Let the scene sketched in 1804 by Michał Stachowicz serve as an example (Kabacińska, 2010). On this card from the album you can see two playing little boys. One of them lets go of the kite and holds a fan in his hand. The other one is riding a horse, which is a stick ending with a contoured head of a horse (with a bit, nipple and chiefs) with equestrian gear. The boy holds a whip in his hand, which he probably hurries his steed with.

Picture No. 2 presents a similar play, on which an afternoon, idyllic scene was captured. "Mom is sitting at the table and sewing something. Julia and Zosia sat beside her, wrapping wreaths of pretty flowers. Józio, with his hand in his hand, on his wooden horse, hassle, jumps around the garden" (Anczyc, 1887, p. 42). Not a richly carved toy is a bust of a horse with simple features, probably made by a grandfather or some craftsman.



Figure 2. W.L. Anczyc. *ABC: pierwsza nauka dla dzieci* (1887)

Also, S. Róžański in his primer intended for learning to read and write at home and at school put in the "First Reading" part a short text about horse-riding, with a sketch of a boy running on a stick on a stick. „The boy came out in front of the house (...) He got on a wooden horse and ride! Hens and geese fled before him; even Burek the dog escaped him. The boy played like this for an hour. (...) The boy dismounted from the horse, took it to the hall and put there, and he went to study" (Róžański, 1906, p. 37). Ignacy Jan Paderewski dashed with his sister on

a horse made at home. "I was a knight riding a horse-charger, on which I left for victories. Behind my steed I had a long stick, at the end of which Antonina placed a bag filled with various old rags, which was supposed to represent a horse's head—even ears were there (...) On this wonderful steed I slogged around the house, fought imaginary fights" (Paderewski, 1982, p. 33–34)—in this way, Paderewski recalled the children's riding on the horse after many years.

The children themselves were also horses that were harnessed to ride. You can find many such descriptions and illustrations. For example, use the following. Picture 3 shows the fun of two boys. One of them, walking on all fours, pretends to be a horse. The other boy is sitting on it, holding a saber in one hand, in the other he's holding the reins, which he steers a horse with. Various toys are scattered around the playing children, including a cannon, a horse figure with a rider, and a drum. This presentation is an illustration of the published story, whose main characters were two boys: Jaś and Waldek, who "Wished a different gift for Christmas than a book. The father, at their request, bought them a book, and at the same time various military supplies: a cannon, a trumpet, a drum, a bridle for a horse, a hat and a hussar sword" ("Dodatek do «Przyjaciela Dzieci»", 1873, p. 441).



Figure 3. *Zabawa chłopców*. "Dodatek do «Przyjaciela Dzieci»" 1873. 37

The play corresponds to the description of a similar play, which is a fragment of B. Prus' text from *The Cyclist's Memoirs*, in which we read: "I am walking, and from this side street runs out a group of four children and teenagers from five to fifteen years of age. Of course, they play in the army at ten in the morning!... At the head of this army rushes some girl in a ragged skirt with tangled hair on her head, carrying a child, (...). At the head of this army rushes some girl in a ragged skirt with tangled hair on her head, on the hand with a child, (...). Behind the girl I see a teenage boy, with a thick and hoarse voice, pretending to be a carter who chases two or eight-year-olds in front of him, and behind them—a legion of small and large children, in jackets, frock coat, colorful dresses, cloth hats, hats or bare head—they go fours" (Prus, 1974, p. 290–291) The inclusion of children to the harness was a familiar game, which Dyjakowski also mentions: "If there were girls in such a harness, their braids were often used as reins, making all cords unnecessary" (Dyakowski, 1911, p. 13).

Rocking horses

Among the various toy horses, rocking horses—already known from earlier periods deserve attention (comp. Żołędz-Strzelczyk, Kabacińska-Łuczak, 2011; Kabacińska, 2007; Kabacińska, 2010). For example, let me use a graphic of Michał Stachowicz from the beginning of the 19th century (Figure 4), where we can see two little boys riding on horses. This is probably a moment of break in learning because the teacher is watching the game closely. The boy on the left is riding a horse made of a stick, finished with a very well contoured head of the horse together with the front hooves and short reins, which the boy holds in his left hand. He holds a whip in his right hand. The other boy is sitting on a wooden rocking horse, whose head was made with great care. The toy is very comfortable and safe, because, what needs to be emphasized, it has a support under the back.

A leather horse with a real tail hung in the door of the Mincel's store (Prus, 1969, p. 32). Similar, perhaps, was placed in Figure 5, where the moment of playing with Christmas presents was captured. The visible division of toys by gender is very important, as this graphic is in the primer, and the contents included therein strongly influenced the children learning to read. The boys received military toys as gifts. One of

them, hitting the drum, probably strikes the song of the marching song, the other prepares to ride on a beautifully made rocking horse. The size of the toy is adapted to the child, being a faithful copy of the real horse. The boy holds a whip in his hand, with the help of which he drives his horse.



Figure 4. M. Stachowicz. *Chłopcy na konikach* (early 19th century).
Muzeum Okręgowe w Rzeszowie



Figure 5. W.L. Anczyc. *ABC: pierwsza nauka dla dzieci* (1887)

A similar representation of a child riding a rocking horse has been placed in a booklet addressed to children, entitled „Coloring books: ten colorful plates described by rhyming for a small child by Jan Chęciński” (Figure 6).

The little boy in a soldier’s outfit proudly rides a rocking horse, made with every care for details of both the appearance of the animal and riding accessories (saddle, stirrups)—the horse looks “alive”. It stands on two skids, so the toy is safe and stable.



Figure 6. J. Chęciński. *The boy riding a rocking horse*



Figure 7. Autor unknown. *A child on a toy horse.*

Muzeum Narodowe Rolnictwa i Przemysłu Rolno-Spożywczego w Szreniawie

Equally beautifully made horse was immortalized in a photograph from 1908, in the collection of the National Museum of Agriculture and Agricultural and Food Industry in Szreniawa (Picture 7). What is important, it is adapted to the child's age. In this performance, we see a small child swinging on a black horse. It is probably a Christmas gift, as shown by the date recorded in the photograph: 26.12.08.

A similar rocking horse can be found in the Średzka Land Museum (see Picture 8). The size is also adapted to the age and height of the child. The animal has a nicely profiled head, on the back there is a saddle with stirrups, a tail made of real hair, only a mane, unfortunately, it has been painted. The horse stands on wooden poles, provided, importantly, with special props for the child's hands instead of the reins.



Figure 8. *A rocking horse* (early 20th century). Muzeum Ziemi Średzkiej

Perhaps this is what Marcin Zaleski recounted: "Between many other toys that our grandfather gave us, we had quite a large wooden horse on the poles, in the whole mount of the mount. Cleaning and decorating this horse was the most favorite activity of mine" (Zaleski, 1893, p. 25; cf. Pachocka, 2009, p. 196–197).

Horses on a float

The boys used to ride not only on a stick on sticks or poles, but also played with horses standing on floats. These platforms could also have wheels, as in Figure 9, where the boy is sitting on such a pony. The figure



Figure 9. K. Kędzierski, *Christmas gift giving* (1922)

of the horse has not exactly been reproduced—it is rather the outline of an animal figure. Equestrian accessories are also lacking in here.

The horse on the float often appeared in tales addressed to children, most often serving didactic purposes. Maria Weryho in her collection described the story of a horse belonging to Poluś. The boy, playing with a horse on a platform with wheels, beat him and pulled his tail. As a result, he broke it. His sister, Krysia, made the tail an animal made of her own long hair which she cut off. Poluś was happy, but their mother was much less (Weryho, 1911, p. 22).



Figure 10. Toy horses in the offer of the store of K. Ignatowicz. “Wielkopolanin” 1804. 281

It was just such ponies on floats that could be bought in the shop of Kajetan Ignatowicz in Poznań. In the period preceding Christmas, there were often advertisements of toys and statements by journalists raising the role and importance of toys in the process of upbringing and development. Figure 10 presents ponies on two types of flats and a rocking horse. It should be noted that the novelty on the offer was “very durable paper horses” (“Wielkopolanin”, 1804, p. 3; comp. Kabacińska-Łuczak, Nawrot-Borowska, 2018).

It may seem that playing with toy ponies gives not only joy of fun and prepares you for the role of a soldier and a warrior, but it is also safe. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, you can find voices that critically evaluate toy horses. As examples, let me use the statements of the doctor Professor E. Madeyski and the pedagogue Barbara Źulińska. The first wrote: “The harmful children's toys include rocking horses and riding sticks, as the children say: on horseback. Both irritate the sexual organs by tickling or rubbing during the movement of the ride, which causes the sexual system to develop too early, which has a significant effect on the future” (*Dyjetetyka*, 1869, p. 141; cf. Nawrot-Borowska, 2016). Barbara Źulińska, who does not believe that giving boys the shotguns, whips, toy soldiers and sabers trains courage, but leads to barbarism, wrote: “Today, courage means something other than bloodshed; today, we are primarily concerned with courage in life, courage in expressing beliefs, and courage in overcoming the adversities we encounter at every turn. Will we get this courage by shooting animals, playing soldiers?” (Źulińska, 1910, p. 23).

Drills

In addition to the horses, the important military and preparatory function was also played by military toys: fusions, rifles, broadsheets. Therefore, from an early age, boys have turned to military skills.

„We all had a small weapon, the children's toy was a drill, they were proud of their mother when the skillful children turned out to be good. When we went with Bulikowski for a walk, everyone carried a broadsword, a carabiner, and war songs were so widespread that we, little ones, sang in a chorus aloud when going for a walk” (Pilichowska, 1997, p. 65–66). Such memories often accompany diary writers. Julian Borzym

greatly appreciated the broadsword he received from his grandfather (Borzym, 2009, p. 46), Józef Kostrzewski recalled creating pop guns (Kostrzewski, 1970, p. 15) and Arkady Fiedler fired an old key filled with gunpowder and lead (Fiedler, 1976, p. 160).

Playing in soldiers was probably a favorite activity for boys. It has also become a frequent motif in texts addressed to children. In the booklet “Let’s play soldiers! Pictures with rhymes for small children” you can find a verbal description of the entire child battle (Figure 11), and in “The Children’s Friend”—drill (Figure 12): „My uncle bought Adam and Staś, toy horses on mounted poles, and for little Ignas he bought a tiny trumpet. The children, happy with the gift, immediately started to play, and Adam began to play around the room pretending to be a rider with a whip. Staś put a hat on his head, a paper hat, and took the Father’s staff like a broadsword, and Ignas, following the example of his older brothers, climbed on the reed of the Father as though on a horse, and began to trumpet like a musician. (...) Adam and Staś snorted like horses, stamped their feet, Ignas trumpeted with all his might.” (*Koniki i książeczka*, 1873, p. 395).



Figure 11. *Let’s play soldiers! Pictures with rhymes for little children*. Warsaw 1869

The fact that the drills belonged to important boys’ games is evidenced by the memory of Ignacy Rzecki: “He taught me [father—K.K.Ł.] to read, write, glue envelopes, and above all, work (Prus, 1969, p. 27). Kazio Wirski, the protagonist of Bolesław Prus’ children, was brought up

with similar memories, uncovered by his uncle: He bathed him in cold water, fed and simply dressed, woke up early, taught him how to ride a horse, shoot, as well as fencing. He created a unit for him from rural boys, who were armed with childish carabiners, dressed in fantastic uniforms and who drilled not too badly” (Prus, [https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Dzieci_\(Prus\)/I](https://pl.wikisource.org/wiki/Dzieci_(Prus)/I)).



Figure 12. *The Children's Friend* 1873, *Drill*



Figure 13. J. Chęciński, *Drill*

There is no doubt that playing drums, military maneuvers influenced patriotic education, especially in the era of partitions. Róża Raczyńska wrote about playing such games in regaining independence: We all want to fight for our homeland (...). If you want to fight for your homeland you

have to be strong, brave and be able to shoot. Arthur is already very good at popping beans and flying volunteers, he only had a popper with a cork. Then he had a springy fusion, from which he could aim and kill (with peas) flying shuttlecocks for a bet.” (Raczyński, 1969, p. 63).

Preparations for a real armed struggle began during military games, during the drill and fighting on sticks. The five boys playing the drums (Figure 13) probably did not realize it until the end. One of them with a highly raised banner (most probably a French one) happily leads their march. Behind him, with a whip in his hand, a boy drives his steed. In the middle a saber walks proudly, behind him a boy playing the trumpet, and finally a boy driving a horse on a platform with a wagon, perhaps a wagon with war supplies.



Figure 14. Boleś-Knight, In: Wrotnowski F. (1851) *Elementarz polskich dzieci*

F. Wrotnowski in “The Primer of Polish Children”, in short stories, didactic pictures, showed the importance of boys’ plays and toys shaping courage and patriotism. Boleś, a several-year-old hero of the book, “put on a suitable paper hat, put a wooden saber to his side, and strutted like a knight” (Wrotnowski, 1857, p. 27). The uncle watching the scene doubted the boldness and courage of the boy, which is why “taking the gun, he escorted the cock, as if wanting to shoot at the wind. Boleś was in fear, he started shouting and crying. What a piece of knight from Boleś!” (Wrotnowski, 1857, p. 27). Uncle told the boy the story of another boy,

“who was afraid to enter a dark room and stammered, and was afraid of a gander like a snake. No one had taught him courage before, and when he grew up he became a soldier to dress up in uniform and buzz the broadsword on the cobblestone” (Wrotnowski, 1857, p. 27). As you can guess, during the fights, the master fled from the battlefield and suffered humiliation. The point of the text fully refers to the meaning of toys and games shaping patriotic attitudes: “But Boleś will be brave when he grows up” (Wrotnowski, 1857, p. 28).

Promoting Polish history and traditions— everyday patriotism

A true patriot must first of all consider the land on which he was born and has grown up to be the first and the main basis for the love of his homeland. In man, the love of the fatherland will only be perpetuated, «when this land is known in all directions (...). Getting to know the native country is therefore an emotional, poetic, religious side of the love of the homeland (...)» (Libelt, 1907, p. 23–24) wrote Karol Libelt in the song “On the love of the homeland” (Kowalczyk, <http://www.e-pw.pl/page.php/1/0/show/96/>). The ways of propagating patriotism were determined by the socio-political situation in the partitions. For example, in the Prussian partition the organic work was also an expression of patriotism, which was written in 1882 by its advocate, Wawrzyniec Engeström (1829–1910): “This supreme and most understandable patriotism of everyday life, honest, legal and open daily work, quiet virtue and sacrifice—this is the strongest foundation of the organization in which the strength and spiritual development of our society is contained.” (Engeström, 1882, p. 22; comp. Kowalczyk)

The spread of patriotic feelings carried out in the family took place also through stories from the history of the family, the country, caring for maintaining the holiday traditions or national. The group of these elements also includes the use of toys, especially boys' toys. According to Jan Bujak, at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, “the content of most of them [patriotic toys] were historical topics” (Bujak, 1988, p. 34). Knowledge of history was being developed through reading books on the history of the nation, arranging theater scenes, building blocks. Among such richness, soldiers are on the forefront.

Toy soldiers

„Liked, especially by boys of all ages, not only children, toy soldiers, are toys depicting miniature figures of warriors from different eras and various armies” (Żołądz-Strzelczyk, Gomułka, Kabacińska-Łuczak, Nawrot-Borowska M., 2016, p. 404). They were made of many materials available in a given era, such as wood, clay, ivory, metals (from silver to tin) (Bujak, 1988, p. 35).

An example of such items shows a collection of figurines in the Museum of the Middle Earth—painted on both sides (see Figure 15). You can recognize soldiers of many armies among them, including Napoleon’s army.



Figure 15. Toy soldiers (early 20th century.). Muzeum Ziemi Średzkiej

Playing with such an army was perhaps a memory described in “Dziennik Łódzki” in 1889: “how many memories must be pressed into your mind, memories of your childhood, with such words «lead soldier»! With what enthusiasm you accepted the box that contained the entire army, set it on the table, formed it into ranks, columns, and your young imagination breathed life into this soulless world, dreaming of battles, victories, processions (...) Faded bright colors of their costumes, weapons faded in your maturing mind, the vivid colors of the youthful fantasy, whose sources are increasingly sought in the real world; So you threw

away the empty toy, or suspecting how much work and human knowledge there is in this tiny object" („Dziennik Łódzki", 1886)



Figure 16. *Playing with toy soldiers.* "The Children's Friend" 1862

Soldiers were also heroes of stories addressed to children. In one of them, Maria Weryho made the main character a figure of an old soldier who tells the story of his life: "I have the honor to present myself, dear reader. I am an old lead soldier. But I must first explain to you how I got here. It was a very long time when once a worker took a spoon of lead, heated it on hot coals and poured it into a mold. After a while the lead froze and hardened, and then the worker opened the form and a young, luminous soldier jumped out. It was me. Then my clothes, shoes, helmet were painted and I became an elegant hussar. I was not alone, there were twelve of us, all of us full of strength and enthusiasm. We wanted to go immediately to the war, but some large hand took us and arranged it in a wooden box. Then we were taken to the store, but we were lying there soon. The next day an old woman came and took us to her grandson in a Christmas gift. Grandson was a seven-year-old boy and his name was Janek. It was a good boy, cheerful, funny, I can not complain, he put us in ranks, he taught us to march, he drove us ... Everything would be best if ... ah, if Jurek was a bit more decent. How many accidents were there for this reason (...)" (Weryho, 1907, p. 22–23). Figure 17 refers to this fragment as it captures the moment of the soldiers' drill.



Figure 17. S. Maślowski, *Playing with toy soldiers*, in: Weryho M. (1907) *A soldier's story*

Two armies of Framuaks and Szkatulaks participated in the battles led by the heroes of the novel Maria Konopnicka "Dolls of my children". The first lived in a frame in a table room, the second in a box standing under the window. "The boys were usually into manufacturing the dolls" (Konopnicka, 1962, p. 3). The Framuaks were elegantly dressed, "Chief of them, Duke Józef Poniatowski, wore a uniformed coat, girded with a sash with a magnificent knot (...) The boast of the Framuvaks were stiff corsets, made of cards turned to pink or blue side, and their weapons consisted of rifles, made of pitch bows—for militants, or of swords, prepared from pens and pencils—for elders" (Konopnicka, 1962, p. 4–5). Their leader was Prince Józef Poniatowski. The Framuaks had their heroes: Czarnecki, Kosciuszko, and Chodkiewicz. Both armies played peacefully during the peace, they made trips to Brazil, but during the war the soldiers fought bravely. "Finally, both armies collided with great impetus. Bohdarenko, with his head hitting like a buffalo, in the columns of the enemy, he beat furiously (...). Czarnecki and Kosciuszko struck swith mall, previously prepared troops in an efficient manner, saving their brave people..." (Konopnicka, 1962, p. 13–14). This literary description of soldiers' fights is probably a representation of authentic boyish games. This example shows how many messages from Polish history children got to know during play and how they could use this knowledge and how many military skills they gained (fighting strategies, command, etc.).

The fun, whose source was the patriotic stories of parents and grandparents, was remembered by Teodor Kaczyński. The memoirist and his colleagues, coming from families where national consciousness and knowledge of the history of Poland were passed down generations, they often played in the Polish army. "The worst thing was that nobody wanted to be in a hostile army," wrote Kaczyński. We were better off when we were making Polish and foreign soldiers from pebbles, sticks and rags. So in our children's minds a national, Polish feeling was being created" (Kaczyński, 1987; comp. Nawrot-Borowska, 2016).

Summary

Bronisław Trentowski wrote in the mid-nineteenth century: "Do you know who the real patriot is? He, who in his youth did, to his own natural disposition, a certain unchanging plan of serving the homeland, who learned something properly, became a detailed man, and then throughout his life he works on his creation persistently and constantly strives for one goal. His path is pointed out. He follows it with a bold, skillful step, and no stranger will stop him" (Trentowski, 1845, p. 34; comp. Kowalczyk). That patriotism which was developed in the family and the church, shaped the generations of Poles thanks to which Poland regained its independence. It seems that a certain influence on shaping the patriotic attitudes of boys could have toys that accompanied them in childhood—horses (on a stick, poles, platforms), soldiers and items used for drill etc. First of all, they shaped equestrian skills and agility, but also instilled a passion for what was Polish, affecting the history of Poland and native traditions. And for these reasons, they influenced the formation of national unity.

And although there were criticisms—Barbara Żulińska decided that playing in a soldier is conditioned "instinctively" and culturally, but "One should, however, turn back and snatch children—and society in the future—from the habits of mutual killing inherited by the original generations. If a boy has to command someone, let him play Falcons. This game will give him the opportunity to do different exercises, he can put columns on them and, most importantly, he spreads the healthy idea of a falcon" (Żulińska, 1910, p. 24), but it was fun in the army, and the hogs on the horse that were important activities for boys.

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The “Chauvinistic” Men of Julie Okoh: Victims of Feminist Bias

ABSTRACT. The paper interrogates Julie Okoh’s sense of commitment to the feminist struggle. Using her plays as case studies, the paper presents Okoh as one of the most passionate, emotional and bias feminist playwrights in Nigeria. The argument canvassed in this paper includes that in Okoh’s dramaturgy, women are portrayed far better than their men counterpart. The research is fundamentally literary in methodology and qualitative in approach with some of Okoh’s selected plays as primary source materials. The major finding in the study is that Okoh is one of the few Nigerian playwrights that have demonstrated ideological commitments in their dramaturgies. The study also observed that the feminist project, especially as portrayed in Nigerian drama, is unremorsefully hostile to patriarchy. It is in the light of the above that the paper advocates the need for Nigerian playwrights to show ideological commitment in their plays. Nigerian feminist playwrights are also encouraged to always strike a gender balance in the delineation of characters in their plays. It is hoped that such gender balancing would facilitate gender equality which the feminist project sets out to achieve.

KEYWORDS: Chauvinism, Feminism, Gender and Dramaturgy

Introduction

Since its global prominence in literary criticism and discourse spanning from the late 19th century, the term feminism has been subjected to varieties of definitions, criticisms, literary works (drama, prose and poetry) and practical applications. As a literary projection which gained its tap root from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in the year 1995, feminism has been given a generous number of interpretations and perspectives which tend to impinge on the existing worldviews, values, customs and traditions of the respective cultural sets of mankind. Expectedly, feminism, in any form of interpretation, seems to have been greeted with consistent and spontaneous resistance in Africa as a result of the preponderance of patriarchal values.

In Nigeria, for instance, several feminist literary works exist alongside counter-feminist works. It is unarguable that since the institutionalization of feminism into global literary discourse, the Nigerian literary landscape has been engaged with a generous number of feminist literatures aimed at extolling feminist virtues and ideologies. In a parallel vein, there have been varieties of critical literary works inspired by the need to debunk feminist extremes which the critics consider threat to the long-held patriarchal values inherent in the culture and tradition of an average Nigerian community.

Propelled by the need to propagate patriarchy as one of the frontiers of indigenous African culture, such Nigerian playwrights as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, Ahmed Yerima and Henry Bell-Gam among others have crafted plays that portray women (whether as wives or mothers) as instruments whose existential essence is mainly to assist men in the actualization of their masculinity and sense of fulfillment in life. It is this seeming chauvinistic position that has birthed the harvest of feminist plays that have graced the Nigerian dramaturgical landscape in present times. In a conscious attempt to debunk gender stereotyping as evident in most African customs and tradition, a crop of Nigerian playwrights (mostly females) have set in motion a harvest of feminist plays that challenge the patriarchal dogmas inherent in the plays of the earlier generation playwrights. Playwrights in this bracket would include but not limited to Tess Onwueme, Stella Oyedepo, Julie Okoh, Irene Salami and Tracy Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh. At first, these crops of playwrights were identified as solo feminist voices from the fringe, but as they continued to soar in their ideological commitment, they amassed for themselves and by extension, their feminist campaign, a large portion of creative relevance in the overall Nigerian dramatic space. Little wonder, these voices alongside their mentees in the feminist crusade have become forces to reckon with as long as African feminist discourse is concerned.

Interestingly, Nigerian feminist playwrights vary in their dramaturgical responses to the negative and inferior portrayal of womanhood in the works of the older generation playwrights. Apart from labeling the older writers as "male chauvinists", the feminist playwrights also accuse them of hiding under the mask of patriarchy to subdue and subjugate women into accepting the facade that they are inferior to their men in all ramifications. For Tess Onwueme and Irene Salami, the role of women in mainstream leadership spans from the pre-colonial times when women

took up the Herculean task of leading their empires into work and returning victorious. Stella Oyedepo as well as Tracy Chima Uto-Ezeajuh are more interested in showcasing the "New Woman" who has been liberated from the shackles of patriarchy and gone ahead to occupy strategic political positions where men bow to her authority. On her part, Julie Okoh is mainly concerned with the psychological trauma which men subject women into in their (men's) attempt to demonstrate their superiority over the latter. It is along this trajectory of pity for women that the paper examines Okoh's portrayal of her lead male characters as either chauvinistic or wicked or both. Part of the business of the paper also is to examine the depth of Okoh's feminist biases and un biases in the portrayal of her male characters.

The Concept of Gender

Research has shown that the terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably. Mike Haralambos and Martin Holborn, in their book entitled *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, observe that many writers use the distinction between sex and gender as the starting point for their analysis. From a historical perspective, they inform that:

The first person to make this distinction was the American psychoanalyst Robert Stoller. Stoller made the commonsense observation that vast majority of the population can clearly be categorized as male or female according to their physical characteristics: 'external genitalia, internal genitalia, gonads (the organs which produce sex cells), hormonal states and secondary sex characteristics'. Because of these differences, women are capable of bearing and suckling children, whereas men are not. In addition, differences in physique between men and women usually mean that men are stronger and more muscular" (Stoller, 1968, p. 94).

Biological differences are widely believed to be responsible for the differences in both the behavior of men and women and the roles they play in society. However, Robert Stoller cautioned against such an assumption contending that:

Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural connotations, if the proper terms for sex are 'male' and 'female', the corresponding terms for gender are 'masculine' and 'feminine'; these latter might be quite independent of (biological) sex (Stoller, 1968, p. 9).

The deduction to make out of Stoller's analogy above is that it does not necessarily follow that being a woman means behaving in a 'feminine', nor that being a man means behaving in a 'masculine' way. For him, girls are not necessarily caring and compassionate just as boys do not have to be aggressive and competitive. Haralambos and Holborn add that though not all sociologists of gender and feminism support Stoller's position, it is not also immediately obvious that how their claims can be justified. For Haralambos and Holborn, the belief that it is natural for women and men behave differently is widespread, and is supported by many scientists and some psychologists and sociologists.

There have been a number a number of attempts to relate sex differences to differences in the behavior of men and women by using evolutionary ideas. One of these attempts, which seem to be the most influential today is the concept of "sociobiology" which was developed by Wilson in the year 1975 and further applied to sex and gender by David Barash in 1979. The concept is based in part on Charles Darwin's *Theory of Evolution*. Haralambos and Holborn add that the concept it goes well beyond Darwin's original theory (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004, p. 96). Like Darwin, sociobiologists believe that humans and other species develop and change through a process of natural selection. Individuals of a species vary in their physical characteristics, and from this point of view, those which are best adapted to their environment are most likely to survive and reproduce. Since offspring tend to have characteristics similar to those of their parents due to genetic inheritance, the characteristics of a species can change as the fittest survives. According to Haralambos and Holborn, Sociobiologists go beyond Darwin in two main ways, thus:

- 1 They argue that it is not just physical characteristics that evolve but also behaviour.
- 2 They believe that behaviour in animals and humans is governed by a genetic instruction to maximize the chances of passing on their genes to future generations by breeding-that is, they try to ensure that they have offspring which survive. At the heart of sociobiology's attempt to explain sex differences in the behaviour of female and male humans is the claim that the two sexes employ different strategies to maximize their chances of passing on their genes (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004, p. 96).

The chief argument raised by Wilson and Barash in their sociobiologist concept is that different reproductive strategies produce different behaviour in males and females and also lead them to occupy different

social roles. That, in terms of sexual behaviour, men are likely to be more promiscuous, while women will be more circumspect in their pursuit of the best possible genetic partner. Wilson argues that "It pays males to be aggressive, hasty, fickle and indiscriminating". According to him, in theory, it is more profitable for women to be coy, to hold back until they can identify males with the best possible genes (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004, p. 96). Drawing from Wilson and Barash's analogies, sociobiologists believe that women can tolerate infidelity by their partners more readily than men. That infidelity by men has little cost for women, but if the woman is unfaithful, the man may devote energy to raising someone else's child.

For George Peter Murdock, the biological differences between men and women are the basis of the sexual division of labour in society. However, Murdock did not suggest that men and women are directed by genetically based predispositions or characteristics to adopt their particular roles. Rather, he simply suggested that biological differences, such as the greater physical strength of men and the fact that women bear children, lead to gender roles out of sheer practicality. He argues further that "Given the biological differences between men and women, a sexual division of labour is the most efficient way of organizing society" (Murdock, 1949, p. 6). In a cross-cultural survey of two hundred and twenty four societies, ranging from hunting and gathering bands to modern nation-states, Murdock examined the activities assigned to men and women and in the process, he found tasks such as hunting, lumbering and mining to be predominantly male roles and cooking, gathering wild vegetable products, water carrying and making and repairing clothes to be largely female roles. According to him:

Man with his superior physical strength can better undertake the more strenuous tasks, such as lumbering, mining, quarrying, land-clearance and housebuilding. Not handicapped, as is woman by the physiological burdens of pregnancy and nursing, he can range farther afield to hunt, to fish, to herd and trade. Woman is at no disadvantage, however, in lighter tasks which can be performed in or near the home, e.g. the gathering of vegetable products, the fetching of water, the preparation of food, and the manufacture of clothing and utensils (Murdock, 1949, p. 7).

Murdock's submission as stipulated above is that the sexual division of labour was present in all of the societies especially those in his samples and concludes that the advantages inherent in a division of labour

by sex presumably account for its universality. Talcott Parson in his article entitled "The American Family: Its Relations to Personality and Social Structure" corroborates Murdock's position when he argues that there had to be a clear-cut sexual division of labour for the family to operate efficiently as a social system, and that the instrumental and expressive roles complemented each other and promoted family solidarity. However, Murdock and Parson's concept of sexually determined division of labour have been subjected to several criticisms prominent among these critique is Ann Oakley's concept of cultural division of labour where she explicitly rejects the notion that there any natural or inevitable division of labour or allocation of social roles on the basis of sex. Against this backdrop, she argues that:

Not only is the division of labour by sex not universal, but there is no reason why it should be. Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable. They owe their creation to human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces (Oakley, 194, p. 9).

The focus of Oakley's argument is that gender roles are culturally rather than biologically determined since comparisons between different cultures show that the behaviour and roles of men and women are highly variable. She believes that gender roles are culturally rather than biologically produced. The crux of Oakley's thesis is that whatever the biological differences between males and females, it is culture of a society that exerts most influence in the creation of masculine and feminine behaviour. It is against this backdrop that patriarchy serves as the anchor on which men unleash oppression and superiority on the women.

Feminism: A Conceptual Overview

The term feminism has been subjected to a harvest of definitions since its inculcation into mainstream literary discourse. These definitions are influenced by the prevailing thesis that the definition intends to underscore. For Barbara Berg feminism:

...is the freedom (for a woman) to decide her own destiny: freedom from sex determined role; freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action. Feminism demands the acceptance of woman's right to individual conscience and judgment. It postulates that women's essential worth stems from their

common humanity and does not depend on the relationships of her life (Berg, 1984, p. 24).

Ann Taylor corroborates Berg's definition when she explains that feminism is a protest against the institutionalized injustice perpetrated by men, as a group, and advocates the elimination of that injustice by challenging the various structures of authority or power that legitimize male prerogatives in a given society. From a sociological dimension, feminism aims at effecting changes in the prevailing social structures. It incorporates political activism and ideological stance. From ideological perspective, feminism aims at examining and analyzing the situation of women in societies by exposing the complexity of male domination and female subordination with the hope of liberating women from masculine vision of life which has, in various dimensions in different historical periods, deified male values to the detriment of women's ethos.

According to Julie Okoh, feminists believe that the destruction of all forms of inequality and oppression will lead to the creation of a more just, social and economic structures that will facilitate women's participation in national development and in international struggle for economic globalization and solidarity (Okoh, 2012, p. 12). Feminism is about making people aware of the secondary position women had, too often, been forced to occupy in social and political structure. She adds that a broad understanding of feminism includes the acting, speaking, writing and advocating on behalf of women's issues and rights, and identifying injustice to women in society. For Okoh, the term feminism has a long span of history. In her analogy, the root of feminism began with the devaluation of the goddesses in primitive societies (Okoh, 2000, p. 9). She adds that discrimination against women was first institutionalized with the development of city states in ancient Greece. According to her:

The Greek major thinkers and writers stressed the need for female subordination. Natural law philosophers in particular, claimed that the inferior status of women was due to their "inner nature." With the exception of Plato, they all believed that women had powerful emotion and inferior brains with an IQ lower than that of the male children. Hence, women could harm themselves as well as others. Therefore, it was necessary to protect women from harming themselves, and if possible, incapacitate them. Based on this belief, each woman in the city states of ancient Greece had her own guardian (usually a father, brother, husband or a male relative) under whose protection and control she lived for her entire life. All the Greek natural law philo-

sophers came to regard women along with children and slaves as neither “rational” nor “civilized” (Okoh, 2000, p. 57).

Drawing from Sawyer’s thesis, Okoh argues that since Aristotle defined the female as defective and the male as normative, male slaves had the responsibility for the early education of boys rather than their mother (Okoh, 2002, p. 17). Okoh concludes her argument by declaring that the preponderance of female subjugation in Ancient Greece serves as the precursor to the feminist movement. The deduction from the various definitions of feminism is that it is a collective term for systems of belief and theories that pay special attention to women’s rights and women’s position in culture and society.

The Image of Male Characters in Julie Okoh’s Plays

It is stating the obvious that Okoh’s plays portray the image of men from an undiluted patriarchal perspective where the male characters feature more as antagonists with villainous tendencies. This trend runs from her earlier works to her later plays where she compensates the men with an infinitesimal dose of positive portrayal of the men as evident in the characters of Professor Tanka in *Our Wife Forever* (2010) and Tamuno in *The Trials* (2008). Long before the uplift of men’s corporate image in her later works, Okoh’s earlier works such as *The Mannequins* (1997), *Mask* (1997), *In the Fullness of Time* (2000) and *Edewede* (2000) have presented men either as promiscuous husbands, paedophiles, bullies, idle breadwinners and self-centred companions among others. In *Mask*, Mr Alfred Okosun is portrayed as a heartless and inconsiderate husband who has no regards for the supposed sanctity of marriage. He flaunts his marital vows and goes ahead to relish an illicit emotional relationship with Nkechi, a girl of eighteen who is also the best friend of his only daughter. Mrs Okosun gets wind of her husband’s extra-marital affairs with a supposed family friend and unable to bare the heartbreak, she gets depressed to the point of experiencing a severe nervous breakdown. Similarly, Omena, their only daughter, gets disillusioned about her father’s irresponsible act and develops a mind-set geared towards hatred for the men folk. Here, Okoh portrays men not just as cheating husbands and paedophiles but as frivolous fathers who seldom find time to nurture their children under the excuse of being too occupied with office matters.

Okoh extends her portrayal of men as wicked fathers in *The Mannequins* where Mr Dialely Adudu poses as a sex freak who cannot control his sexual libido to the ridiculous and consequently, tragic extent of abusing his thirteen year old daughter Iyere Iluobe whom he infests with the Vagina Vesico Fistula (VVF)—a disease that destroys the woman's reproductive organs. Similar with the experiences of Mr Okosun in *Mask*, Mr Adudu's extra-marital engagement with teenagers brings about a major communication break down between him and his wife. On her part, Etemini, Adudu's wife feels traumatized about her husband's sexual reckless and undying romantic appetite for female teenagers. In this play, Okoh portrays men, as evident in the character delineation of Adudu, the lead male character as sex maniacs who put sex ahead of any other value in life. In spite of his enhanced economic status, Adudu is conceived in the society of the play as an unfaithful husband, irresponsible father, vindictive boss and a corrupt manager who throws caution to the wind just for a round of sex. He goes about abandoning women to their fate after putting them in a family way. In the end, Adudu is humiliated publicly and disgraced out of office by a collaboration of his staff and government machineries. Similarly, another major male character in the play, Agboga Igberaese, Adudu's best friend and colleague, who is supposed to admonish Adudu against sexual recklessness, is also not spared of male chauvinistic philosophies especially as it concerns polygamy. He advises Adudu to emulate him by converting all his concubines into full time wives rather than "...just... attract her for ...pleasure and nothing more" (Okoh, 1998, p. 21).

In *Edewede*, Okoh tries to portray the men in some positive light by sparing them of the usual stigma of rape, sexual recklessness, extra-marital entanglements and frivolous fatherhood. However, the play opens on a rather discrediting note for the men as Okoh heaps the blame of female circumcision on patriarchy which in turn sets out to celebrate the superiority of men over women. Here, men are seen as collective chauvinists who are bent on suppressing and oppressing the women as well as imbuing in them a sense of inferiority through the violence of circumcision. In this play, Ordia, Edewede's husband and the lead male character, is portrayed as a coward who cannot defend his wife and daughter from such societal inhibitions as female genital mutilation. Though, Ordia understands Edewede's plight as regards female circumcision but lacks the will power to resist his mother's (Ebikere) insistence on getting Oseme, their daughter, circumcised. Here Okoh, through the

character of Ordia, presents men as weaklings who cannot think but bow sheepishly to such bogus patriarchal tradition as female genital mutilation. The deduction here is that Okoh has subjected men again to the guilt of patriarchal extremes aimed at enslaving women through the machinery of circumcision.

In *Closed Doors*, one of Okoh's early 21st century plays, male characters are obviously scarce save for their being mentioned as offstage references. Nevertheless, the male characters mentioned offstage in the play are not also devoid of the usual negative behavioural attributes that runs in most Okoh's plays. *Closed Doors* is a serial diary of men's onslaught on women in a bid to demonstrate their superiority over the latter. In this play, the inmates of GOODWILL NURSING HOME (all pregnant women) bemoan the predicaments surrounding their pregnancies as occasioned by their supposed lovers (men). Bola, one of the inmates in the nursing home, is relieved of her banking job for getting pregnant. Ironically, the order for the termination of her job was dished by her boss who is also responsible for her pregnancy. Tracy, the heroine of the play and one of the inmates, is marked for assassination by the same man that is responsible for her pregnancy. The reason for the assassination attempt on Tracy is because her lover, who is also a desperate politician as well as a family man, considers her pregnancy potential material for political blackmail. Amina, a girl of thirteen and the youngest of the inmates, gets pregnant through the process of a serial gang rape by herds men. Belema's pregnancy comes through the machinations of her own school teacher, who, ab initio, promised her heaven on earth. The deduction from these testimonies is that all the male characters responsible for these pregnancies are morally bankrupt and heartless to the dangerous extent of thwarting the supposed bright futures of these "innocent" young girls and teenagers.

Our Wife Forever stands out as one of the few plays of Okoh that tries to portray men as considerate, loving, caring and compromising beings using the character of Professor Tanka. Tanka, unlike the usual male chauvinists that inhabit Okoh's dramatic universe, shows Victoria, his late friend's wife, all the necessary affection, care and love every woman would envisage from her husband. He stands by Victoria throughout her trying times by the machinations of her brother-in-law, Chief Thomas Imodu. Tanka's affection for Victoria builds to a romantic crescendo whereby both of them get yoked together in marriage. Through the character of Tanka, Okoh tries to portray men as respecters of the fun-

damental human rights of the women. But typical of Okoh's sense of ideological commitment, men cannot be completely exonerated of oppressive tendencies, hence, the portrayal of the character of Chief Thomas Imodu who does not only stand out as the antagonist in the play but also the voice of patriarchal extremes. Hiding under the umbrella of tradition, Thomas, pressurizes Victoria to forfeit all her late husband's wealth and surrender herself to be inherited by him in accordance with the traditional and customary law of window inheritance. At first, Thomas seems to have had his way but with the joint forces of Victoria and Prof. Tanka, the former is brought to pillory and humiliation. Here, Okoh celebrates the dismantling of patriarchy not just by the women but by their male sympathizers as symbolized in Tanka.

The crux of our analogy here is that Okoh's plays, regardless of their generic, geographical and periodical make ups, portray men as violators of the inalienable rights of women. Even in plays where some male characters are ascribed positive and moral qualities, the antagonists are usually men who are dogged and undaunted in their propagation of patriarchal values.

Men as Victims of Julie Okoh's Feminist Bias

In his critical essay titled "A House Divided: Feminism in African Literature", Nnolim states that:

If the female writers live in a house divided, their counterparts who are critics are much more united in a single-minded effort to carry the fight to the court of the male writers who are their ...enemy, the agent of their disparaged position, their oppressors. This might be a case of misplaced hostility, for the debasement of the female image is as old as the Bible and the Koran, and has other origins in pre-historic literature and mythology. (Chukwuma, 1994, p. 258)

The position above serves as a cue for our critical excursion into Okoh's dramatic universe where men are often tongue-lashed and ascribed with satanic attributes; a universe where men are portrayed as devil's incarnates; a universe where men consistently oppress and subdue women through the machinations of patriarchy; a universe where women are predominantly portrayed as angels and heroes and men, devils and tyrants. It cannot be over emphasized that Okoh's gender-

sensitive plays are feministic to the extent that one hardly comes across a morally sound male character.

In *Closed Doors*, all the references to male characters are derogatory and uncomplimentary. First, the owner of the Goodwill Nursing Home is a man “who is out to exploit pregnant young girls and teenagers by offering them the option to either pay huge bills for abortion or give birth so the children can be adopted for huge amounts of money. Tracy, the heroine of the play, is portrayed as a nineteen year old pre-University student who parts ways with her decent family upbringing and engages illicit affairs and in the process, she gets pregnant but rather than blame her for her immoral dispositions, Okoh shifts all the blame to the man responsible for the pregnancy. On her part, Tracy prefers brooding over her being abandoned by Michael, her childhood lover and her “Big Politician” sugar daddy rather than blame herself for flouting the supposed moral decency and rectitude of her family. In Tracy’s moments of psychological trauma, the playwright, through the character of the Chief Nymph, makes conscious effort to revitalize her self—esteem as she charges her, thus:

CHIEF NYMPH: A heroine is one who lives in hope when faced with challenges. Like the beautiful phoenix bird that burns itself at a stake only to rise up later from the ashes reborn, Go on! Call forth all your traumatic experiences. Bring out all the buried secrets. Purge them into the fire of gestation (*After blessing TRACY, MOTHER EARTH stretches out her magic wand to touch TRACY*) (Okoh, 2007, p. 45–46).

The fortification and blessings showered on Tracy by Mother Earth in the excerpt above seem to suggest that the playwright has exonerated Tracy from the immoral act of pre-marital sex especially with an advanced influential politician – a man old enough to be her father. The playwright’s concern in the play is to portray men’s inhuman treatment towards women rather than the latter’s sexual recklessness and obvious lack of social etiquette. Bola, the most composed of all the inmates, also flouts the rule of the bank where she works which stipulates that newly employed staff must abstain from pregnancy for at least three years from the day of assumption of duty or face the penalty of being fired. Bola does not only flout the rules of her employer but does so with her direct boss, the branch manager of her bank yet the playwright exonerates her of this immoral and unethical act and puts all the blame on her manager (man) for his “wickedness and heartlessness”. Similarly, Bele-

ma, another inmate and a secondary school student, derails from seeking genuine knowledge from her teacher and mentor and gets erotically attracted to him and in the end, he she gets pregnant but as usual, the playwright heaps all the blame on the teacher (man). Without an iota of remorse and self-blame, Belema laments, thus:

...He told me he loved me. Foolish me, I believed him completely. It was only when I got pregnant that I discovered that he had played the same game on many other girls in the school (Okoh, 2007, p. 25).

Belema's lamentation above does not suggest that she was raped or harassed by her teacher but that she succumbed to his wooing antics only to be deceived after being impregnated. One would have expected the playwright to apportion a significant dose of blame to Belema for being sexually reckless and loose at a point in her life where she was expected to demonstrate moral rectitude. But as a result of Okoh's in-depth feminist dramatic stance, all the blame for Belema's pregnancy and misfortune are channeled towards her teacher for being treacherous and insincere in their relationship. Similarly, Eki, the oldest and most adventurous of all the inmates, resorts to prostitution because her uncles (men) impoverished her and her siblings by confiscating their properties after their father's death. Eki's attempt to justify her resort to prostitution in order to fend for her siblings seems to suggest that the playwright is advocating for commercial sex work as a liberal pathway to economic breakthrough in a country like Nigeria where such menial jobs as petty trading, cleaning, crafts, nanny, food vendor and farming among others, constitute modest means of livelihood. Expectedly, Eki gets abandoned after being impregnated but rather than blame herself for resorting to immorality (commercial sex work) as the ultimate source of livelihood, she, quite characteristic of the other inmates, transfers all her aggression to men in general whether as greedy uncles, irresponsible policemen on duty or sexually bellicose sugar daddies. As she puts it:

Men! They are difficult to understand. When they want a woman, they are all over her. She is their darling, their sugar-sugar, their honey-honey, their succour; the air they breathe in, the light they see with, the energy that keeps them active. Every seductive adjective one can think of is lavished on the woman. But once they get her, she becomes the obstacle in their way, a black devil or even mere garbage to be dumped into a dust-bin (Okoh, 2007, p. 52)

Eki's lamentation above clearly suggests that she does not have a moment remorse for choosing the path of commercial sex work in a country where entrepreneurial skills can afford one livelihood. Of all the inmates, perhaps, Amina's case appears the most pathetic since she was raped serially by a group of herdsmen. But the playwright prefers to put the blame on men rather than on poor and insensitive leadership in the country that has is unable to birth an effective judiciary that would bring perpetrators of rape to justice. Even when Bola's pregnancy was attributed to a bank manager, Belema's to her school teacher and Amina's to unidentified herdsmen, the playwright prefers to apportion all the blame for the pregnancies and abandonment of the inmates to politicians (men) just to underscore her ideological commitment that men are evil and wicked. In an attempt to conceal her female chauvinistic tendencies, Okoh presents men's sense of moral bankruptcy through the mask of politicians, thus:

AMINA: Oh, I no been know say politician them be thief.

EKI: Yes, my dear little girl, they are all thieves...

AMINA: But, wetin dem dey do with all the money wey dem dey thief?

BELEMA: Who knows?

EKI: They use it to seduce women. Look at all of us. Are we not victims of their insatiable quest for pleasure?

BELEMA: Oh yes, we are. They seduce us, use us and abandon us, That is very unfair.

BOLA: As if that is not enough, they turn around to stab us in the back.

TRACY: They send assassins after us.

BELEMA: After killing us, they remove from us those very organs that they once cherished, to make juju medicine that will make them strong and invincible... (Okoh, 2007, p. 56)

The playwright's merging of men and politicians as a homogenous entity that seduce, abuse and maim women is indicative of her deliberate ploy to exonerate Nigerian female politicians from all the decay and decadence in the nation's political space. This, again exposes Okoh's subtle feminist bias against men. Tracy, the heroine of the play lacks the moral rectitude to blame men for her misfortune having gone against her family values. She acknowledges that her father (a man) is opposed to her teenage pregnancy, thus:

TRACY: My father couldn't take it when he found out. He drove me out of the house. As I was outside the gate thinking of where to go, I could hear yelling

at my mother, abusing her, beating her. I heard her crying, begging him for mercy. (Hysterically) Oh!... He must have pushed her down!...He has a gun in his drawer! He is coming after me! I must run from here before he comes!... (Okoh, 2007, p. 18)

Tracy's narration above gives credence to the logic that her father, like most Nigerian fathers (politicians inclusive) are opposed to the social anomaly of teenage sexual harassment and pregnancy. It also goes to show that immoral behaviour is individualistic and not an exclusive of the men folk as portrayed in Okoh's *Closed Doors*. It can also be argued that Tracy's father, in an attempt to demonstrate fatherly care, concern and affection towards his daughter, must have expressed his concerns for Tracy's social excesses in the past but must have been ignored by Tracy's mother in a typical African idiosyncrasy whereby mothers feel obliged to give their children especially females some social cum sexual protection. Little wonder, Tracy's father transfers the aggression of his daughter's teenage pregnancy to the mother.

Another manifestation of Okoh's feminist bias in *Closed Doors* is in the area of the management of the Goodwill Nursing Home. The playwright is aware that the profession of gynaecology cuts across the sexes meaning that the goodwill Nursing Home could have also been run by a female doctor. But she prefers to portray a male doctor in such dubious, corrupt and inhumane character delineation in order to amplify her feminist stance and commitment. Even when the playwright presents Nurse Chioma, a female character in the nursing home, to be harsh, uncompromising and mercantilist to her fellow women in order to modify her excessive negative portrayal of men in her works, it becomes more glaring that men are still her chief target since Nurse Chioma only acts on the orders of her boss, the proprietor of GOODWILL NURSING HOME, a man. The playwright goes further to introduce the character of the Orderly, another offstage male character who contributes little or nothing to the plot of the play except that he is mentioned in order to buttress the playwright's mantra of men's inhuman disposition towards women. In this play, the Orderly is subjected to castigation and public pillory by the inmates who claim that he is bossy and inconsiderate yet no concrete action is ascribed to him from the beginning to the end of the play. Nnolim amplifies the sexist sentiment in Okoh's dramaturgy, thus:

Feminism takes centre stage in...Julie Okoh's dramaturgy. Her major technique is inflationary in characterizing women and deflationary in the depic-

tion of men. That is, women are created as better than their male counterparts, all the male characters are far worse. (Nnolim, 1994, p. 248–261)

Nnolim's critique above summarizes the gamut of Okoh's dramaturgy. Mr Okosun in *Mask* is portrayed as an irresponsible husband and father who cannot control his libido let alone attend to his paternal responsibilities at the home front. He engages in an illicit affair with Nkechi, his daughter's school friend but when the illicit relationship is exposed, Mr Okosun alone receives the heat at home to the point of being poisoned by his wife while Nkechi continues to pride herself as an achiever without any form of remorse. The same dose of irresponsible characterization rubs on Mr Adudu both in *In the Fullness of Time* and *The Mannequins* where he is portrayed as an embodiment of oppression, tyranny, dictatorship, sex abuse, infidelity and corruption among others. In *The Mannequins*, Adudu goes about town intimidating young girls and impregnating them and in the end, he is made to pay for his immoral engagements by infesting his own daughter with Vagina Vesico Fistula (VVF) as well as being humiliated publicly out of his position as the manager of his company while his accomplices such as Mrs Odebo and Miss Bharo (women) are allowed to walk freely in the streets and boast of their illicit affair with another woman's husband.

In *Our Wife Forever* Okoh vests her dramatic feminist antagonism against men most by using Victoria, the heroine of the play to bring patriarchy (as symbolized in the character of Chief Thomas Imodu) to ridicule and pillory. In an attempt to argue that patriarchy is a product of illiteracy and atavistic cultural practice, Okoh presents Prof. Tanka, an educated man as Victoria's ally in her fight against patriarchy and by extension, male domination. Expectedly and typical of Okoh's dramaturgy, Thomas (men), the antagonist in the play is wicked, heartless, inhuman, unsociable, flirtatious, greedy and bossy amongst other negative attributes. He is different from Okoh's conception of the "new man" who is caring, tolerant, respectful, friendly, humble and kind as exemplified in the character of Hector, Victoria's late husband and later, Prof. Tanka. Having assisted Victoria to defeat Thomas and his bogus patriarchal ideologies, Prof. Tanka unveils his protracted emotional feelings towards Victoria, his late friend's wife with the aim of marrying her. Prof. Tanka confesses his attraction to Victoria, thus:

FELIX: Yes. Well, I started to experience in me the rebirth of forgotten tender feelings. At first, I tried to repress them, but they started growing inside

me. I was confused and afraid. I didn't know where they were leading me. So, I decided to stop coming to your house, hoping that the distance would kill the feelings (Okoh, 2010, p. 86).

Felix's confession above suggests that he has been lusting over his late friend's wife but didn't know how to broach the subject to her *ab initio*. In this sense, it can be argued that Felix's resolve to assist Victoria in her fight against Thomas is not borne out of his genuine concern for a late friend's wife but the usual care and concern which men extend to women that they love and admire. The deduction here is that the marriage between Victoria and Felix in the end portends some form of moral and traditional breach as well as betrayal of trust since Felix is supposed to serve merely as a backbone and surrogate uncle to Victoria and her children. Tanka constitutes a prototype of Okoh's heroes for daring patriarchal values and lending his voice to the women struggle. It is ironical that such a character as Felix, with little or no regards for true friendship, would be accorded a heroic status. This can only be possible in Okoh's brand of feminist plays where women are saints and blameless and men, devils and culprits. It can also be argued further that Okoh deliberately yoked Felix and his late friend's wife in marriage in order to underscore the point that men are greedy and selfish to the ridiculous point of assisting their late friend's wives for a ransom-marriage.

Okoh's deflationary treatment of men in her plays transcends her feminist plays. In *Who Can Fight the Gods?*, the thematic emphasis is on university leadership and management, but Okoh deliberately rubs in the issue of gender just to buttress her saintly portrayal of women in a society where men are held responsible for all the social disorder. In this play, men are responsible for the corruption in the university system which should be a centre of excellence. The society of the play, as represented by the university convocation arena, is littered with dirt—a metaphor for corruption, which only women (First CWO, Second CWO and Third CWO) can clean as exemplified in the excerpt below:

FIRST CWO: ...This is not time to sit on the fence. This is not time to wag tongue and quarrel blindly among ourselves: Parity! Parity! Parity! This is time for us to unite to fight a common cause. SECOND CWO: Let us fight against corruption and injustice. THIRD CWO: Let us fight against megalomania, ostentation and wastage.

FIRST CWO: Let us fight for the poor, the homeless and defenceless.

SECOND CWO: Let us fight for the marginalized. THIRD CWO: Let us fight for development and progress...

FIRST CWO: There is strength in unity. When the going is tough...

SECOND AND THIRD CWO: Women get going! (Okoh, 2002, p. 80–81)

The deduction from the excerpt is that the social order which every sane society yearns for can only be actualized by the women. Again, Okoh demonstrates her sexist bias in *Who Can Fight the Gods?*—a play that was originally crafted to address the issue of corruption, social decay and moral bankruptcy that have enveloped the university system in Nigeria. In this play, Okoh demonstrates some traits of an opportunist by using every dramatic space and atmosphere at her disposal to drive home her uncompromising feminist bias. What has been lavishly expressed in this paper is that Okoh's dramaturgical corpus advocates for a new African traditional order where patriarchal values would be upturned in favour of pseudo-egalitarianism (a society where both sexes are treated as equals) with the women having a better moral and rational pedigree.

Conclusion

The business of this paper has been to examine and evaluate the depth of feminist bias in Okoh's dramaturgy. Drawing from a panoramic assessment of her works, the paper raises a strong argument as it presents Okoh's dramatic canvass as being biased in its portrayal of men as evil geniuses and devil's incarnates while women are most often exonerated of their crimes. It is against this backdrop that the paper argues that Okoh's extreme negative portrayal of male characters in her works, is an eloquent testimony of her uncompromising and unapologetic feminist stance. One apparent finding of this paper is that Okoh, in a bid to underscore the pitiable plight of the women folk in society, as evident in her plays, played to the gallery by making men appear worse than they are in real life. Whereas the paper acknowledges the need for writers, especially African writers, to be ideologically driven and committed in their works, it also cautions on the need for drama to always uphold the virtue of moderation and sincere reflections of the happenings in society. The paper advocates strongly the need for African writers to distinguish between ideological commitment and sexist sentiments. It also canvasses the need for feminist playwrights especially in Nigeria to always propagate the ideals of feminism rather than focus on the "odds" of patriarchy.

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The dramatist's dimensions in tackling child labour in Nigeria: the exemplar of Faith Ken-Aminipko's *Say no to child abuse*

ABSTRACT. It has been observed over the years that child labour has been a trending phenomenon in our society. It has also been noticed that poverty has driven a lot of parents and guidance to painfully force their children into early work. And this has caused a lot of hazards in our society especially Nigeria. It is on this note that this paper explains the reasons why children are forced to work, the effects of child labour upon our society, the causes of child labour, policies that have been made by government to impede it, types of child labour and how Nigerian Dramatist perceive the issue through their works. Lewis' "Culture of poverty theory" and Stouffer's "Relative deprivation theory" provide this paper with fibre and framework to interrogate the subject matter and provide the critical consciousness and promoting change of attitude. This research has its root in educating the minds of the people, enlightening the society on the dangers of child labour and creatively proffering solutions. Hence, the thrust of this research is to educate people on the danger of child labour and creating the desired awareness on the issue of child labour and the effects on our society. This paper adopts qualitative method of research since it will be engaged in much textual analysis. Following the methodology, this study summarises a finding which states that the prevalence of child labour in Nigeria is largely an internal problem with poverty, ignorance and bad government as leading causes. To this end, this study draws conclusion that the government, parents, institutions and the general public should cooperate in the best manner to put an end to child labour practice or reduce it to a bearable state. Further suggestions arouse at the end of this study.

KEYWORDS: Child Labour, Nigeria, Poverty, Childhood, Children's rights

Introduction

In Nigeria, as we may have it in any other nation of the world, many children's health, education and childhood are threatened and thereby put on the line by an evil phenomenon known as child labour. This

shows that children between ages of 5–17 heavily toil under long hours to earn a few naira which are usually too little for a meal despite the severity of the work. In most cases, they suffer close to their death in their homes and outside without proper reward simply because the society they find themselves either feel reluctance about them or believe that children too must work like adults do in order to meet up with the socio-economic and cultural expectations without considering keenly the effects on them and the society at large. No matter the reason why children work, child labour is a negative phenomenon that should be eliminated in order to secure the health of children socially, physically, mentally, morally and intellectually. This explains the severity of the problem and quickly brings to mind the question; what has the government, institution and even the general public done about it? Unfortunately, not enough have been done to ensure its dearth or decline. Such likely response explains the prevalence of the problem and as such requires a quick response.

From the global standpoint, child labour has been in existence through history, in Nigeria, it has long been harmonised and has become part and parcel of our traditional culture whereby a child is expected to help the parent in augmenting some basic duties of economic inclination especially in farming however, the difficult conditions under which children work occasionally today has become more evident in Nigeria. This perhaps may be as a result of the increasing industrialised society which began from the 19th century. The aftermath effect of the 1967–1970 Nigerian civil war and other social inadequacies in the country are closest responsible factors of child labour incidents in Nigeria. According to Edem;

Currently, child labour has become more visible because of the increase in the number of children producing goods for export. Most under-developed countries due to rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages (p. 149).

Edem's assertion creates the necessary impression that the apparentness of child labour is a problem emanating from within and as such may also be treated from within. Relatively, the possibility of addressing child labour problem may be large if only it will be granted the necessary attention it requires. This further explains the thought that many may have undermined its existence but its increasing rate as well as its consequent effect upon the Nigerian society have become an issue of serious

concern. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Nigeria in 2006:

A staggering 15 million children under the age of 14 are working across Nigeria exposed to long hour of work in dangerous and unhealthy environments carrying too much responsibility for their age. (http://www.unicef.org/Nigeria/children_1935.html)

To support the above, Borgen magazine in 2014 expresses the belief that 20 million Nigerian children are victims of child labour. This is to say that the child labour rate is daily on the increase meanwhile, child labourers are exposed to several dangers which affect them physically, mentally, medically, psychological and socially. Children are believed to be weak at the stage of childhood hence, are highly vulnerable to road risks as labourers. Consequently, common incidents such as rape, kidnap, road accident, and drug abuse are not far from what children suffer on account of child labour. This is a worrying fact and has attracted multiple attentions, especially from the international circles, apparently aware of the danger of child labour;

...the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989 came out with a convention on the Rights of a Child, which 198 countries including Nigeria endorsed. Earlier before 1973, the United Nations through its organ, the International Labour Organization in convention C138, had advised State parties to ensure a minimum age of employment, which usually should correspond to the age of leaving primary school (p. 150).

Regardless of the worries and warnings of the UN and other related bodies, the ridiculous sight of children under school age in most big cities, as well as rural villages today, trading food on the streets, herding animals, tanning and drying raw leather products, fetching water for commercial purposes, washing dishes at restaurants, serving as domestic hands, selling wares at kiosks, collecting firewood for business, harvesting crops in family farms or commercial plantations, amongst other activities is still on the increase. This worrying reality can be easily attributed to poverty with clear reasons that amongst poor families in Nigeria child labour is a major source of income. This may be of direct concern to child labourers and their relatives however; the apparentness of child labour and its effects upon the Nigerian society is a greater concern. This is because in its mere form, child labour appears weak and harmless as part of the social body but in actuality is a complex and de-

generating phenomenon. That is why Nwokoro aptly suggests that the phenomenon of Child Labour is arguably the tallest of social challenges as it impacts directly on school enrolment, attendance, completion rates as well as health rest, leisure and the general psychological disposition of children. This is a clear indication that the menace of child labour is a complex problem. It is of the interest of this research to examine the concept of child labour from the holistic angle-historical frameworks, causes and consequences on the individual, the family and the society at large. It will however attempt to proffer solutions to the condition.

This paper is set to educate both the young and the old the dangers of child labour and at the same time diagnose the problem and suggest treatments to the already harmed children. It will expose the danger of child labour in Nigeria through play text the role and the impact of dramatist in the fight against child labour and provide information on how to minimize child labour practice or completely discourage the practice of child labour in Nigeria.

It is an overheard statement that “children are the future of tomorrow” it is therefore crucial to engage in efforts that will enhance their well-being by drawing attention to their predicament. To this regard, this research is an attempt at improving the well-being of children because its attitude will stir institutions, the government and even the general public to the favour of children by discouraging the existence and growth of one of their greatest threat. By so doing, child labour and its related effect will be reduced to a barest minimum. To this end, the society will be a larger beneficiary because if children are given the best in all ramifications it is expected that they will equally deliver the best to the society.

Owing to the fact that the idea of child labour is a universal one, extremely broad and complex phenomenon, this paper limits itself to child labour in Nigeria. It shall therefore focus itself on the examination and analysis of child labour as well as an action against its practice as expressed and documented in the play texts; Faith Aminikpo’s *Say no to child abuse*.

Conceptual Framework

Child labour is any work or task undertaken by a child below the age of 18 with a view of being rewarded in cash or kind or for any other reason and which deprives him or her of good health, education, nutrition,

childhood and other important necessities. It is considered child labour because those under consideration are children within 18 years of age which is below adult and working age. Child labour has forced an unaccountable number of Nigerian children out of the comfort of their homes and out of school into the dreaded Nigerian labour market and beyond. It goes further to plague children with all kinds of ill-health including illiteracy and meanwhile it has been fought from many angles both internationally and locally. From the international circle, the United Nations and some of its sub-bodies like the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and others are relevant teams that have fought child labour existence for several decades. Locally, the Nigerian government, NGO's and philanthropists are also doing their bit in the same fight, however, child labour still remains an increasing menace bothering the society. Among Nigerian streets, motor parks and roads especially on traffic jams it is common to see children hawking, trading in stalls and begging for alms while others engage in domestic services, farm work and other menial jobs during school, siesta and sacred hours. Although, it is estimated around 15 to 20 million the actual amount of child labourers in Nigeria is still uncertain, meanwhile the reasons for its prevalence is a galactic and plural idea. The proceeding column will provide theoretical bases for child labour existence in Nigeria after a conceptual review of the topic.

Affirmatively, child labour as a concept bears various definitions from different individual scholars, group scholars and organisations according to their different experiences and understanding of it. The international Labour Organisation (ILO) defines child labour as;

Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity and is harmful to their physical and mental development. It refers to such work that is mutually, physically, socially, or morally hazardous to children and or interfere with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely, or requiring them to combine school attendance with an excessively long and heavy work load (<https://libguides.ilo.org>child-labour-en>).

The International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour defines the concept as:

Work situation where children are compelled to work on a regular bases to earn a living for themselves and their families and as a result are disad-

vantage educationally and socially; where children work in conditions that are exploitative and damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development; where children are separated from their families often deprived of educational training opportunities; where children are forced to lead prematurely adult lives (<https://libguides.ilo.org>child-labour-en>).

The United Nations International Children Emergency fund (UNICEF) submits that child labour:

Is a much narrower concept and refers to children working in contravention of ILO standards contained in Conventions 138 and 182. This means all children below 12 years are of age working in any economic activities, those aged between 12 and 14 engaged in more than light work, and all children engaged in worse form of child labour (<https://www.unicef.org>protection>files>).

Addition, the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), observes that child labour is work that is likely to be hazardous, or interfere with the child's education; or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, or spiritual development (CRC 1989, Art. 32; Nwokoro, 2011, p. 13).

From the foregoing definitions of child labour, what is observable is that opinions differ regarding "when and how" a particular work is to be truly regarded as harmful to the future of a child or even interferes with his well-being. However, one agreeable aspects of the various view on child labour is that of deprivation. Any work that deprive children of essential privileges and that hamper their future is negative and anti-development to children. Another concordance on child labour is that, it involves hard-works on children under severe and though circumstances. Hard work here refers to work that ordinarily goes beyond the limit of a child's physical and mental capacity. Another point to note is that child labour in its dangerousness, have the capacity of endangering the future of children. According to the definitions above, important to mention is that child labour is harmful to the development of children.

This lingering menace of child labour puts children under various forms and shades which are prominently under the economic umbrella. According to ILO convention;

Child labourers would refer to children younger than 12 who are economically active; children 12 years old engaged in more that light work; and all children engage in the worse forms of child labours in which they are ens-

laved, forcibly, recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into legal activities or exposed to hazards (Nwokoro, 2011, p. 13).

The above gives an impression that children engaged in child labour do so in order to attract some kind of reward even though they are sometimes forced to do so. Drawing from the above is to sharply say that child labourers are not just products of the poor and wretched class but also of the less privileged. This premise will lead us to the theoretical bases of child labour.

From the theoretical level it is essential to draw our minds back to the forces that are responsible for child labour incidents. From the beginning, just as expressed earlier in the foregoing column, children with their parents usually engage in work-related activities which were mostly domestic, family establishments. Such activities were seen as normal; being part of the child's socialization process, but today, all that have changed. Fyfe captured this change in cultural attitude by saying:

Child labour was once common and considered morally acceptable in many industrializing societies. Attitudes about work and childhood have undergone a great transformation since the late 18th century however, in many countries; the notion that children should work has been rejected. Within the developing world where child labour often remains prevalent, such attitudes about childhood and child labour often still persists (p. 151).

This change however, excluding poverty and other related issues can be attributed to newer factors such as industrialisation and massive population growth. As Nigeria became industrialised and with an increase industrial activities all over the country, coupled with her heavy population growth, the incidents of child labour is not only increasing but is also overwhelming in its eminence. According to Lopez, in an attempt to meet with the growing rate of industrialization, especially in developing countries like Asia and Latin America, they found it expedient to engage children in labour. Wright, expressed a similar view in his article "The Littlest Victims of Global Progress". He comments that the drive by Thailand to join the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICS) of Asia impacts heavily on the children (p. 151). These views are not only to proof the point above but to also say calmly that due to a general need for man power following the massive growth in industrialization which is in alignment with the massive unemployment rate, poverty and the need to survive child labour case becomes a developing menace.

Expectedly, children from wealthy and comfortable homes can be hardly seen today engaging in works synonymous with child labour. This perhaps is due to their status of privilege and some level of comfort. While this remains a standing point, children from extremely poor background are not only denied of some essential privileges as in; education, good parental care and other childhood privileges but also suffer bigger mayhem in their efforts for self survival. Most times they suffer from mental related sickness such as; stigmatization from the press and public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and irritability, personality disorders and anti-social behaviour, and alienation and isolation from their family (p. 152). Arends-kuenning equally concurs when he observe that;

It also has a significant negative effect upon the level of education, school attendance, grades, literacy, leisure time, and overall human capital formation of the child worker (p. 152).

In a nut shell, it is expected that children of this description due to huge deprivation make up child labourers in our society today. In view of this, it is of essence in this study to bring to limelight the theoretical issues of child labour. The research shall be examined with the application of Lewis' "Culture of Poverty theory" and Stouffer's "Relative Deprivation Theory".

The culture of poverty is a concept in social theory that asserts that the values of people experiencing poverty play a significant role in upholding their poverty-stricken condition, sustaining a circle of poverty across generations. It was proposed by Oscar Lewis an American Anthropologist, in the late 1950s and although it was heavily criticised in the 1970s by scholars it maintained and made a significant comeback in the 21st century. It offers one way to explain why poverty exists despite anti-poverty programmes. Early proponents of the theory argued that the poor are not only lacking resources but also acquire a poverty-perpetuating life pattern. According to Oscar Lewis, "The subculture [of the poor] develops mechanisms that tend to perpetuate it, especially because of what happens to the world-view, aspirations, and character of the children who grow up in it" (p. 191). The latter struggled to render "the poor" as legitimate subjects whose lives were transformed by poverty. This explains a simple theory of "generational fluidity" being that a child who is born and breed in a poor home is likely to remain so and even transfer to his future kids. Lewis developed this concept from

his field work experience among the urban poor in Mexico and Puerto Rico and contends thus:

The people in the culture of poverty have a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of not belonging. They are like aliens in their own country, convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs. Along with this feeling of powerlessness is a widespread feeling of inferiority, of personal unworthiness. This is true of the slum dwellers of Mexico City, who do not constitute a distinct ethnic or racial group and do not suffer from racial discrimination. In the United States the culture of poverty that exists in the black community has the additional disadvantage of perceived racial discrimination. People with a culture of poverty had very little sense of history. They are a marginal people who know only their own troubles, their own local conditions, their own neighbourhood, their own way of life. Usually, they have neither the knowledge, the vision nor the ideology to see the similarities between their problems and those of others like themselves elsewhere in the world. In other words, they are not class conscious, although they are very sensitive indeed to status distinctions. When the poor become class conscious or members of trade union organizations, or when they adopt an internationalist outlook on the world they are, in my view, no longer part of the culture of poverty although they may still be desperately poor (p. 204).

The latter also submits that the "culture of poverty" theory has the following elements on; the level of individual, the parents, care givers and guardians who experience the above feelings suffer from weak ego structures, lack impulse control and show little ability to defer gratification, have a sense of resignation, fatalism and an unstable family structure (p. 206). These qualities therefore make them to believe that the only source for hope is by giving out their children to labour with a view to earning extra income for the upkeep of the family. In Nigeria, the poor often develop various strategies by which they cope with their conditions in form of doing things their own ways. These feelings compel them to take actions and engage in many activities that will ensure a quick escape from the realities of poverty, one of which is child labour. It is seen as a normal way since it is common among them. Even the children themselves may in subsequent times compel their own children to embrace child labour so that they do likewise as they did and this will continue with succeeding generations.

Pettigrew submits that the Relative Deprivation theory is credited to sociologist Samuel Stouffer, who developed the approach while studying

social psychology during World War II. Stouffer found that soldiers of that era measured their personal success not with the standards set by the military but on the experience they had within their individual units. Take, for example, a private in the Military Police and an Air Force private. In addition to their rank, they both also have the same level of education and have been in the military for the same amount of time. Despite their likenesses, the Air Force private feels a sense of deprivation due to the nature of rapid promotions in the Air Force; he has not acquired a promotion yet and feels deprived. However, the private in the Military Police does not have this same sense of deprivation because in his unit promotions are not as prevalent. Peter Townsend gives a clearer explanation:

Relative deprivation is the lack of resources to sustain the diet, lifestyle, activities and amenities that an individual or group are accustomed to or that are widely encouraged or approved in the society to which they belong.

Simanda informs that measuring relative deprivation allows an objective comparison between the situation of the individual or group compared to the rest of society. Relative deprivation may also emphasize the individual experience of discontent when being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled, however emphasizing the perspective of the individual makes objective measurement problematic.

Drawing from the above, and in relation with child labour case it is relative to say that one who is unsatisfied with a feeling of discontent is almost a choice less fellow and is capable of doing anything within his limited reach to attain some level of satisfaction in his frustration. This sought of individual is deprived and also suffer neglect that is why Graham and Martins make bold to say the following:

Physical neglect can be defined as failure to provide the necessity of life for a child. The lack medical care, adequate nourishment, appropriate clothing, supervision and adequate housing are all factors that constitute neglect. Where to draw a line between neglect and a low, but adequate standard of care is more difficult. It may be that social workers and health visitors who are overexposed to deprived families become more accepting of lower standards (Hall & Martin, 1993, p. 9).

Such level of neglect is a social issue being that there is a strict display of social stratification wherein, there is the upper class, middle

class and low class who suffer the highest social neglect. This low class of poor citizens find it very difficult to survive since they are lacking heavily in both primary and secondary human requirements for living. Being in this state is indeed dangerous and can result to various negative effects including physical, psychological, and medical. The worse of all is perhaps psychological since it affects the mind box and mentality. Victims of this condition think very little but to survive.

The theory of Relative Deprivation also highlight on "relativeness". In view of the subject of discuss, it is needful to say that those who are poor and considered deprived plays a mental game of comparison. This simply explains a measure of condition and living standard by the poor against those considered wealthy. By comparing, they see themselves in a very weak position and may get more frustrated. Relative deprivation theory flags a point which state that "one is only deprived when he finds himself in a situation of lack when some others are not lacking". This is just the case of child labour, if one is not lacking he or she will hardly seek presence in hard and difficult labour involvements and conditions.

Child Labour History in Nigeria

Child labour has a long history; it exists in both rural and urban areas in various forms such as street trading, gardening, child caring, handicraft, house chores, prostitution and trafficking etc. Leading factors such as poverty, ignorance, culture, corruption, in effective laws and lack of will to enforce them are some causes of child labour. Although, the phenomenon of child labour is known to exist in virtually all parts of the world, the prevalence is very high in sub-Saharan Africa especially in Nigeria, the most populous black nation of the world with an estimated population of 170 million people. Typically, child labour is an age-long practice in the history of mankind. It has existed in various forms and in various parts of the world since ancient times. There are various conjecturing or claims by various scholars as regards the history of child labour. Nwokoro asserts that;

The earliest form of child labour is perhaps slavery which was big business, as it both created and relied on the support network of big merchants and some well placed members of the societies where it flourished (Nwokoro, 2011, p. 14).

For Lana Osment, tradition or culture is a responsible factor for child labour. Many societies have it in their culture that children in their growing age are liable to work and so are high responsibilities. Older generations assumes that children need to learn skills for the good of their future (Osment, 2014, p. 20).

The foregoing are claims of the history of child labour, and there are many more out there. This nuances in child labour history has made it difficult to reach an agreeable point regards its history. In Nigeria, it has never been easy to know the definite beginning or history of child labour because of the inefficiency in documentation in the prehistoric era. However, the origin of child labour can be traced to some factors/concepts.

Culture and tradition: The researcher in this study, shares a side with Lana Osment's view that child labour history can be traced to traditions and cultures of many societies. In Nigeria, many tribes or people have it in their culture to make children start work at a very young age. In Igbo culture of Nigeria for instance, where yam production is a major agricultural engagement, parents engage their children in farm duties at young age to support as man power. Obinna and Osita-Oleribe assume that many families in Africa want their children to help in contributing towards family income (Osment, 2014, p. 21). Apart from the Igbos, the Yoruba and Hausa races in Nigeria encourage young children as a matter of culture to engage in work. Just like earlier said, this cultural practice was not seen as evil, but was only a part of a child's training to become economically and socially responsible. Hence, this cultural practice (child labour) made children learn from their parent's occupational skills and crafts for the good of their future.

Poverty: Is not an alien phenomenon of man-kind from the prehistoric era till date. Therefore, poverty as an ageless phenomenon has a link and hence, shares much history with child labour in Nigeria. Many families in Nigeria live below the poverty line and so apart from engaging children in family duties as earlier observed, children from poor families are lured or prone to do certain things to survive on their own or with their family. Many have heard stories where parents send their children away to live with strangers as maid servants, messengers, cleaners, and other menial jobs. Poor parents often do this in order to reduce the load of responsibility from their shoulders and sometimes to generate income for survival. This practice of giving out children still hovers in today's Nigeria as it was in history. In fact, in olden days it shifted from

just child giving to slave trade as some parents had to sell their children in order to make ends meet. Nwokoro (2011, p. 14) may not be wrong when he conjures that slavery is responsible for the earliest form of child labour. Akamo and Mtwewe may also be right in their suggestion that poverty may not just be responsible for child labour origin or history but also a leading factor and driving force of the epidemic of child labour in today's world as they observe that tackling poverty can be a perfect solution to reducing child labour.

Civil War: War is world phenomenon that is highly negative to mankind and with its consuming ability is capable of mass destruction. The Nigerian civil war that spanned between July 1967–January 1970 is largely synonymous with the description above as its destructiveness claimed millions of lives, destroyed properties worth millions and displaced thousands all over the nation. As an originating factor of child labour, the Nigerian civil war destroyed the economy of the country, more resources were directed to the war and so people became poorer. What is even worse was that lots of children were separated from their parents and so had to survive on their own. Osakwe and Lipede posit that;

The loss of parents during the war placed on children the demands of early and unprepared responsibility. Some children were victims of the war while others were voluntary or forced child soldiers (Osakwe & Lipede, 2017, p. 65).

In addition, Amnesty International (2007) estimated that there are 300 thousand child soldiers in the world, actively involved in fighting in more than thirty countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Columbia and Afghanistan. Some of them have been victims of torture and some are beaten to make sure they obey orders. The availability of light and cheap weapons means that children age ten or even younger are some time used to fight. Children have also been forced to kill members of their own families, and female child soldiers have been raped or used to provide sexual services (Haranlambos & Holborn, 2008, p. 758).

Although, at the close of the war in 1970, the Nigerian economy improved drastically following the oil boom that brought about a super-increased revenue, the war still had a major effect on children as the internally displaced children scattered all over the country had to survive and by the surest means child labour.

Causes of Child Labour in Nigeria

A number of remote and immediate causes as proposed by different researchers are responsible causes or factors of child labour incidents. Prominent among them are:

Poverty: Is in fact, the biggest and greatest cause of child labour. Sunandamma affirms in her article *Child Labour, Social and Economic Realities which effecting Child Development* that;

The most important cause of wide spread child labour is the chronic poverty which forces the parents to send their children to seek employment. Parents are not only incapable of investing in their children's development due to poverty, also reluctant to support them and want them to start learning as soon as possible (Sunandamma, 2014, p. 2).

The above line of thought may be considered true since poverty is highly depriving in nature. The National Human Development Report sees poverty as "A state of long term deprivation of those essential materials and non-material attributes of well-being which are considered necessary for a decent living". (NHDR 2008–2009). (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdrs2010/news/africa/>)

Nwokoro also submit thus;

Child poverty which involves deprivation of young people below the age of 18 has been identified as a major development challenge in recent years (Nwokoro, 2011, p. 19).

Child labours as supported by the foregoing body of thoughts holds poverty firmly as its major initiator. Basically, a poor home is left with little choice; what is important is just about survival and nothing else. Hence, in the bid to survive, different approaches may be needed and child labour is above the most prominent. Poverty is a leading figure in developing and under-developed nations of the world. This simple explains why child labour plagues these countries including Nigeria who is fully a member of countries in this category. It has been observed that an increase in house hold income and rising standard of living brings about significant decline in child labour trends (Edmond, qtd in Nwokoro, 2011, p. 18). This is a clear indication that the incidence of child labour faces a major decline in countries with developing economy as in the case of Malaysia, India, and China.

Illiteracy: Is a global anomaly which generally explains the inability to read and write, this ailment is also linked to child labour as one of its major causes. In Nigeria, illiteracy rate is still on the high side. Nwokoro observes thus; "Illiteracy rate in Nigeria is still said to be high as the country ranked 118th in educational attainment with males disproportionately higher than females" (Nwokoro, 2011, p. 20).

Illiterate parents develop a high tendency of sending their children to engage in paid works than literate parents who are less likely to do. Observably too, illiteracy and poverty are tied friends. However, the incidence of child labour is prone to reduce considerably if parents take keen decision concerning their children's welfare and consider their education as a primary concern.

Culture: Is primarily the way of life of a people transferred from one generation to another. Although, it changes through time, it retains some important element of its identity. In Nigeria, different tribes and culture directly and indirectly pose a leading role to the cause of child labour. For instance, in the northern part of the country where child labour flourished greatly, it is widely observed that little children below 10 years of age go about rearing cattle, trekking long distances and covering kilometres as they graze. In the same geographical terrain, there are evidence of "almajiranci system" an Islamic culture where very little children are trained and encourage by (Mallam) adult guidance to go about begging for money and other things; and return back at the day's end and account for their gains. This practice makes for a method of sourcing income. More so, in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, among the Igbos there is a belief that children must begin early in life to learn and acquire important skills for the future. Hence, children follow their parents to farms, market, paid jobs, stream etc. This practice however, in its initial state was to teach children and not for just profit derivation sake but today following independence and the heightened state of corruption in Nigeria which had brought about poverty and social inequality, the early practice of child work have transfigured into child labour with a high growing effect.

Poor government regulation as regard child labour: Observably, today there are various existing and developing laws and policies which if properly applied and implemented will considerably help to reduce the practices of child labour. According to Nwokoro (2011, p. 24) the following are examples;

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) of the United Nations. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 12(3), which seeks to ensure that all citizens have adequate security, suitable employment with just conditions of work, freedom and protection from exploitation and abuse.

The Child Right Act (CRA) of 2003, which provides for the protection of children against discrimination, harmful and exploitative practices such as child marriage, prostitution and child Labour etc. The Education for All (EFA), of 1990 which seeks to guarantee quality education for all Nigerians of school age. The Universal Primary Education packaged by the Military Government in 1976 to develop the educational capacity of Nigerians The Universal Basic Education of 1999, which made the first 9 years of schooling both free and compulsory for all Nigerian children of primary school age. The Adult Literacy Program which targeted adult illiterate. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003, provides for the prohibition and prescription of punishment for traffic in persons, particularly women and children. However, corruption, weak institutions, poor funding, and lack of will to execute and implement are the scourge of these laws and policies in Nigeria.

Unemployment: Due to Nigeria's economic state, unemployment is a growing disease. It is the lack of job opportunities for the proportion of labour force available for work and is linked to the high prevalence of child labour in Nigeria. Parents who are unemployed easily encourage their children to engage in work in order to generate income. This situation is prominent in urban centres like Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Aba etc. and female children appears to be more engaged in it than their male counterpart.

Large family size: In the earlier days in African society large household size is used to qualify the wealth and social-status of a man. Courtesy of this practice is in the Igbo tribe where polygamy was a common practice. In recent times, the case is different and even widely spread given that the appearance of large family size amongst Nigerian families today is prominent among the middle class and low class citizens. The reason for this reality is unclear however, according to Nwokoro (2011, p. 22) many research are of the opinion that one possible reason parents in developing countries have many children is because they believe children can be profitable economically as they seem to be much less economic burden in a developing versus developed countries.

High infant death rate is another reason for large family size. More so, amongst the low class child birth is believed to be the reason for marriage. They may as well be other reasons for the appearance of large family size, however, what is important is the social reality of today whereby large families who live below average sees it necessary to send their numerous children out for work in order to meet up home demands.

Early loss of parents, destitute, bastard, and orphan children: Children within this category most times suffer negligence and helplessness from the society. And since one of man's ultimate will is survive, abandon children must survive by either working menial jobs, prostituting, hawking/street trading, begging etc. This social reality today in Nigeria is a cause of child labour incident.

Types of Child Labour

Child labourers in Nigeria are engaged in various work activities. Prominent among them are: Prostitution, Street trading/ hawking, Agricultural labour/Industrial labour, Vehicle loaders and bus conductors, Domestic keepers, Child begging, Child criminals etc.

Child begging

This has negative psychological, social and health consequences. The three categories of child beggars are—those who lead blind parents or relatives, those who beg entirely on their own and those who act as fronts for their parents, especially mothers, who are usually hidden from public view but supervise them from a close distance. These children are the most vulnerable because they are from families of the poorest of the poor. In all three categories, they run enormous risks of running or darting between cars in heavy traffic putting them in dangers of accidents. They also suffer the severe psycho-social consequences of engaging in demeaning type of activity and being exposed to constant abuse and aggression from the general public. In the southern part of Nigeria, begging was not significant though among the Yoruba's, it was culturally expected that mothers with many children would beg (normally for a few days) as a symbolic expression of their willingness to demean

themselves for the survival of the children. In recent times however, this has changed as beggars can be spotted in several cities. Begging is most wide-spread in the North where alms giving widely regarded as a religious obligation. The largest percentage here belongs to the almajiranci system—a semi-formal system of qu’ranic education, in which children mostly boys are sent by their parents to take up residence with Islamic teachers or mallamai for instructions in the qu’ran and other texts.

Prostitution/sexual exploitation

Commercial sexual exploitation has become a problem of special concern in Nigeria, both because of its scale and links with commercial trafficking in women and girls and because of its role in the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic now sweeping the country. Though studies on it is scarce owing to its undercover nature and the shy nature and attitude of people to make discussions on it. It has been widely observed that in most commercial cities of Nigeria such as Port Harcourt, Calabar, Owerri, Lagos and other parts of the country child prostitution is common. Surveys carried out between 1989 and 1993 by the West African Research Group on sexual Networking Orubuloye et.al (Betelwhobel & Undyaundeye, 2009, p. 7) identified the characteristics of commercial sex workers in five cities—Lagos, Ado-Ekiti and Benin, in for the west, Port Harcourt in the South and Kaduna in the North. The commercial sex workers were found in hotels, brothels, bars and streets, many below twenty years and comparatively educated. They operated outside their local governments, from different ethnic groups, most of them were single (separated or divorced). Those who had children were left with grandmothers in their local areas and there was tendencies to have them originate from Polygamous homes. They were on the average found to have about thirty clients a week. The clients were both single and married.

Child Labour in Agricultural Sector

Most child labour occurs in agriculture and in the informal sector of the economy, where these and other provisions of the Labour act neither are neither monitored nor enforced. Child labour in this sector by a stu-

dy has shown areas like Ondo, Ado Ekiti, Ibadan and others, areas as destinations of these children. Some of them are engaged in such humiliating practices related to slavery such as a sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and forced labour.

Vehicle loaders and bus conductors

In bus stations and motors parks across cities of Nigeria, children especially males are usually seen amongst many activities surrounding such environment calling passengers for taxis and buses, many carry bigger responsibilities as bus conductors. This is a trending reality that subject children to great risks in the Nigerian express where a lot of bad things happen. Apart from road risks of accident and robbery, children in this category are exposed to hash weather conditions and are at the mercy of kidnappers.

These are the major manifestation of child labour cases and types in Nigeria. Others include: child trading which involves the act of hawking and engaging in all forms of trade activities as in the case of urban centres, child criminal which engages children in drug trafficking, "Yahoo" and other illicit activities; domestic keepers which see children working as maids and servants in homes, small business outlets and others.

Synopsis of the Play

The play *Say no to child abuse* centres on the deviants happenings perpetuated by Mrs Braye and her team of workers at St. Mumbasa Orphanage and the suffering of the parentless children at the orphanage. Spotlight is on a set of twin children Nelly and Nelson who were abandon on their birth, years ago at the gate of St. Mumbasa Orphanage home. Nelly and Nelson amongst other children suffer malnutrition, maltreatment, force child labour and general abuse from Mrs Braye and her attendants who are driven by greed and wickedness. Further abuse is rendered by a foster father who instead of protecting Nelly by seeing to her needs and desires decides to defile her sexually after which, she is thrown out of the house. However, this level of wickedness and abuse witness some levels of justice as Mrs. Braye runs out of luck. The police put her on arrest for engaging the children in child labour and trafficking

instead of taking good care of them, with the relieve items donated by good citizens and well-wishers. The story is complicated further as Mrs. Inemo, the mother of the abandoned twin returns after many years to claim her children.

Plot Analysis

Conventionally, every drama has an order or arrangement of which the events or happenings must follow so as to create a meaningful impact on the audience. In view of this, plot is that element that drives the concept of the playwright following the interpretative ability of the actors on stage. Hence, in accordance to Aristotle's interpretation, plot is the sequential arrangement of incidents in an art (drama). It is the soul of drama. The plot of *Say no to child abuse* runs like this:

Opens with a prologue where children sit in a classroom, receiving lectures from their teacher. The question and answer session on child violation leads the teacher to telling them a story of St. Mumbasa's Orphanage. At the orphanage, the first that is shown is the set of abandon twin at the entrance which are taken in by two attendants. Ten years later, the twin children Nelly and Nelson were divided as a foster parent Mr and Mrs James adopts Nelly for a fee of 1.5 million naira. Three months after Nelly's adoption, Mrs Braye begins to engage the other children in child labour practice by forcing them to go out in the street to hawk petty items (Banana) meanwhile, they suffer under-feeding. In the process of their trading activity, one of them named Mabel encountered a bad individual who lured her with a trick of buying all her goods and then rapes her.

As the story unfolds, Nelly also encounters same fate with Mabel as her foster father Mr James rapes her. To this effect, Mrs James throws her out of the house claiming she seduces her husband. Nelly in her devastated disposition return to St. Mumbasa Orphanage and is slightly accepted by Mrs Braye while the children sympathize with her. This same occasion witness Mrs Braye and the attendants sharing items of donation brought by visitors for the children. The next action is the apprehension of some children from St Mumbasa Orphanage by police officers for hawking on the street during school hours. And the last is the arrest of Mrs Braye for her deep involvement in child abuse and treachery and Mrs Inemo the mother of Nelly and Nelson for neglect and abandonment.

Plot structure

As earlier stated, plot is the sequential arrangement of events or happenings in a play from the beginning, middle to the end. This form of arrangement is the make-up of plot structure; it can either be climatic or episodic. An episodic plot structure, takes over a long period of time and also do not obey the law of three unity as stipulated by structure their plays using this structure are worse because the incidents happens without proper necessary sequence. (p. 18) Whereas, the climatic plot structure is designed with an exposition, climax and resolution, few setting and obeys the unity of time, place and action. In plays of this structure, shortly after the climax comes the resolution. In view of the above, *Say no to child abuse* as authored by Faith-Ken Aminikpo is of the climatic plot structure with the following reasons.

This one act play with eight (p. 8) scenes centres its action at St Mumbasa Orphanage home even though two actions happened outside the vicinity. This is to state that the plays setting is restricted hence, limited. More so, in terms of time and action, there is an agreement with climatic plot structure being that although, there is reference to a sharp shift in time after scene one as the stage direction indicates "Ten years later" and in scene three direction which indicates "Three years later" majority of the happenings takes effect at St Mumbasa Orphanage. Also, it is discovered that if exposition is the introduction of the plays character and situation, it is noted that from the beginning to the middle (where the climax is) the play is stretched and falls immediately after the climax. From the above, it is registered that the plot structure obeys the three unity of: place, time, action.

Character in *Say no to child abuse*

Characters are dramatic personae created to carry out dramatic action in a work of art. Every dramatic art cannot function without the employment of characters, because they serve as the vehicle that carries the concept, idea and ideologies of the playwright to the audience through their dialogue and action.

Character is a very fundamental element of drama and works closely with the plot being that, it is through the character that plot develops proper arrangement. According to Aristotle in his *Poetics*, characters

reveal civil life (man's action) and moral purpose (imitation). Characters imitate life hence, dwells on imitation. The following are the characters in *Say no to child abuse*: Mrs Braye, Mrs Inemo, Mr James, Mrs James, Nelson, Nelly, Sunday, Mabel, Young-man, Teacher, Pupils (Joy, Junior, Henry, and Prince), Miss Lilly, Mr Daniel, Police Officer, Orphanage Inmates.

The following characters were designed by the playwright to portray different characterization. Characterization is the manner a character is being portrayed in a play. Characterization is what relates or distinguishes one character from another. It also explains how a character lives his life differently in the plays world. Importantly, it is the construct of the playwright. More so, since character carries emotions of several kinds including pity and fear, characterization becomes that interpretation style a character embodies. Is the character a Protagonist or an Antagonist? That will be known through characterization.

In summary, characterization defines a character's physical attributes (height, sex, age, complexities etc) social status (profession, family, relationship and religious background) psychological state and moral value. It creates a general idea or conception of an individual in a play.

Thematic Thrust

Thematic thrust defines the overriding idea in a play. Therefore, the overriding idea in the play *Say no to child abuse* is child neglect and abuse. Children in the play who are the main subject suffered from various forms of abuse which includes; malnutrition, maltreatment, under-feeding, deprivation of education, unnecessary beating and assault, oral abuse (foul use of words on them), neglect, rape, child labour, trafficking and lack of parenthood. Among the listed item of child abuse, trafficking and labour appears to be the focus in the play. On an occasion, Mrs Braye traffics a child, named John, to a ritual killer in the play. More so, is the use of children in St. Mumbasa Orphanage as hawkers to sell petty items.

This unlikely act exposes children to lots of danger and as kids who are not yet responsible to themselves is very vulnerable and so can be easily taken advantage of just like the case of Mabel, a 13 year old orphan who suffered rape from a young man on one of her hawking expeditions, courtesy of Mrs Braye. Nelly also suffered rape on account of adoption by Mr James. Mr James raped her to satisfy himself and Mrs James sent her packing without listening to any explanation. The high level of child mal-

treatment and abuse comes to play so cheaply on account of the children's condition, weakness and vulnerability. They were exploited by Mrs Braye and her team. The worse is that even when the philanthropist aid the orphanage, Mrs Brayer diverts everything for her selfish pocket. This is to state clearly that a big stake of the children's suffering of abuse is hinged on the greed of Mrs Braye and the attendants.

Sunday: "See the way mummy and all the attendants are sharing the provision meant for our upkeep" (Aminikpo, 2017, p. 20).

Style and Technique

The author's choice of words, sentence structure, figurative language, and sentence arrangement all work together to establish mood, image and meaning in text. Style describes how the author describes events, objects and ideas. It could be original, formal, or informal.

Therefore, in *Say no to child abuse* the author's style reflects simplicity and originality in word usage. Formalized use of words is also employed. Most of the characters in the play especially the children tries to be expressive and so the writer attaches them with simple terms that are easily comprehensible in order for them to effective express their torment and suffering. They sounded original too even though their speech seems formal.

Sunday: But ma, we have not eaten since this morning.

Mrs Braye: What? (Gets up and slap him) you are very stupid! Why didn't your parents thought about it before they dumped a miserable child like you? Can you talk to your parent like this? Idiot? Now will you get out of my sight before I kill you? (Aminikpo, 2017, p. 14).

Both Sunday and Mrs Braye speech shows originality because their innermost thought is what played out. However, they were a bit formal in that the lines tries to obey the law of English Language.

Societal Relevance

One of the major assignments of written plays is to impact changes on the lives of its audience. Drama therefore, stands to educate, edify while entertaining. Aminikpo's *Say no to child abuse* is very relevant to

our society because the major issue raised in the play is not just a global one but a peculiar one in our immediate society. Child abuse is a problematic phenomenon with an intense negative effect on the society, but yet people still practice it in full-fledged.

Conclusion

This research is carefully carried out to probe into the problem of child labour in Nigeria. Child labour phenomenon is a fact in our society and has apparent effects upon the Nigerian citizenry; some have already been address in the foregoing chapters. Specifically, this column is aimed at noting salient points and significant findings before administering recommendations. This study discovered the following: Child labour as an offshoot of child abuse is an evident social ill. Child labour as a global phenomenon engages children below age 17 in unlikely and disfavoured work conditions. Although, child labour is a global issue many people in Nigeria are ignorant of its nature and vices. Child labour in Nigeria is a growing disease. Child labour is not just terrorising to its victims (children) but even the general public suffers as well from the sickening effects now and in the nearest future. The problem of child labour in Nigeria is overlooked or undermined by many ignorantly not considering its impediment to national development. Poverty, illiteracy, large family size, culture amongst others is relative factors and causes of child labour. Corruption amongst public administrators has affected various efforts both locally and internationally to tackle the issue of child labour. There are various policies and laws stipulated locally and internationally to control child labour incidents but they appear weak due to poor implementation and follow up by the law enforcement agency. Those that engage in child labour are economically and socially deprived. Child labourers due to vulnerability and irresponsibleness often indulge in negative activities or criminal involvements, such as prostitution, armed-robbery, and pick pocketing, all of which can lead to arrest, imprisonment, maiming or even death by mob action.

To begin any statement here is to comfortably say that the issue of child labour is not just a problem for those who may be involved in it either as victims or as initiators/instigators. Child labour is a social ill and as such is a concern for all whether rich or poor, adult or children. It is also important to say that parents who instigate their children to

engage in inappropriate work because of economic or some other reasons should desist from such act because whatever result it may bring is more harmful than good to them and to the larger society. Children are the leaders of tomorrow and so the future may suffer if our supposed leaders are in their childhood deprived of essential ingredients to make up good individuals and countrymen to take up the future and move it to a greater height. This is an impending issue and so government and reliable stake holders should create more awareness, solutions and alternatives to the practice, and establish stiff penalties for those who may insist on defaulting. In addition, the researcher is appealing to the general public to desist from this ill practice and join hands with the government as critical stakeholders in tackling it. Just like what the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children Emergency Funds (UNICEF), United Nations (UN) and other organisations are doing today, more should follow suit to see that issues like this be extinguished completely from the society of man.

Playwrights and dramatist has also done greatly to have been able to fish out hidden realities facing children in Nigeria today as they UN-preferentially engage in child labour practice. Thanks to the likes of Faith Ken-Aminikpo and others who deemed it fit to address this bordering issue through their dramatic art, more of this should be encourage as they act as awareness strategy to facing this problem. It is on a closing note that the researcher will like to observe that the needs of children must be considered first above all priorities. It is essential that children and youth be sound and well prepared in body and mind for the task of tomorrow. Their child hood, education and other related privileges should not be traded for anything else. This task is a concern for all; government, organisations, institutions, the general public etc. In UNISON we can make our society a better place for all.

Way forward

Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of child Labour is a rising challenge that must essentially be overcome for a better and more developed society. Therefore, having made several findings in the previous column the researcher in this column will administer the following recommendations:

Policies and laws against child labour occurrences should be treated with strict seriousness.

Since poverty is one of the greatest causes of child labour incident then, the government should install more focus on the economic sector; develop more industries by diversifying into different economic areas and engage Nigerians (Not foreigners/expert rates) to do most of the jobs thereby, reducing unemployment rate.

Many a time, engagement in child labour seems to be more of a survival strategy than real preference hence, the government as well as NGO's should provide cheap or free platform where children can engage in acquiring good skills and education. This will disengage them from idleness and improper activities and expose them to a veritable platform for gaining knowledge that will be beneficial to their future.

Particular attention must be given to the education sector on account of its importance in human capital formation of the citizens. Federal budgetary allocation to the sector should be increased at both the national, state and local levels to secure adequate funding. A situation where school tuition is made free for both primary and secondary education will go a long way to reducing child labour incidents.

Since large family sizes is also a cause of child labour then, efforts from government and NGOs should be committed towards addressing issues of reproductive health and family planning. Religion plays a fundamental role in this regard and as such government may liaise with various religious groups to ensure that resource persons who are knowledgeable about the effective and acceptable family planning method are adequately available and create forums for teaching their adherents accordingly.

Young people and couples should ensure that they adequately prepared to fulfil the obligations of parenthood before giving birth to children.

More so, the government should put in place effective safety measures to see that children born out of wedlock (victims of broken marriage, bastard, displaced children, orphans etc) do not rely on their own but on the provisions of the government; social/charity homes.

Government and stake holders should be committed towards investing to reduce maternal mortality. This will reduce the rate of motherless and abandoned children.

International agencies, NGOs, CSOs, Town Unions, religious and social bodies should continue to mobilize for resource allocation, effective advocacy, research, capacity building, and public debate to develop strategies, fashion intervention policies and more to ensure that child labour issues meets a major decline and if possible an eventual death.

The media should intensify and create more enlightenment campaigns to let both children and parents understand that child Labour is a misnomer and that the best place for the child to work is in school.

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Prisms of perceiving femininity. Theoretical and empirical reflections

ABSTRACT. Within centuries femininity and its understanding have been the subject of numerous observations and analyses. Over the past decades its shape has been gradually becoming outdated and transformed. This article reflects on the prisms of perceiving femininity. It refers to two theories: essentialism and social constructivism. The aim of such considerations is to show the changes of the role and place of women in society (in the light of current norms, trends, opportunities and socio-cultural transformations).

KEYWORDS: Woman, Femininity, Socialization, Social Roles, Stereotypes, Essentialism, Social Constructivism

Throughout the centuries, women and their place in society were the object of many observations and analysis. Women's identity and issues related to their social roles is analyzed in an academical discourse in the field of female studies so called *women's studies* or *gender studies*. This article treats about femininity in the broad sense of the word, its evolution and—what's the most important—our current understanding of this term. I'll try to clarify what is hidden under the notion of femininity now, how we understand and perceive women, what influences this perception and how it evolved through the centuries.

It seems that women's issues and the broad conception of femininity are very elusive and difficult to analyze from regular social frameworks. The tendencies of femininity, as well as those of masculinity, are constantly evolving, becoming an inseparable and distinct part of a fluent modernity, as explained by Zygmunt Bauman (2006). The world is constantly changing (social-cultural changes (Sobecki, 2010, p. 87), at the necessary speed to be able to have a self-realising, successive or relatively comprehensive happiness, which is a good reason for a constant re-definition of already existing, traditional norms and values. This re-

definition makes multiple and often alternative attempts to conceive these norms and values from the current perspectives of XXI century life.

Thus, the conception of femininity becomes the object of a successful evolution and is vulnerable to the changes of time. We can admit that the contemporary femininity is ambiguous, variable and sometimes controversial. Sherry H. Ortner argues that „the treatment of women in reality, their relative power and impact on the life of society, depends on the culture, historical times and regional tradition” (Ortner, 1982, p. 112). E. Gontarczyk adds that „different types of changes visible in the schooling and education, medical care, political sciences, mass media, as well as law, professional career and family. The convictions about femininity and masculinity or the stereotypes about what is feminine and masculine or what is appropriate for women and for men are also vulnerable to changes (Gontarczyk, 1995, p. 101).

The basis of what's feminine and masculine comes from two theories of sex, which are the result of Robert Jesse Stoller sex—biological aspects from his 1968 work (biological essentialism) and cultural theory (social constructivism). The first category is totally focussed on the aspects related to the physiology and reproduction aspects that describe the sexual and biological identity of a person. The second category relates to everything which is culturally associated with sex, like social roles, cultural demands and expectations (for which these roles are the answers). Fulfilling these specified obligations, in this context is nothing else than identification with a concrete sex (Urban, 2014, p. 142–143).

Due to the essentialist theory, every individual with a definite sex has a specified, characteristic set of features and dispositions. From this perspective, the socio-cultural sex depends on the biological sex, by which is completely determined. Zbyszko Melosik says that the differences between the sexes is nothing other than the “logical consequence of biological differences” (Melosik, 1999, p. 173). In this theoretical conception, our biology, which is based on physiological features, body anatomy, skeletal system, set of hormones and chromosomes, totally implies our sexuality. This leads to the and isolation of two groups: women and men, who (besides physiological and anatomical differences mentioned) possess also lots of vital, radically different psychological features (Bem, 2000, p. 9). It's related to the principle of the sex binarism, which underlines the different vocations of men and women, as well as their social functions, and situates them on two opposite (however asymmetrically situated) poles (Melosik, 1996, p. 28; Gromkowska-

-Melosik, 2012, p. 71). The supporters of this approach claim that women and men are the parts of two different, unparalleled worlds (due to the common statement, emphasizes by John Gray: „Men are from Mars, women are from Venus” (2008, s. 21) with unequivocal functions, duties and characteristics related to the commonly established ideal of femininity and masculinity (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2010, p. 185–186). In biological essentialism it is impossible to indicate the mutual features or obligations that would be feminine and masculine and the elements of reality, in which both sexes could be equal and, fulfilling the same criteria could compete, be satisfied or be partners.

They're as different as reverse and obverse. The most fundamental difference in this context seems to be the female ability of procreation, that throughout the centuries predisposed them to accomplish every kind of protective tasks in the domestic environment and men (by the lack of this feature) to fulfill the material and economical needs of the family, related to professional and social activities (Miluska, 1999, p. 44). In this perspective, the biological approach is the main dichotomous, evaluative and unambiguously determining aspect of what means to be a woman, man and what is an obvious negation of it. The supporters of this approach are named “naturalists” (Zaworska-Nikoniuk, 2008, p. 18).

On the other hand, a constructivist approach exists, which treats man and woman categories as an effect of a social battle of a domination. Due to this theory, there is no universal femininity and masculinity, but only their socially accepted image, which is a (derivative) effect of socialization, based on socially established schemes and relations of authority—not based on a natural biological tendency (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2010, p. 187). A confirmation of this theory can be the words of Aleksander Kamiński from 1966: “Men (or women) structure of a personality is shaped by the social patterns of their cultural background, in other words—behaviour, attitudes and aspirations of men and women typical of their cultural area. Boys grow up to be men and girls grow up to be women assimilating the acquired habits due to male or female patterns of behaviour” (Kamiński, 1966, p. 134). It appears that not the biology, but the culture, history and the process of socialisation affects the sexuality of a person and has a crucial influence on shaping the femininity/masculinity of the individual (Dybel, 2012, p. 9). As Katarzyna Palus writes in her article “triad soma-psyche-polis determines our living not only as the individuals of a definite sex (biological dimension), but also a definite gender (social-cultural dimension)” (Palus, 2006, p. 188).

Now, It should be mentioned that gender sometimes becomes a confirmation and medium of the social contrasts (that confirms for ex. patriarchy) and constitutes its reproduction and a social illustration. It is associated with a theory of the symbolic violence of Pierre Bourdieu and with his “naturalisation of a dominating group cultural capital” (Gromkowska, 2002, p. 16). It is integrally related to the creation of two differently defined and prioritised habitus, that are susceptible of a social transfer and consolidation, as a historically formed, symbolic system of structures, which is internalised and indisputable. In this context, habitus is understood as a socially constituted range of activities, features, norms and attitudes based on experiences, effectively differentiating both sexes. As already mentioned, they are accepted by an individual as “normal” and natural, creating at the same time a kind of conceptual illusion of every mental context of the definition of masculinity and femininity. It constitutes a matrix that in a non ambiguous but “commonsense” way (Warczok, 2013, p. 34) defines what is in the range of these two categories. It is also important to say that, in such an approach, masculinity is frequently positively marked with its vast range of possibilities and activities in the masculine role of system of social roles. While femininity is mainly defined by its “non masculinity” and the lack and differences in comparison with men (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 216–218).

If we'd like to talk about the understanding of femininity nowadays and refer to mentioned theories, we'd have to try to explain the traditional meaning of social roles to which women are predisposed. Social roles are every kind of social norm which clearly define the female and masculine duties in the micro and macro dimension, i.e. in a vast social reality (Dankevych & Stakhnevich, 2011, p. 319). They constitute a kind of set of instructions that every sex has to follow to “keep the order”. Lucyna Kopciewicz claims, that “this social role is a cultural «recipe», expressing the expectation addressed to the people having a defined position in a social structure and identified as woman or man” (Kopciewicz, 2003, p. 63).

For centuries, because of biological essentialism, women were treated as the „Worse Other”, which was associated with the recognition of them as biological less developed and predisposed to executing every kind of domestic tasks as well as biological obligations—birth giving and taking care of the children (Gromkowska, 2002, p. 42). Traditionally, throughout the centuries there was a clear division and “association of

men with intellect and women with everything that is irrational, sensual or physical" (Bator, 2001, p. 36). The differences between femininity and masculinity determined also a different temperament characteristic to both sexes, that can be confirmed the theory of the reproduction and sex significance (biologically determined by the cell's metabolism) by Patrick Geddes (which was commonly treated as "romantic idea of masculine rationalism and feminine intuition" (Vicinus, 1972, p. 143–144). Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran, relating to the theory of Talcott Parson, noticed that maternity constitutes the basis of roles attached to women and men. It determines social convictions and reduces the woman to the role of mother. Men however, because of the lack of capacity of birth giving, are almost in a natural way, in the common beliefs, predisposed to fulfilling the roles beyond the domestic environment (Renzetti & Curran, 2005, p. 11).

In the beginning of the XX century there were still popular convictions related to this men and women dichotomy (*nature-culture* [Ortner, p. 116–129]), associating public sphere with Man and domestic sphere with woman (*domestic-public* [Rosaldo, 1980, p. 389–417]) and attributing the sphere of production to man and the sphere of reproduction to women (production-reproduction [Edholm, Harris & Young, 1977, p. 101–130]).

It is worthwhile seeing that even though through the years women accepted this dependent role, there was a time when feminist conceptions and huge waves of the feminist movement appeared. In this context, we can understand feminism as a social movement which struggled for equal rights, equality of women and their total emancipation. It was to defend the social order, the same social status of the both sexes, as well as to oppose the discrimination and oppression regarding women. (Gontarczyk, p. 83). In the most general sense it is a voice of women's freedom, not allowing for sex discrimination and oppression (Anthias, 2002, p. 275). In the beginning it had to be a tool to struggle for women's right to vote (the first wave of feminism, known as "women's suffrage movement"), but gradually the postulates of women were developed and modified. However they still oscillated around the patriarchal system problems and social equality (contrary to the second and third wave of this movement) (Malinowska, 2009, p. 46–55). Today, the still intense feminists are becoming a kind of confirmation of the need to popularize a new image of the woman, which often involves strongly overcoming stereotypes, redefining her own identity and constitutes a negation of

essentially understood femininity. This is evidenced by the increased level of independence, growing ambitions (Holmes, 2007, p. 6), birth control (Badinter, 2013, p. 153), development of the contraceptive market, as well as examples of taking over typically male roles by women—for example in the area of maintaining the family's financial condition, successively climbing up to the next levels of promotion, or carrying out their professional aspirations in typically masculine fields (Kosakowska, 2006, p. 92). Modern women are gaining new dimensions and possibilities in the field of manifestation their femininity

Another context of analyzes within the framework of the mentioned topic determines the process of socialization and the issues of assimilation of stereotypes concerning femininity and masculinity recorded over the years. Maria Tyszkowa pays attention to the fact that “socialization in the psychological sense means shaping the individual—based on the generalization of experience in the social environment and the transmission of social communication processes—specific, socially and culturally determined internal regulators of activities and behaviors along with action schemes, as well as the formulas and rules of cognitive recognition, elaboration and interpretation of an individual experience and its emotional experience and valuation” (Tyszkowa, 1985, p. 13). Two types of socialization are commonly distinguished: primary and secondary socialization. A child observing his closest surroundings, based on primary socialization, and then through secondary socialization, gains knowledge about the world around him, and about its norms, rules and order (Doradz-Sawa, 2008, p. 40). As Jolanta Miluska writes: “as a result of activities undertaken by the social environment (parents, peers, other important adults, mass media), children learn to act in a manner appropriate to their sex, develop the appropriate features that are the premise of such action and only then get the full gender identity that includes the ability to identify themselves within the sexual dimension” (Miluska, 1999, p. 55). Sexual socialization in this context refers, above all, to socially accepted behaviors, which include somatic, characterological, temperamental and behavioral features which are appropriate for a given sex (Dankevych, 2011, p. 318).

Philip G. Zimbardo and Floyd L. Ruch drew attention to the importance and role of educational methods used in order to correct, socially acceptable identification with a given sex, its functions and place in society (Zimbardo & Ruch, 1996, p. 340). For centuries, the above-mentioned essentialist discourse prevailed in these educational meth-

ods. Within its assumptions, the aim was that “girls and boys at the beginning of adulthood reflected their natural features (both physical and mental) at maximum”, thus striving for the “ideal” of a woman and a man. In this way, through, for example, the use of rewards and punishments by caregivers (Bardwick & Douvan, 1982, p. 165–166) (in accordance with the assumptions of the concept of behaviorism (Renzetti & Curran, 2005, p. 110) adequately to the manifested behavior (which was or could not be in the “norm” of femininity and masculinity) and own observations and modeling, the child learned to identify with his own gender (Strykowska, 1992, p. 17).

It turns out that from an early age, through socialization, both girls and boys are taught, for example, “correct” understanding of professions: as masculine or as feminine (Cameron, 2007, p. 5–6), so that they can shape and then develop their aspirations in an appropriate way. This is, as already mentioned, what mainly directs our interests, influences how we understand and argue our role, goals and life aspirations (Freeman, 1996, p. 4). Socialization, therefore, by reproducing common patterns, tendency based on traditional norms and cultural practices, in a sense leaves no choice, and in an unequivocal way determines who we are together with our attached luggage of assigned traits and instruction containing a series of recommendations, how to behave and what is in accordance with our biological predispositions and social vocation (Kaschack, 2001, p. 187).

As already mentioned, the process of socialization is sometimes closely related to the assimilation of stereotypes functioning in the social area. Stereotypes are defined as “a generalization referring to a group in which identical characteristics are assigned to all its members without exception, regardless of the actual differences between them” (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 1997, p. 543). Sexual stereotypes, on the other hand, are nothing more than “beliefs about the features characterizing women or men and the activities that are appropriate for them” (Brannon, 2002, p. 240). Gender stereotypes, according to Kay Deaux and Laurie L. Lewis, have a multifactorial structure (Deaux & Lewis, 1984, p. 1003). They relate, *inter alia*, to specific behaviors characterizing both groups, value systems, personality aspects, tasks performed by them in society, the physical appearance of their representatives, the implementation of professional duties and areas in which they specialize (Budrowska, 2013, p. 263). It can be concluded that the main tasks of gender stereotypes as “products of the social structure” include the constant confirma-

tion of society in the conviction about the importance and necessity of falling within the "typical" images of femininity and masculinity (Budrowska, 2013, p. 264–265).

Ellyn Kaschack paid attention to the way in which specific features unequivocally determine male and female personality in an artificial way. And in this manner, we can say that a woman should be characterized by, among others, delicacy, protectiveness, sensitivity and willingness to help, while men by: activity, courage, self-confidence, individuality, competition, aggressiveness (Kaschack, 2001, p. 44). It is a division, highly seated in the social consciousness, where, as we can see, women are identified with the caring roles associated with help and work for others, full of dedication, devotion to others, characterized by inner warmth and delicacy and often religiosity (Mandal, 2000, p. 17–18).

The general characteristic of masculinity and femininity, as Maria Strykowska writes, is the conviction that "masculinity is associated with risk taking, assertiveness, action, cognitive focus on the performed work, problem solving, implementation of distant goals and dealing with external relations between family and other social institutions. Women, on the other hand, are oriented towards protectiveness and affiliation. In interaction, they look for a foundation for building emotional ties, empathy, common experiences and mutual opportunities and responsibilities. (...) In general, femininity is combined with expressive orientation, i.e. emotional concentration on other people and maintaining harmony in the group, and masculinity with instrumental orientation related to action and achievements" (Strykowska, 2006, p. 126). This is perfectly confirmed by the *Deutsche Encyclopädie* from 1785, invoked by Ute Frevert: "a man who in nature has more brawn is fit for hard work and farming, as well as a woman for quiet activities, especially for nursing children. A man has more energy and enthusiasm than a woman. He is bold, strong and suitable for a carer, while a woman who is gentle and shy, on the contrary—needs care. A man aware of his strength, by nature is pushed towards government, while a woman who knows her weakness, rather to obedience, is willing" (Frevert, 1997, p. 36, 79).

As already mentioned in the assimilation and internalization of gender stereotypes, the family environment and the already mentioned socialization process play an important role, providing standardized information on what features, interests or duties a woman should have and which ones belong to men. In this context, we can recall the words of N. W. Gonczarenko, who gives the following female and male character-

istics: "psychological stereotypes about masculine and feminine personality traits often come from childhood and according to them, typical of men's features are: independence, persistence, competitive spirit, tendency for reflection, striving for novelty, emotional endurance (...), for women in turn: passivity, lack of obstinacy, avoiding competition, emotiveness, intuition, sensitivity" (Gonczarenko, 1991, p. 109). The above examples become a perfect confirmation of the assumption that "certain character traits are" naturally "feminine, while others" naturally "masculine" (Mead, 1982, p. 26). Thanks to them, a given person could easily "enter" into a specific matrix of behaviors, being in harmony with his / her own gender, which allowed him/her safe and full adaptation to society.

In this context, it is worth recalling one of the characteristic stereotypes of sex functioning in the years 1820–1860—The Cult of True Femininity (Welter, 1978, p. 313–333). It referred to the traits that a woman should have and which constituted a measurable criteria for her assessment. It included four virtues: piety, chastity, submission and domesticity. They constituted a "set" of unambiguously valued female traits. It was widely socially approved, as evidenced by the common persuasion of women to strive for achieving these values in their lives. There is no doubt that we experience its repercussions to this day, as evidenced by the archetype, still deeply rooted in the social consciousness: the Polish Mother (referring to the issue of performing tasks related to motherhood – often a determinant of the social status of women and the only field under her power and domination – it assumes the versatility and perfection of women in fulfilling all their duties and obligations within the network of various roles they perform in society (Titkow, 2012, p. 28–32) and Marian Cult (closely related to the role of the Catholic church in Poland)—women were required to display such features as warmth, goodness, beauty, gentleness, submission and care (Kowalczyk, 2003, p. 17; Kościańska, 2012, p. 147), which are the basis of the socio-cultural condition of our country.

In the light of the aforesaid arguments emerges the question how the image of woman has been shaped and what is the widely perceived femininity in the contemporary world. With an objective to know opinions how the femininity is understood in XXI century, I decided to ask that questions the students of pedagogy as the representatives of the current young generation as well as active observers and participants of the present social reality. Therefore, I took advantage from the classes classes that I conducted within the academic years of 2016/2017 and

2017/2018—during which we have been considering the issues contemporary changes in socio-cultural reality, taking into consideration the current perception of the masculinity and femininity. 134 persons, among whom 121 women and 13 men took part in this initial recognition (which had a character of a survey). Each person was given a task to write down maximum 2 connotations with the term “femininity”. The responses were of anonymous character. Overall I managed to gather 257 responses. I decided to group the obtained responses for a few categories, such as: appearance, character (personality) traits, performed functions and other connotations. The vast majority (over 160 connotations) referred to the features characterizing women which can be encompassed by the definition of femininity. As it arises from the survey, in most cases students associate contemporary woman with „independence” (autonomy)—35 responses which can constitute certain kind of after-effect of emancipation and equality movements as well as response for the successive augmenting—over the years—of the women rights which as a result has led to the situation—that currently in the vast majority of States (especially these developed) women constitute a social group with equal rights and possibilities comparing to men. On the next positions, taking into account the number of responses, have been *ex aequo* „delicateness” and „potency” (including „the mental strength” and „the power to step up”—both 1 response) which can both indicate and confirm the aspirations of the current women. Such conclusion can be also drawn from the next responses given by students within the analyzed category, such as „assiduity” (12 responses). Within this trait, the students were referring to the images of “overworked woman” (1 response) and „working woman: (2 responses). The further traits were *ex aequo*: „self-confidence” (9 responses) and „sensitivity” (9 responses). Among other popular responses can be indicated: „care” (6 responses), wisdom and educational background (6 responses, among which were responses such as: „a well-educated woman” or „a woman who aims at good educational background”), „multitasking” (6 responses) and „resourcefulness” (also 6 responses). Taking into consideration the traits characteristic for the femininity, also: „subtlety” and „independence” (each 4 responses) as well as „family-dedication”, „solicitation” and „perseverance/pursuance to achieve one’s objectives” were mentioned (each 3 responses). The students also identified such features as: „emotionality”, „communicativeness”, „intelligence”, „success”, „feistiness”, „good organization”, „self-sufficiency”, „sentimentality” (2 responses each). Only single

votes has been noted for such features as: „goodness”, „affectionateness”, „attentiveness”, „attentive”, „charmness”, „self-centred”, „kindness”, „indecision”, „argumentative”, „openness”, „responsibility”, she “has a traits of the stereotypical man”, „free”, „aware of her own value”, „crazy”, „creative”, „courageous”, „ambitious”, „well-read”, „stubborn”. Taking into account the whole scope of the presented traits, their discrepancy and multicontextual character is visible. It is apparent that, according to the obtained responses, contemporary woman is full of contradictions and ambiguity. Such observation has been fully coherent with the remark of Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik: “sometimes one may have the impression that a woman shall be like radio—to set oneself for certain airwave in the specific moment and be «appropriate» for a situation: to have unlimited potential when it comes to attune oneself. She should simultaneously be that and that and that else and someone different as well. She should be every kind” (Gromkowska, 2002, p. 100).

The next category which has been grouped upon the basis of the gathered responses, referred to the (external) appearance of the current women. Within the framework of this category, the largest amount of the students' responses regarding the features of femininity are associated with: beauty (9 responses), elegance (8 responses), paying attention to one's appearance (6 responses). The same number of responses were for: pulchritude, sexappeal and sensuality (3 responses each). Less amount of respondents (two responses each) indicated the “attractiveness”, “trendy look” or “vulgar appearance”. The single opinions were connected to: “esthetics”, “female shapes”, “make up”, “nakedness”, “focused on one's appearance”, “dresses”, “slim”, “waist/figure”, “appearance”, “athletic (fit)”. Such responses may suggest the perception of the women is mainly based on their visibility, the possessed body and may indicated for combining femininity with widely understood—physical attractiveness, which may confirm further existing in society beliefs and tendencies referring to the theories of essentialism, but they can also constitute certain kind of response for changes regarding the current perception of identity (including female) and its creation, which in the contemporary culture has been transferred “on the surface” and “incarnated by visual representations” (Melosik, 1996, p. 72). In this case one may observe the *sui generis* “orientation for visibility” (Gromkowska, 2002, p. 95–97).

Another divided category refers to role as well as location within the world. This category has been vividly less popular (comparing to

the previous two) taking into account the number (slightly over 20) of gathered responses. While considering the role and the place within the world, for the students of pedagogy the term “femininity” is first of all associated with “maternity” (7 responses). Among this kind of response, the more precised answers were: “working mother” (1), “good mother” (1), which still can indicate for the internalized in the individuals' awareness essential approach for femininity connected mainly with realization of the duties at home, but at the same time with occurring more and more often—simultaneous performing of family and professional roles by contemporary women. The next emerging responses were: “career/career-making”—4 responses (1 of the responses were: aiming at career) and *ex aequo*—4 responses for “businesswoman” (and among that, such statements as: “determined businesswoman”—1 response). The next, a little bit less popular answers were: “housewife” (2), “realizing her dreams” (2) and “self-development” (2). After that, students indicated: “house”, “homebody”, “professionally fulfilled”, “personal development”, “woman who has achieved professional success and professional career” (1 person each). The presented answer prove the bipolarity of the female role issues. On one hand, we can observe the traditional approach for femininity as well as roles attributed to the women, concentrated mainly on house, family and maternity which have been balanced with the perception of women actively participating in social reality, competing with the men, realizing their hobbies and passions and following their own dreams. The most seldom responses regarding the femininity which confirm an aforesaid remark as well as unveil certain evolution in the mode of perception of women and widely understood femininity, given by students were: “feminism” (2 responses), “emancipation” (1), “growing up” (1), “maturity” (1), “being judged” (1), “fight” (1), “power” (1) and “adaptation” (1).

The contemporary perception of femininity—according to the contemporary theories and the opinions of pedagogy students—indicate for the fact that it is highly framentated and ambigious. As the first perspective can be seen—according to the given responses, the issues regarding bigger independence and self-dependence of the woman as well as multidimensionality of the female life which in an appropriate manner shall combine both realities—essentially female—connected with house environment and the numerous traits traditionally attributed to women with this non-traditionally female (or stereotypically male) connected with bigger independence, focus on professional activities, bigger activity,

increasing ambitions, resourcefulness and realization of the new plans. At the same time, the external appearance and social attractiveness of woman is not deprived of significance. To recapitulate, sex as the analytical category encompasses two areas: biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender). According to Ewa Gontarczyk "in compatibility to such distinction, we must be aware that sex of certain person is formed by a biological factors, while his/her gender has been shaped in sociological and cultural manner" (Gontarczyk, 1995, p. 35). Moreover, the factor of gender currently often takes advantage over biological sex as gender has been constructed through our functioning in the culture and upon the basis of its norms and patterns" (Mizielińska, 2006, p. 185–187).

Accordingly with the recalled statements, arguments, theory and responses provided by the students—we may draw a conclusion—that we are living in the world consisting of many various, often contradictory with each other realities, that we create by ourselves. The fragmentation of the present culture and as a consequence, also our identities turns out to be not only theory, but also real part of the social reality (Gromkowska, 2002, p. 98). It is equally applicable to the issues regarding masculinity and femininity as well as socially approved images of those, which are subjected to constant changes, evolutions and downgrades (Gromkowska-Melosik, 2010, p. 167). It is worth paying attention—according to Zbyszko Melosik—that the ideal of hundred percent representative of the certain sex was and still is subjected to successive modifications depending on the epoche or even decade, taking into account and distinguishing different features of psychological and/or physical character (Melosik, 1999, p. 174). Michel Foucault in his analysis regarding post-modern reality, emphasizes that the diversity of interpretations, perceptions of co-existing realities leads to the necessity of "stepping out"—putting on the first plan one of them and achieving so called—primacy of metanarration in the context of relatively perceived rationalism. Such metanarration constitutes "the genuine knowledge" which unequivocally characterizes and precises many ambiguous issues of our existence, for example—how to perceive masculinity and femininity in contemporary world (Foucault, 1980). What is important, is that such knowledge cannot be discover, but it is constantly produced (through naming and defining) in a process of the fight of a dominant status various, and often contradictory meanings and interpretations regarding an authentic (in relative meaning of such term) masculinity and femininity (Melosik, 1999, p. 174). It is also applicable to femininity, its perception and the

image of the contemporary woman, about whom A. Gromkowska-Melosik writes as follows: “she possesses at her disposal unlimited amount of the «cultural sources» which she can use for the construction of her own identity. In the past the women socialization used to be (...) disciplining. Woman has been closed into a corset—in literal and metaphorical sense. She was supposed to fulfill all the expectations, which were very unequivocal (...). Today «everything is possible»—a woman can construct and reconstruct herself in free manner and widely understood—popular culture grants her with unlimited options to do so. However, it does not mean that in contemporary reality corset does not exist—although paradoxically it has been created by unlimited freedom to construct one's own identity and cultural stress upon attuning—according to changing requirements regarding the shape of the body and identity. The discourses of the femininity are spinning faster and faster” (Gromkowska, 2002, p. 99).

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The Origin of Slavery and The Incidence of The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Oguta, Nigeria

ABSTRACT. Studies in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade have received a lot of patronage. Such contributions have been made mainly exteriorly without adequate coverage (detailed) of the interior concerns of same. Here, the research has been focused on one of the numerous local narratives dealing with the very sourcing and underpinning of what can be judged the pivot of the trade within. Oguta was first opened up as an inland port at the advent of the present occupiers of the beautiful land around Oguta Lake which links to the Niger through the creeks on the plains and the Atlantic, same as the Urashi River. The local trade arising from the agrarian economy of the place and the attendant commercial and social activities had gradually developed into something beyond the ordinary and had triggered a chain reaction that cascaded into various dimensions. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade had just begun and coincided with this latest development in Oguta. But it added to the existing commerce, the nefarious and inhuman trade on humans; for humans were the main stock of the international dealing. The organizers and paddlers at the global level made it so alluring that many took the bait, swallowing it with the hook, line and sinker. The experience in Oguta is one of such particularly with regard to the origin local with the narrative begging for proper historicisation as is attempted below with the sole objective of projecting love as the missing link that is necessary for progressive and meaningful living.

KEYWORDS: Slavery, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Oguta case study

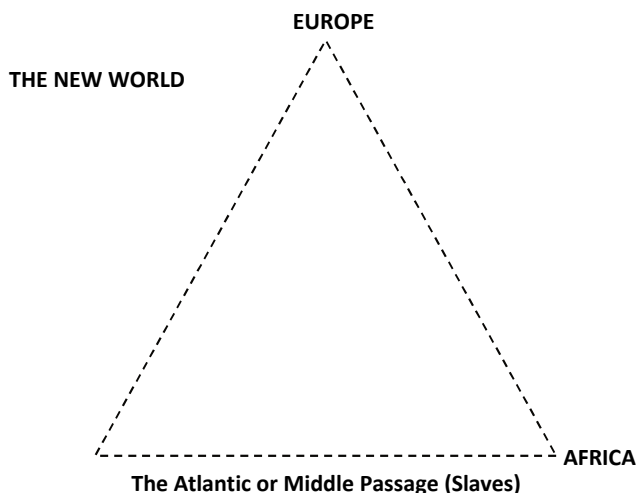
Introduction

Slaves are persons (most often to include their descendants) who were bought, stolen, captured in wars and similar social crises and pawning who were expected to render services to their owners sometimes called masters who exercise or possess full power over the slaves including their life and death. Slaves amongst humans are the direct opposite of free born, they have few rights and are discriminated upon. They socially are far

worthless and hardly allowed any serious kinds of leadership position. In Oguta for example upon the high regard accorded to elders using gerontocracy, the male individuals who become the oldest in a lineage, village or the entire community is not allowed to assume office if he is of slave descent. This is almost the same in many social organizations such the very important Age Grade system in Oguta. They cannot lead in the worship or veneration of the land especially where there is a free born.

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade has been various described by so many scholars to give appropriate meaning to it. Philip Curtin a notable historian for instance says of it as being "the largest intercontinental migration in western History, spanning a period of 300 years in which the Africans in mass numbers crossed the Atlantic" (Curtin, 1978, p. 74). It has also been described as the triangular trade on slaves since it basically covered Africa the source of the slaves, the New World (America) the main destination with plantations on which the labour was needed and Europe the continent of the main organizers and paddlers of the trade where some of the slaves also arrived serving both in the domestic and industrial concerns. Simply put the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade stands for the nefarious transactions on humans (slaves and unfortunate free born) from African across the Atlantic to the Americas and Europe to serve as slaves at both the plantation (later to include factories) and homes of these places. This development formerly spanned over a period of about three hundred years of between 1600–1900 A.D. In actual sense of it, the trade had begun earlier from about the middle of the 15th C. (about the 1450s) when the Portuguese used their ship to move sugar produced in the South Atlantic particularly on the Island of Sao Tome.

They exploited the slaves available on the African coast (the Arguin Islands south of Rivers Senegal and Gambia ends and the mouth of the Congo River). Following the accidental discoveries of the new land mass of the Americas spear-headed by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and the earlier establishment of a new maritime trade route on the African coast around the Cape of Good Hope to India by the Portuguese, the old world came to be divided into two halves: one around Africa to the east, to Portugal and the other around Americas to the west, to Spain by the Pope as ratified in the treaty of Tordesillas of 1494. This treaty gave Portugal the monopoly of Africa and Spain the Americas. This situation coupled with the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by the Turks which ended the Black Sea Coast supply of slaves caused Africa to become the only external source of forced labour.



The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade began in trifles with the development of the plantations (sugar) in the New World by the Spanish and to the South Atlantic by the Portuguese (for example at Sao Tome) and later to Europe (Sicily in Italy). At this time mid-way through the 15th century, the slaves bought at southern coast of Africa which were shipped to Europe were about a 100 for each year.

This was after Europeans had attempted using the Amerindians in the New World plantations without much success. The Indians were not suitable because they could not endure the brutality of the European masters, were not suited to hard labour and were susceptible to European disease that they had to suffer from.

Using the Asiento system ("the right to trade in slaves") by which the Spanish granted occasional licenses to its citizens to import slaves into the New World. Through this system, some individuals could bring in fifty slaves to Hispaniola (the present Haiti and Santo Domingo) for mining work. Not long after the number increased coupled with the associated smuggling of 1520s. Upon this the permit as contracts became transferable when Spanish colonists and the European merchants joined in the transaction thus increasing the number of the slaves being dealt with at this time beyond the official estimation. Lorenzo de Gorrevod, the Governor of Bresa in 1518, who was granted the Asiento was reported (Rico, 1975), to have imported four thousand black slaves to sell to the Spanish colonists of which he paid customs duties. Asiento served up

until 1580s as the monopoly of the Spanish. The Spanish crown later gave the right to Asiento to the Portuguese who had the initial license to bring a set number of slaves to the Americas. The Indian labour disaster encouraged the increase in the African slaves in the New World as an efficient labour resource. Asiento system of getting slaves for the Spanish colonies led bitter contest among member dealers and became in Rico's words "a part of international diplomacy", seen as a powerful bargaining tool. For with the treaties of Utrecht and Ryswick, both the British and the French acquired the Asiento enabling them to receive the Spanish bullion used in the payment for the slaves.

Some of these African slaves were later to be used for mining in for instance Hispaniola and Puerto Rico so that their numbers in the entire New World particularly increased tremendously. The slave population rose to the level that in 1527, they could mobilize and rebel in Puerto Rico. They even moved into Cuba and Jamaica where they were not so needed. Also as the colonists moved from Spanish Islands to the Spanish mainland, they went with some of their African slaves who then had to settle at New Spain, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Chile (Curtain, 1975). During this period of the 1520s, a given Spanish estate was reported to have used between eighty and hundred African slaves so that towards the end of the 16th C. Curtain estimated that there were over fifty thousand officially imported slaves to the New World besides the number which was smuggled in.

Once every 8–10 days (prisoners of war and criminals) from the forts, the African who brought slave would go with powder, ball flints, shots, rum and tobacco.

The African chief forced the Europeans to pay presents (dechy) or tax (comey) on each slave. Slave dealings brought revenue to participating African states (government & chiefs).

Ship captains or factors (white agent) dealt with African chiefs at the coast and were in charge of the trading ports where the slaves were kept by the African traders, for shipment. At some time, the agent became consults under the African authorities.

Price of male slave at Bonny: 96 yards of different types of cloth, 52 handkerchiefs; 1 large brass pan, 2 muskets, 25 kegs of powder, 100 flints, 2 bags of short, 20 knives, 4 iron pots, 4 hats, 4 caps, 4 cutlasses, 6 bunches of beads 14 gallons of brandy.

Journey through the Atlantic (the middle passage) took 5 to 8 weeks, slaves sometimes would attempt suicide by going on hunger strikes,

hanging, cutting their throats. The slave holiday ships averaged 5.8 and this was packed with four lines of slaves. The space allotted to each slave was 6ft by 1ft by 4inches so that a ship carried between 451 × 600 slaves. Diseases suffered by the slaves which accounted to high mortality rate would include, small pox, dysentery, and ophthamia.

The slave origin was important to the planters: Ibo slaves from Niger Delta were said to appear docile but despondent with slavery and so could commit suicide. The Mandingo from Sierra Leone were gentle, could write Arabic recite parts of the Koran but unfit for field work. Koromantees (Gold coast) were courageous and rebellious papaw (Whydah) were popular, hardworking and disciplined.

The root of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Oguta is in the internal slavery system which developed along the line of growth of the community. The issue of the development of slavery in Oguta as the research has revealed is likened to the saying that necessity is the mother of invention. The subsequent development of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the involvement of Oguta in it came about as a necessity too. These necessities it has been argued, could have been critically viewed so that perhaps a more mindful attention should have paid to them for the sake of humanity. Before one goes on to further analyze the incidence of the slavery/slave trade in the area, an excursion into the course of the action from the very beginning as narrated by the people around the spatial area of the discuss is made. The main instruments used in gathering the data and processing of them, are oral traditions, participatory observation and some library research.

Narrating the incidence of slavery and the commercialization of the practice in Oguta which with time was engulfed by the foreign trade on it known as the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Pa Okororie Nwaso traced the beginning to the initial period of the political development of Oguta. According to him, during the further formation of the political organization of Oguta, the people needed a leader whose responsibility would be solely the administration of the society. This leadership styled after the monarchical system of government, had a man in the person of a king. The king was bestowed with great powers above everybody. He was therefore, highly respected and lived with strict dos and don'ts in relating with his people including his royal family members. One of such was that the king should not be engaged in most practical working activities such as working in the farm. Such rights and privilege were to some extent, extended to his royal family members. Other people performed

some of such functions who were remunerated or rewarded in one way or another. He was supposed to live in an unrivaled comfort so to concentrate on the all-important governance of his domain. He exercised control and power in an almost absolute manner that for instance, he could have any maiden that he pleases as wife no matter the number he had earlier taken. People wished to be identified with the king, his honour and privileges. There came a time when many people did not wish to work for the king for some reasons. Perhaps the very king at whose tenure this began, was not popular or cherished as was earlier the situation.

The king responded defensively and was said to have appointed the respected elders in a council who became the *Ndiche* (council of *Oririn-zere* titled elders) and were responsible for the overseeing of the services due the king assigned to some people Pa Okororie further said that this arrangement worked only for sometimes as most of the people later proved very difficult in the state of affairs. The king had to device new means of taking control of the situation. The king made laws that tended to compel the people to perform the tasks around the palace even without some form of reward. Such dictator king used the state security mechanism around him to enforce conformity of the people. Some of the new laws simply were oppressive and meant that the will of the people put around the king to serve was neglected and later completely denied.

In this way, some of their people were now made to permanently serve and live around the king. These gradually with time became slaves to him. It situation further deteriorated when family members of such people and their descendants continued to serve as slaves within the royal family even after the king had passed. The sort of kingship evolved by Oguta people is the hereditary type so that in the place of the king who passed, would be the regent. The regent must come from the royal family and may later perhaps later succeed the king. If he is not to be the king one of the male relations of the late king would reign in his place. The kings upon the much power accorded them by the people, had at some points arrogated to themselves so much power that they ruled as something of demi-gods or despots or outright dictators.

It was as from this time that such kings made the rather very wicked law that they must be buried with certain items (exotic grave goods) and two servants standing alive on either sides of the body of king right inside the grave. These kings were theocratic and said to be of god. People believed that whatever they commanded was from god and were bound

to obey such even after the death of the kings. In this way, the people would not have offended their God. From this time onwards, the servants respect among the people dwindled and was finally lost at one point. At the beginning, it was viewed as an honourable thing to be with the king and even accompany him through the journey to the great beyond. The people particularly the servants transcended from the privileged position round the exalted king to a disdain lavish situation. Some people now looked at serving around the king as living in an earthly hell. Families would only send their wayward children to be with the king. Those who could not find such sort of persons among their family members and who must send someone looked for an alternative means of dealing with the situation. Sometimes there could be a family that has such less desired children and would be willing to part with them for something important to them. Such people may wish to exchange a good woman from a good family for their worthless son who may end up at the palace to serve the king.

Women were often used in such dealings because they were considered less valuable human being. Another reason for this is because of the patrilineage family system which translates to only men being the ones entrusted with the survival of the family. The women married into a family is to join her husband in the procreation and survival of the family which existence is on the account or in the name of the man's family. Ascendancy of each family is therefore, traced to the man's family not the woman's. A woman cannot establish her lineage in that regard in the husband's family or place. Her contribution is mainly viewed and appreciated in the help she renders in raising the children with her husband and co-operating with him and their children in their social growth and development. A woman exchanged for a worthless person of course would not have much respect from the new family although she would not be maltreated as was obtained around the palace and lose all respect.

With time, other solutions to the contribution of persons to the king came up. Those who could not make such exchange with woman considered by some as wrong or they did not have limited of had to resort to other valuables such as life stock, landed property (including fishing waters), gold and special inheritance. Some families who had the so-called worthless man or boy to give out would accept very valuable possessions in exchange for the human. If the person's worth is judged as being the equivalent of a property, his treatment by mean royals may not go beyond that of ordinary property tool or domestic animal. They therefore,

can be used in doing all sorts of activities. It was from among such that the individuals to be buried alive with the corpse of a king or similar sacrificial and ritualistic of fairs. Since, the kings were very powerful, people could not stop them when they thought such acts to be inhuman and gradually it became part of the customs and tradition of the people.

Not long after some wealthy and influential persons desired that they (such as high chiefs and priests) should be served in similar way as the king. Such began to exchange some of their valuables for the rejected persons. When they arrive these wealthy person's houses, they will subject the so-called worthless persons to serving in whatever capacity that suites them or they would be severely punished. From the manners they treated these servants who could not go back to their original families, slavery started in Oguta. These so-called worthless people would normally be taken out of their community where they may never get to see any of their original family members and so did not have something of a second change of changing from bad to good persons and be mercifully returned in similar way as they came. Even for some who were not taken far away from their biological family home, they challenge of being free was so much as the master would require a lot more than an average or poor family can afford. More so, they would normally be put through an oath being the parties in the exchange never to back down on the agreement or deal. Again, there was a gradual evolution of the status of one servants who late became slaves in hands of their masters. The kings from the onset, allowed the servants to visit their families since they were taken from within the Oguta community, marry and raise families but were bond to go back to the service of the king. When the wealthy men joined in the system, such privileges were curtailed. The individuals were exchanged for the wealthy and important men property and the people were taken to be a replacement of such property which therefore made them to be assets. Under the king, the servants lived in similar ways as other citizens of Oguta. They could raise children and keep some personal belongings though never to become so rich. Some of the servants were proudly pleased to be the king even at death. Being used as sacrificial lamb around the palace was an honour to the servant and the faithful family. The kings were charismatic and ruled with caution and fear of God. He could be assassinated and made to seem as if he died naturally in the palace.

The wealthy individuals acted with impunity towards the servants as nobody could question them on how to use their property being the

servants. Some of these kings or instance castrated the men servants now slaves and had them like eunuchs so there was no use them getting married and their own formal family members are better protected.

Mr. Emmanuel Mmaduagwu revealed that the unwritten constitution of Oguta was later to be reformed with further enlightenment. The law that made families to contribute persons to work for the king around his palace was repeated was the people came to denounce it so much. The king makers who crowned the king regained their power and the kings seized being dictators. Oguta then resorted to taxation in the form of farm produce especially yam and livestock. People who worked for the kings were now being paid with the proceeds of the tax. The payment this time was with money of which they used cowries (*ego ayara*) and later *manillas* (*ego igwe* or *ikpechi*). This time the king was among the riches members of the society and could comfortably pay people who worked for him. They had is non servants whom he paid also. The kings became popular again and not secretly despised by his people. The act of slavery and even the local trade on it had already started and could not just come to an end because the king sort to revert. The rich persons of Oguta saw it a good enterprise. They convinced some people who they paid handsomely to exchange their persons for money (that is out rightly buying them). Some people yielded to this and actually sold their persons to such rich individuals.

Mr. Mmaduagwu clarified that at this time of the development being narrated, that Oguta people were still living around the Old Benin kingdom. That is was when the then Oba of Benin through his expansionist policy conquered Oguta and made her to pay tribute that Oguta got the idea of monetary taxation as mentioned above. At the conquest, he disclosed the then king of Oguta was dethroned and killed and a new ruler imposed by the Benin monarch was put in his place. He further narrated the account of the political evolution of Oguta saying that after sometime, that another powerful state attacked and annexed the area including the part of Benin which had Oguta in its fold. Oguta people were adversely affected by these wars he said necessitating their migration to the present homeland. Mr. Emmanuel Mmaduagwu explained that although we evolved our socio-political system through the peculiar circumstances of our societal system through the peculiar circumstances of our societal growth and development, that some of the ideas involved were borrowed from places around us who had either evolved such themselves or also borrowed from elsewhere.

The idea of slavery just as that of the kingship had been existence before Oguta people got involved in them through their societal development. Nobody can claim that he knows exactly when and where the act of slavery began but can only trace its development in a particular place such as Oguta as an idea where it could have also been borrowed or simply evolved in their everyday life activities.

The biologists make us to understand that living things including man anywhere he may be found, fight for advantage, this may simply be the summary of the natural path through which the act of slavery and the trade began even in Oguta. So man anywhere and anytime can exploit his fellow man and continually capitalize on the advantage, such that may evolve into slavery.

For Mr. A.O. Okoroafor one reason why people sold their persons into slavery was headiness. If a family observes that their child is too stubborn and may end-up badly, they would want to do away with him, this time profitability so he does not cause serious problem. Often this transaction was secretly carried out although at some point there were those who now made their business that they would buy from whoever and keep until there is need for them and would gainfully sell them. Such people became the middlemen who further cashed in on the local trade when the Europeans arrived at the coast requesting for slaves in large numbers for the labour need in the New world. These Europeans paid even more handsomely for these slaves and so encouraged the local dealers to carry on with the business.

When the local traders were dealing with the people around them, the need was not in large numbers, it was only when such need arose and so there was no gain keeping so many who have to keep alive until they are sold. The people could use them some sacrifice war machinery and the likes and so the numbers on sale was limited.

Another reason why slavery and slave trade began in Oguta was that certain people desired to have in the fold, some human traits not found or common among them. Such traits as cleverness and industriousness can be desirable and make people plot devilishly to have them from people who possess them.

Owu 'masquerade' found in Oguta was forcefully taken away from the people of Onya because of its beauty and lovely performances. In such occasion, Oguta might have taken some of its dancers or other performers such as instrumentalist to help propagate such. The oral traditions in Oguta recorded that it was through a gallant slave of Oguta that

Owu was brought to Oguta. Sometimes when places are stormed militarily, captives are taken together with booties of the war. The captives may include a strong warrior who's brave and fighting traits may be kept as a state asset. History has it that some of the wars waged were partly engaged in for the beautiful women and sometimes treasures such as gold of the party being attacked. Only recently Iraq temporarily annexed the oil rich Kuwaiti for the purpose of its richness.

The opposite of action is when people choose to marry certain category of persons from certain families because of some good traits found in them. This time through a peaceful natural means of conviction and affection.

Some wealthy individuals would buy some strong slaves who are added to his security set up. This time professionalism in this regard had not started as we have today where body guards come on their own to be employed as skilled labour. This also helped in entrenching the act of slavery and the attendant trade.

Similarly, war captives were keyed especially around the king or warriors responsible for their capturing and often these would remain as slaves in Oguta. Such people could be used in the farm or in the manufacturing areas. According to Mr. Afam Ogini some of such slaves were actually acquired as labour hands in the farm by the wealthy persons in Oguta. In some other cases, barren women they could afford then brought slaves who some of them kept and treated like their own children. This was a sort adoption by these women. Their children may be well taken care of by the woman but once she and the generation are gone, the children of such persons will be regarded as slaves by Oguta people.

This is better than the art of stealing people's children by such persons as the barren women because at least the pain of the loss of the child by the parents would not be there when they are taken with the consent of the one who legitimately had them either as their children or slaves.

Creditor and debtor situation sometimes led to slavery and subsequently slave trade. Someone who is indebted to another and could not redeem such in time may be compelled to live under his creditor for some time working as a slave so to make-up for the debt. Sometimes this person is not able to pay through his life time and the same treatment would continue with his children who have also become slaves to the creditor. In Oguta there are instances where this happened and caused the subsequent generations of the family of the debtor to now be seen as slaves. Some persons were said to have borrowed money from some rich persons using the child as collateral. When the person does not pay his

debt as agreed, the agreement will elapse and the child will become the rich person's slave.

Some slave situation arose from Oguta because the persons involved were used in making atonement for the crime committed (sometimes mistakes) by them. For example in one instance a hunter from a neighbouring community had mistakenly killed a man from Oguta in a hunting expedition but tried to cover it up by retreating to community. Oguta looked for the Oguta men killed, and searched carefully and located the killer who confessed his crime. Oguta in making way for peace, asked the hunter to do some ritualistic things including the provision of a virgin girl for the slain man's family. These were done but it began another line of slave generation.

In these ways holding slave grew in Oguta by the day. An average Oguta person lives an aristocratic life and so the wealthy ones among them used the availability of slaves at a far less exorbitant amount being paid by the Europeans surfaced in their cargo ship with many manufactured items and began to exchange them for certain items of trade found by the gulf of Guinea especially around the bight of Biafra, which later came to include the slaves, the story changed. The internal slavery and trade therein was now stimulated to respond a much more global need and trade on slave that had just started with the Spaniards and the Portuguese leading the way at two different but convergent fronts.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive the African coast on this part remained offshore anchoring at such islands as Akasa and Bonny. It was from here that these Europeans and the Niger Delta Middle men began to trade on the items of trade available which later included slaves following the arisen need for them in the New World. With this development, the local dealings coast en route the New World and Europe thereby beginning the triangular Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade which process has earlier been described.

In the middle of 18th C., the Europeans had started moving up beyond the coast and into the hinterland of this area. Before the end of the 19th C. they had moved far into the land encountering directly some of the sources of the slaves that had sometimes pondered on the nature of the environment and society that the African (southern Nigerians) slaves came from. At this time however, the slave trade had been abolished and some mechanisms put on to ensure compliance by all. It at about this time in 1885 that the first set of Europeans entered Oguta for another line of business (the palm produce trade) with trading compa-

nies in the lead. Unfortunately, the trade of slave had later firm grip on the system in Oguta and many other societies on the hinterland. The information on the abolition had not sank in and the trade was still on but perhaps not in full swings as before. Such prominent Oguta business men whose business included slave dealing as Chief Obua Ajukwu, Chief Nwasike Ude and Chief Ifi Eyiche who were at the fore front of receiving the European even against the wish of Oguta people did so with the hope of dealing directly with the Europeans on slaves instead of passing through some second line middlemen around the coast. This did not work as the Europeans had a different plan entirely

In the course of the trade before the 19th C., Oguta people who traded on slaves had bought them from the locals around and moved them on their big dug-out canoes towards the coast to Okrika, Abonema, Nembe and Akasa. Even while the trade was on, the oral history (historical account given orally by an eye-witness) taken from some persons who were involved indicates that it was secretly done to some extent. The slaves were not at all times exposed in the canoe while being taken to buyers in the relay manner in which the trade was carried through for the children and some young women, they were often covered in the boat and discretely sold to buyers. Oguta according to the oral history did not participate much in the sales at the coastal area except for a very few number of the people. It was through Oguta however, that much the slaves from sold from around Oguta was dealt with Oguta served as a major slave market being an inland port which provided better access from the hinterland to the dealer around the coast. It was through the frequent use of the route from Oguta to the coast that subsequent business persons came to know the route as an important one linking the people at the coast far to the hinterland. Yam production which Oguta was famous about gave her the first bank cheque to the bank but the live new line of trade on slaves further enriched her. Both supported the emergence of a new class of local bourgeoisie who later received the Europeans coming to trade on palm another big stimulus in the happy economic growth of the Oguta community.

Conclusion

The incidence of slavery and later slave trade in Oguta sprouted as a result of solving the political need of the people. It was further enhanced by the uncivilized behavior of the rich persons of the land. The deve-

lopment of slavery in Oguta is really regrettable. The inhuman treatment of man on fellow man is simply callous and insensitive. These were mistakes that could have been avoided but for the wrong reasoning of some persons. The profit made out of dealings on slaves and the comfort sort by the people who patronized the act are nothing compared to the pain, mystery and feeling of alienation that the slaves were faced with.

The most unfortunate part of this development is the continuation of the stigma associated with the act. Even when useful laws have been made to end the ugly trend for good, the peoples in some quarters have not headed such but gone ahead to entrench the wicked feeling amongst us. Here, love is advocated as the solution to the problem with love every of such mistakes would be taken care of. Let everybody accept everyone as human not to have some as sub-humans simply because of some accident of history. The psychic imbalance created by the incidence of slavery amongst us should be surmounted with love enthroned at all levels of our operation. Some of the descendants of the ex-slaves have achieved a lot amongst us so to earn our respect and elicit love of all. This is another clarion call to all people with this sort of development to please quit anything that supports discrimination and promote issues that bind us together in love.

The 21st century human should be an enlightened one who craves for good always and radiates love everywhere. Let the love shine and shine always.

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Appendix

Table of interviewees

S/N	Name	Title	Sex	Age [yrs]	Occupation	Date of interview	Place of interview	Remark
1	Okororie Nwaso	Elder	Male	82	Farmer	Oct 1992	Ishibe Oguta	Very good
2	Emmanuel Anene Okoroafor	Mr.	Male	44	Civil servant	Dec. 1992	Umunkwoko-moshi Oguta	Good
3	Anthony Osita Okoroafor	Mr.	Male	37	Civil servant	Jan. 1993	Umunkwoko-moshi Oguta	Good
4	Emmanuel Mmaduagwu	Mr.	Male	45	Business man	Jan. 1993	New Layout Oguta	Good
5	Nkem Uzoka	Mr.	Male	52	Retired soldier	Jan. 1993	Umutogwuma Oguta	Good
6	Onyenma Iyasarara	Mrs.	Female	61	Farmer	Feb. 1993	Abatu Oguta	Good
7	Akpe Ezekoro	Madam	Female	71	Business woman	Feb. 1993	Umunkwoko-moshi Oguta	Good
8	Ikechukwu Irona Izieme	Chief	Male	66	Business woman	Feb. 1993	Abatu Oguta	Good
9	Chieke Uzo Kamalu	Mr.	Male	69	Rtrd civil servant	Feb. 1993	Orsu Obodo	Good
10	Onyedika Paul Nzeako	Mr.	Male	87	Traditional ruler	Feb. 1993	Egbu	Good
11	Johnson Ben Ugborua	Mr.	Male	80	Ligonier	Feb. 1993	Mgbidi	Good
12	Nkeoyeni Nwapa	Madam	Female	66	Fisher Dealer	Feb. 1993	Amarocha Oguta	Good



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Feminine Voyeurism in Ghana Films: Unmasking Frank Raja Arase's Chauvinist Directorial Techniques

ABSTRACT. There has been constant resonance of feminine image misrepresentation in most narratives since the (re)invention of video films across African continent. In spite of the binary struggle between the (presumed) chauvinist filmmakers and their feminists counterparts, muscularity always (re)emerge in new trends to dominate femininity. Consequently, there seems a paradigm shift on the (mis)representation of women which (re)enforces Laura Mulvey's sexual voyeuristic objectification of feminine gender as reflected in near-nude costumes as well as sexual scenes that adorn most Ghana screens. This paper examines Frank Raja Arase's selected films that are randomly sampled to foreground these voyeuristic imprints.

KEYWORDS: Ghallywood, voyeurism, feminism, Arase's films.

Introduction

In most African societies, patriarchy is so much instituted that there are various parts of meats reserved only for male gender. One of such parts is the gizzard of a chicken which is exclusively reserved for the male folk and women who dare to eat it are adequately punished by the existing patriarchal laws. The arrival of Christianity seems to further entrench this patriarchal contraption in Africa as many chauvinists convert have thus (mis)interpreted the bible to suit their patriarchal intents. An African chauvinist school of thought in analysing the biblical creation account believes that God's creation of woman was not in His original plan and as such, a creation error. According to this school of thought, God had created all the animals in binary opposite of male and female except man (Adam) whom God created alone in the paradise. However, seeing that He had created all the animals in binary opposites of male and female and Adam in a single gender of male, God thought

that Adam needed a companion. Therefore, as an afterthought God created Eve. These types of notions which propagate patriarchy in African societies are equally reflected in our films.

This paper examines the replication of such patriarchal school of thought in Frank Raja Arase's selected films which are randomly sampled to foreground the application of voyeuristic imprints to objectify women as sex symbols. The writer's choice of Frank Raja Arase is purposive having (un)consciously observed voyeuristic imprint in most of his films. It queries this excessive application of voyeurism which is hitherto not part of African culture.

Frank Raja Arase

Frank Raja Arase is one of the leading directors in Ghana film industry. Contrary to popular opinion that Arase hails from Ghana, he is a Nigerian, from Edo state. However his earlier contract with a Ghanaian production company; Venus films owned by Abdul Salam Mumuni gave birth to a number of Ghana blockbuster films. Among these films, Arase's film, *Heart of Men* (2009) signaled the quagmire of voyeurism in Ghana screens and by extension, other African films. Some of his notable films include: *The maid I Hired* (2006), *Why Did I Get Married* (2007), *Princess Tyra* (2007), *Agony of the Christ* (2008), *Beyonce: The President Daughter* (2006), *Mummy's Daughter* (2000), *Crime to Christ* (2007), *4 play* (2010), *The Game* (2010), *Somewhere in Africa* (2011), *To Love a Prince* (2014), *Iyore* (2015), *Ghana Must Go* (2016), and so many others. He is famous to have created most Ghana stars like Nadia Buar, Van Vicker, Kalsom Sina-re, Kofi Adjorolo, Majid Michael, Yvonne Nelson, Jakie Appiah and so many others.

His films' genre which seemingly intertwines glamour with crime is often replete with good narrative techniques which involve high suspense, good story lines, good plot structure and exotic locales. Though his films are screen played by different writers notable among them is Pascal Amanfo, the concept of a feminine voyeurism reoccurs in these films. These narratives mostly center on the challenges of family situation; especially, the question of infidelity between husband and wife. Like Alfred Hitchcock, Arase intertwines the serious and the unserious, comic and serious actions, a technique that makes his narratives very entertaining as it is replete with high emotional charge.

Breaking Patriarchal Structures through Feminist Concepts

Patriarchy is a masculine effort to impose male ideology which seeks to dominate the feminine gender in a particular society. On the contrast, feminism is feminine effort to liberate female gender from patriarchal construct in a particular society. Feminism purportedly to have started in women's moment of the 1960s has a millennial root that stretches to antiquity. Shaka and Uchendu, trace feminism "back to mythical figures like Liliath, to the legendary fighting Amazons of Greece and ancient Dahomey, and to classical plays like Aristophanes' *Lysistala*" (Barry, 2012, p. 10). Similarly, Umukoro and Okwuowulu, citing Okoh, equally trace the evolution of feminine suppression to Paleolithic era when goddesses were highly venerated. According to them, "Female goddesses as Athena, Aphrodite, Hera, Hestia and Artemis were highly venerated and assumed great Significance in hierarchy" (Okoh, 2010, p. 226). Okoh however, attributes the lowering of the statues of the goddesses in the Greek pantheon to Zeus' impertinence, inferring that Zeus instituted patriarchy in Olympian by killing king Cronus his father and subduing his mother Rhea. Thereafter he usurped the women reproduction power and gave birth to Athena and Dionysus through his head and thigh respectively. This mythology changed the emphases of female and male divinities (Umukoro & Okwuowulu, 2010, p. 226–227). Having seemingly traced the origin of patriarchal domination and feminist struggle, it is therefore necessary to underscore the difference between gender and sex as such delineations will aid in the analysing the key texts in this paper. In view of this, Umukoro and Okwuowulu, citing Agbo, draw a sharp distinction between both concepts, according to them:

Gender is defined as cultural, behavioural, psychological, social traits typically associated with sex that is male or female. Sex is directly linked to the biological reproductive organ of both male and female. This is the obvious difference between sex and gender (Agbo, 2010, p. 227).

The obvious difference and relationship in both concepts infers that the biological trait of an individual determines his/her societal gender construct. Based on this stereotype, the feminine gender has, over the years, been subjected to a second class role irrespective of her capacity; hence the evolution of feminist movements.

The inception of feminist movement emerged in the western world due to the long deprivation women faced from economic activities.

Based on their sexology, most of them were forced to channel their energy to domestic chores, edifying their bodies and becoming objects of sexual satisfaction to the male gender. Consequently, several women who found this subjugation abnormal championed the feminist trends. Shaka and Uchendu affirm the notion that:

It was in attempt to expose this cultural mindset in men and women as a mechanism of gender inequality that the feminist projects of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s emerged. Since these decades, feminist theory and criticism have undergone several processes and changes in focus and intentions (Shaka & Uchendu, 2012, p. 3-4).

Since the emergence of feminist struggle, different societies and cultures have evolved their peculiar concerns as pointed out by Shaka and Uchendu.

In Africa for instance, the concept of womanist struggle is pivotal and takes precedence over feminist struggle. In the womanist struggle, women endear themselves to be brought into men's affairs, especially the decision making process. It accentuates that women have specific duties at home which are not in any small measure a second fiddle which should be disregarded by men. Womanist concept unlike feminist ideals does not seek equality with men, rather, complementarities of both sexes. Umukoro and Okwuowulu complement this notion stating that:

African feminism, with recourse to their peculiar social condition and cultural exigencies, has developed an African variant which, though runs counter to the antagonistic disposition of its western variants, articulates no less the feminist vision. Its thrust however, is the complementary of the sexes. Obinna Nnaemeka reveals that the African model of feminism, often tagged womanism, has repudiated the western feminist abandonment of motherhood in their quest for egalitarianism (Umukoro & Okwuowulu, 2010, p. 227).

This womanist struggle in Africa permeates in African society because the African gender construct favours the male gender to ambitiously pursue his dream whereas the female gender is being flattered by old men at the tender age and harassed sexually. The society rather than encourage the female gender places premium on her physical appearance as object for male sexual satisfaction. Thus, female genders unconsciously channel their energies towards beautifying their body in preparation of a ready-made husband, forgetting to pursue their dreams and aspiration (Shaka & Uchendu, 2012, p. 4-5). Thus, while acknowl-

ging the African gender construct on the both sexes, womanist movement seeks to demystify the premium placed on women's body and project the role of women in the family. Thus womanist struggle is subtle but it still resonates in most African culture because of the inequality placed on different sexes due to the social gender construct.

Having given the background of feminist and womanist movements, it is pertinent to note therefore that the binary struggle between chauvinist and feminist/womanist ideologies has always been mirrored in the films of various cultures where the struggle is domiciled. In Africa, the concept of the chauvinism has been captured in various films especially that of Frank Raja Arase earlier mentioned. Following the womanist African ideal which enthrones motherhood, and a conscious effort by feminist critics and the emergent feminist filmmakers who have produced films that have attempted a role reversal of the chauvinist portrayal of feminine image in Africa, the paradigm of these bizarre feminist portrayal which seemed to have stopped has only taken a new form as chronic chauvinist filmmakers now employ voyeurism as an alternative means of expression.

The concept of voyeurism involves the sexual derivation which a human being achieves by watching naked individuals. The concept of voyeurism in Ghana films is traced to European screens. Laurel Mulvey had articulated Voyeuristic motifs and the image construct for the Hollywood cinema as scopophilia (pleasure in looking). She associated that scopophilia "with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (Mulvey, 2006, p. 60). Mulvey observes that cinema satisfies the primordial wish of pleasurable looking, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. Thus, cinema audience derives pleasure in using another person as object of sexual stimulation through sight. According to her, pleasure of looking has been between active (male) and passive (female). The image of the passive is encoded with erotic imprints which connotes to-be-looked-at-ness. Therefore the female gender is portrayed in leitmotif of sexual object carrying erotic spectacle and traditionally displayed as sexual objects in two levels: one, as erotic objects within the characters in the screen and secondly as erotic objects for the viewers that are watching the film. Comparing male and female sexual objectification, Mulvey observes that male gender derives no pleasure in gazing at the sexual advance of his fellow man. Thus this justifies male's role as active pleasure "seeker" where the female is passive pleasure "seeker" (Mulvey, 2006, p. 63-65).

This concept promotes nudity and demeans the feminine gender in African society as portrayed in most Ghana films. God's presence corroborates this notion that women are variously represented in films as "object of male gaze, sex objects, and self-sacrifices to gratify the man's desire (Smith, 2014, p. 98). Correspondingly Smith observes that:

The role of a woman in a film almost always revolves around her physical attraction and the mating games she plays with the male characters... Women provide trouble or sexual interludes for male characters, or are not present at all. Even when a woman is the central character she is generally shown as confused or helpless and in danger, or passive, or as a purely sexual being (Smith, 2006, p. 14–15).

Adjei supposes that voyeuristic scene seen in Ghana films presently could be traced to Andre Bazin's development of deep-focus photography as a neorealistic concept which brought the eyes closer to reality. He infers that this in turn encourages soft phonographic scenes in films. According to him, these voyeuristic imprints seen today in Ghana films are western narrative techniques which, do not conform to the orature narrative techniques in Ghana films. He submits that "independent European or Neorealist Cinema, rather than Hollywood, has influenced Ghalollywood in expression of sex and sexuality" (Adjei, 2014, p. 14–15). Continuing, he presumes that many Mexican and Venezuelan romantic soap operas that now dominate Ghanaian TV screens such as *Esmeralda*, *Aespuleo Bay*, *Second chance*, *Hidden Passion*, *Storm over Paradise* and so on, which explicitly depict extended sexuality have been popular in Ghana screen and thus blindly mimicked by indigenous filmmakers.

The trending Feminine nudity and obscene costumes in most Ghalollywood films complement this notion. Citing M. S. Tili, God's presence observes that the near-nude and obscene costume filmic motifs of Socrates Sarfo, one of the pioneer producers in Ghana video film industry greatly influences the voyeurism seen today in Ghana films (Tili, 2013, p. 222). Thus, directors who employ voyeurism technique promote nudity and demean the feminine gender in African society.

A Critical Reading of *The maid I Hired* by Frank Raja Arase

In the narrative *The maid I Hired*, Frank Raja Arase seemingly brings women to the centre of marital problems. The narrative starts with party scenes where ladies (un)consciously flaunt their skimpy cloths.

This scene accentuates the argument of this paper on the voyeuristic imprints in Arase's films. Thereafter the narrative centres on the family of Desmond (Mike Ezuronye) and Melody (Yvonne Okoro) who are husband and wife. Desmond, being a movie star is very rich and would want his wife to rather keep his home than build her own career. We recall that this notion held by the filmic character Desmond preempted the feminist struggle. Though Melody is extremely comfortable in their exquisite and magnificent abode, she is very lonely and desires to work and build a career. Thus against her husband's consent, she engages in a work. Again, her attitude conforms to the concerns of the women who originated feminist struggle. Consequently, both couple becomes extremely busy that Melody employs the services of Juliet (Yvonne Nelson), a village girl and her childhood friend, transforms her through buying her some skimpy cloths in order to look good and subsequently take care of her baby.

As Melody's excessive busy schedule entrenches problem in their family, Desmond claims that his premarital agreement with Melody is that while he, Desmond, provides for the family, Melody keeps the home. Consequent upon the friction in the house, Desmond lusts after Juliet as Juliet wears these skimpy cloths bought for her by Melody. Thus, the concept of Mulvey scopophilia is highly valorised in these scenes. This lustful scenario heightens the tension in the narrative as both partners feel the absence of each other. Once more, the emotional depth by both couple is portrayed by the director with a composite shot of both partners rendered in a montage sequence where they react to their respective emotions in diverse ways. While Desmond soliloquizes as he drives, Melody goes to God in prayers: thus a moment of self realization which is akin with Arase's films.

Arase's chauvinist ideology is equally portrayed in these emotional states. Though both couple battle emotionally, Melody's emotions are magnified as her best friend, Juliet, whom she brought to the house as maid is presumed to have taken in for her husband. With this, Arase takes a stand in the chauvinist and feminist binary struggle which implies that women should not pursue their careers to the detriment of their family. Arase's stand goes to affirm Shaka and Uchendu's earlier reviewed position that African society encourages female gender to channel their energies towards beautifying their body in preparation for a ready-made husband, forgetting to pursue their dreams and aspiration (Shaka & Uchendu, 2012, p. 4-5). The film finally ends in the moment of

truth where the viewers discover that Desmond is not responsible for Juliet's pregnancy. Thus, Desmond's family supposedly makes—up.

Arase's films have similar motifs that could endear him to be adjudged as an auteur director. This is seen in his frequent characterization of feminine characters as seductress, as seen in Juliet's skimpy cloths as well as the ladies wearing pants at the swimming pool. This conforms to the position of this paper on Arase's Voyeuristic imprints in his narrative. Thus Arase's notion of seductress characters conform with Mulvey's conception of female gender being portrayed in leitmotif of sexual object carrying erotic spectacle in two levels: one, as erotic objects within the characters in the screen and secondly as erotic objects for the viewers that are watching the film (Mulvey, 2006, p. 65).

Furthermore he characterizes them as career women who lacks affection for their family and who could scarcely keep a home as seen in Melody's character. This portrayal which contradicts the notion of motherhood in womanist concept of African feminist ideology is an indictment of feminine image in his films. In addition, he characterizes them as betrayals as seen in the betraying tendencies of Melody's friends who in order to win Desmond's love tell various lies to Desmond that Melody cheats on him.

A Critical Reading of *Why Did I Get Married?* by Frank Raja Arase

The narrative, *Why Did I Get Married?* is driven by just two characters: Williams (Magid Michael) and Janet (Yvonne Okoro). The two character-driven technique of the narrative is perhaps its most fascinating aspect. The film chronicles the family of Williams, a medical doctor, who, following his wife's advice abandons his medical profession to enjoy a blissful marriage with his wife Janet. Afraid of having contact with other lady's private part, Janet had advised Williams to abandon his medical profession. Against this background, she tries to get contract jobs for Williams. However, William's decision to go back to his profession was borne out of financial bankruptcy as well as a failed contract which he believes he lost as a result of his problems with his wife Janet at the period of the contract.

The inception of the narrative presents Williams' family in lovely mood with a conscious attempt by Arase to delineate the two characters

which are both portrayed as deceptive personalities. Their deceptive nature is seen during a self imposed fasting which both opted to do. During the fasting, both characters secretly eat something while still pretending to the other spouse that the fasting is still going on. Beyond this scenario which portrays both partners as deceptive, they are both portrayed as serious minded characters, though playful in nature. Their serious and unserious nature makes their characters flexible and this character flexibility sustains the narrative which revolves around the activities of both partners in their house. Just like most Arase's films, Janet (Female) is at the receiving end of most encountered marital problem in the narrative.

On one occasion, both couple had come home after celebrating their marriage anniversary, Williams not only accuses Janet of making him spend money, but prevents Janet from going to the toilet when she is pressed. His reason been that she was to go and defecate his money which she just squandered. In addition, Williams' harsh behaviours towards Janet, translated into physical abuse immediately Williams starts working in the hospital. On several occasions, Janet will take alcoholic drinks due to boredom at home whenever Williams goes to work. However, on returning from work on several occasions and seeing his wife in such drunken condition, Williams forces more drinks on her in such a ruthless way.

In the portrayal of both characters, while Janet is portrayed as a no-do-well woman, who does not have any career and who often tries to seduce her husband whenever he is at home and feels frustrated whenever her husband goes to work, Williams on the other hand is portrayed as a medical doctor, a serious character who does not want his mother in-law to take care of his financial responsibility; a reason why he went back to his medical profession. Janet's seductive movement which conforms to Murvey's voyeurism is seen in various scenes which she played with her husband Williams. This is highlighted in the family's troubled situations where rather than using alternative means of making up, Janet uses futile seductive enticement on Williams. The unsuccessful seductive attempts on Williams are a strong incitement on the feminine gender presupposing that men could develop strong self control even when they lust after feminine body. Conversely, William though ruthless in certain periods, is portrayed as a man who does not joke with his job, loving and caring. His seriousness with his medical profession is seen in his response to distress calls when he is relaxing with his wife. Thus the

juxtaposition of his relaxation scenes with his wife and his reception of distressed calls portrays his wife as a big distraction which he must always subdue to be focused. However, typical of Arase's films, the narrative swerves to a swift twist at its tail end as all the filmic actions are perceived to have happened in a dream; both couple are presumably yet to be married.

A Critical Reading of *To Love a Prince* by Frank Raja Arase

The narrative revolves on the desperate character of Solange (Yvonne Nelson) a beauty Queen who will do anything possible to win Akila's (John Domelo) love. Akila is a prince and a gentle man greatly desired by all feminine characters in the narrative. First, Solange fakes an accident scene where she pretentiously runs into Akila's car. Though not badly hurt by Akila, she is taken to the hospital by him. This accident situation thus provides an opportunity for Solange to meet the prince as well as the opportunity for her to tell the prince about her beauty contest. Secondly, during the beauty context, the audience's favours Bernice (Jakie Appiah) over Solange. Bernice is Solange's best friend. Following this, Solange secretly organises a kidnap of Bernice's sister, using her as bait to entrap Bernice to step down from the beauty contest. Her stepping down gives Solange an opportunity to win the contest and subsequently invited to be hosted by the prince, Akila. Conversely, At Akila's house in the company of Bernice, Akila openly confesses love for Bernice and thereafter makes outward love gestures and marriage proposals.

Subsequently, both Akila and Bernice agree to marry themselves. As Akila and Bernice are organising their wedding, Solange arranges for Bernice to be blinded and crippled by some bad boys. Unfortunately Bernice dies in the process. After her burial, Solange makes futile efforts to seduce Akila. However, being greatly troubled in the spiritual realm, Bernice's spirit possesses a dead body, Vanessa and falls in love with Akila. Shortly before Akila proposes marriage with Bernice's spirit, he discovers that Vanessa is a dead body being possessed by Bernice. Consequently, he vows not to remarry in his life.

Just like most of Arase's films, the portrayal of the character of Solange as an evil genius, seductress, murderer and desperado portrays the woman folk in a bad light, while Akila, the prince, a male gender, is portrayed as a focused young man who would not fall for Solange's

seductive action. Emphases are laid on Solange's body and beauty which she (Solange) premiums at the point of her purported accident. At the beauty pageant, her character as a desperado as well as an evil genius is highlighted. Seeing that Bernice is the choice candidate, she arranges for the adoption of her sister and thereafter prevails on her to withdraw from the beauty race. In addition, even though Solange supposedly takes hummer jeep as a price from the prince to give up on him, she keeps trying to seduce him. Again, her seductive attributes is akin to Arase's films which foregrounds the voyeuristic imprints in them. Finally, in trying to maim Bernice, she murders her best friend. Thus, her character portrayal as a murderer is perhaps the height of feminine character stereotype in Arase's films. Having murdered Bernice, Solange's quest for the prince continues through different scenarios where she tries to seduce him. Her unremorseful nature as well as her focus on marrying the prince overtly reduces feminine characters as mere charlatans whose means of survival merely depends on men. This equally conforms to Shaka and Uchendu's earlier reviewed position that African chauvinist construct supposes that women's energy should be channeled towards their body and subsequently marrying good husband rather than building a career.

Comparative Analysis of the Selected Films by Frank Raja Arase

The feminine portrayals in the three films are seemingly stereotyped to achieve voyeuristic imports. First, they are portrayed as women whose source of livelihood depends on men. In *Why Did I Get Married?* and *To love a Prince*, Janet and Solange, the key feminine characters in both films rather than channel their energies towards building a career for themselves, focus on beautifying their bodies as bait for the key masculine characters in the narrative. In *The maid I Hired*, Arase though presents Melody, the key feminine character as ambitions towards building a career; he equally takes a serious position on the evil effect of a woman building a career to the detriment of her family. This is portrayed in the emotional battle which Melody undergoes as she presumes that her maid Juliet has taken in for her husband.

Furthermore, voyeuristic scenarios are replete in these three films as Arase always constructs a feminine sex symbol in his narratives. Through Melody is the key character in *The maid I Hired*, Arase con-

structs Juliet as sex symbol for voyeuristic impact in the narrative. Juliet, a presumed village girl and childhood friend of Melody, is hired by Melody, to take care of her baby. Juliet's presence in the house serves as voyeuristic imprints to Desmond, by extension to the viewers who presumably start lusting after her. In *Why Did I Get Married?* Janet was characterized as the sex symbol to achieve voyeuristic imprints. Janet on several occasions would systematically make sexual overtures on Williams her husband. On the other hand, Solenge in *To Love a Prince* makes countless futile sexual advances to prince Akila. Most times, in as much as the male gender will resist the sexual intents made to them by this seductress, Arase elongates the voyeuristic scenes to presumably achieve his scopophilia imprints. Apart from these key characters, characterised as sex symbols by Arase, he often intermittently brings in party scenes, swimming pool scenes, beauty pageant scenes, beach scenes where woman who are merely on their nude forms flaunt their bodies.

Conclusion

Frank Raja Arase's narratives are captivating with stories neatly woven around various complicating events. These conflicts often centre on unfaithful feminine partner in the family. He always makes use of exquisite and bogus locations to add glamour to his narratives. His films often chronicle marital challenges which are seemingly caused by the wife of the family through her excessive career pursuit to the detriment of her family or her overbearing placement of premium on her body. Thus, feminine characters in Arase's films are often seen as temptress, betrayals, seductress, insatiable and inability to be good mothers. These films are often replete with conscious seductive movements by the feminine characters who often wear skimpy cloths. This bizarre portrayal of feminine characters often creates voyeurism motifs in his narratives.

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Networked subversion: a catalyst for a change in thinking about sexuality

ABSTRACT. The picture is an important element of Western Culture. Boldly it can be called a universal means of transmission, an inherent part of social and virtual communication. For this reason, in my text, I have decided to analyze images in social media, cultural objects that deal with issues of breaking the cultural pattern of gender and sexuality. I will focus on the subversive nature of these images and how they can be put into public discussion. Simplicity, literacy, and above all, the visuality of the message, are the characteristics of the image, that led to its inclusion in the digital communication process. Contemporary man is "homo videns", communicates with the world, receives the world through images. Language is an abstract message, the image provides precision, versatility. The ease of reading a visual message makes certain cultural content more accessible. The issue of gender, the artificiality of meanings given due to sexual characteristics, is easier to say with images. Due to the photos present in the social media, the academic discussion on the limitations of the sex bureaucracy is becoming more common. Everyone can express their voice, give discussion, confront other people's opinions. Because of the number of users, the freedom of uploading photos, the topic of breaking the hetero-dogmat is global. Social media as a tool to undermine cultural gender stereotypes.

KEYWORDS: gender, body, social creation, social media, subversion, pictures, massive communication

Introduction

The way we understand human sexuality and set boundaries between the sexes, or define the essence of the category of gender itself, is historically and culturally contingent.

Contemporary western culture accepts sexual differentiation based on anatomical differences. Yet at the same time, the same culture provides tools for changing this order. By combining the world of show business with the world of social networking, a channel which promotes attitudes that go beyond the limits of biological sexes has come into being.

In order to understand the idea of networked subversion better, I find it justified to analyse selected cases of it and have a closer look at promoted slogans, at the main participants of social networking campaigns and at a provoked discussion. I am going to focus on images that undermine the cultural norms of masculinity and femininity and that have been presented in various social networks. In this way, by using research materials, I would like to present manifestations of gender-based games, which are visible in the web sphere of entertainment. I wish to focus particularly on the issue of free creation of femininity and masculinity, regardless of the carnal limitations, as a form of cultural contestations of gender norms that close sex in the body.

My analysis includes three images, which have been selected by me deliberately. The purpose of these images is to show ambivalence about sex. The pictures show, in a preserved way, a problem of reducing femininity and masculinity only to a bodily narrative. Sex is dressed in a stiff anatomy corset and the selected images depict people who are well-known and popular. That why, I think, the images have gained public, mass character. Two of these pictures illustrate a campaign which breaks binary thinking about sex and convinces that gender is a social, mental construct that does not depend on the anatomy. These images originally appeared in the Internet but the third picture, the picture from the cover of one of the most famous magazines in the world, had appeared on the magazine cover first and then it was published on the Internet.

So, why do photographs function in the social media? Firstly, photographs are unique research material. They grab a fragment of the reality and write down on its surface not only images but also content that requires reading. As Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński pointed out, a photograph "has become a sign, as a letter, word, and even sentence (...). It has become a new, more universal means of communication (...)" (Wolny-Zmorzyński, 2007, p. 42) I have chosen the photographs due to the fact that the contemporary culture is dominated by visual information. Some researchers even call our culture "the culture of images". What is more, the scholars label contemporary people as "homo videns". A contemporary person prefers an image as a communication tool. He or she uses an image or a simple visual code that transfers knowledge or emotions. That perceptual language accompanies us during every step of deposing the spoken or written word, which requires completely different communication skills.

Secondly, the contemporary western culture can be described as interactive, modern, and high-tech, because the idea is focused on co-creating, modifying and commenting content. The three activities listed above have become qualities of the culture. A new habit of being up-to-date and of participating in the circulation of information within social networks is constantly being formed. Yes, we want to receive information quickly, stay informed at all hours or even have an opportunity to see what is taking place on different social networking sites. Thanks to new media, we can do it. That is why we carry mobile phones around and check updates constantly. Such behavior has become an inherent feature of the contemporary culture. Additionally, the behavior has changed the way we communicate and live. Long ago, Marshall McLuhan wrote in "Understanding Media" that "...the medium is the message" and it is still a valid cultural diagnosis. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result in the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 37). The nature of culture depends on the dominant medium. Media indicate how we think and they order our reality.

In "Amusing ourselves to death", Neil Postman goes even further. He claims that the media have become our language that we use to communicate and think about things. More importantly, today they condition our view of the reality because they have become our "metaphors". "A message denotes a specific, concrete statement about world. But the forms of our media (...) They are rather like metaphors (...)" (Postman, 2006, p. 10), which "create the content of our culture" (Postman, 2006, p. 15).

Nowadays, our culture is based on the Internet, and especially on global social connections, thanks to popular and common mobile accessories. For this reason, we can describe our culture as a "mobile-phone" or "thumb" one. (Maj, 2008, p. 112–127). The name comes from the phenomenon of continuous using a mobile phone/gadgets. The objects that we carry around are handy and personal. They allow us to stay connected constantly, and thanks to that they have become "an extension of ourselves". Global social networking is our new "metaphor". It changes our view on the reality and the way we communicate. Now information and ideas are presented in the form of short posts, or schematic pictures/symbols. These are rate, clarity, brevity, iconicity of information that are truly important. We can communicate wherever we want, all we

need is reception/connection to the Internet. There also exists another important aspect of the modern network of relationships, which we cannot forget about. This is the freedom of speech. We can talk about everything. These are active receivers who decide what topic is popular or worth talking about, even if the subject is controversial or forbidden beyond the virtual reality. This is how the global communication works, this is how we function in the world.

These two features of the modern times, that is the attachment to an image as a means of communication and the popularization of the Internet, especially of the social networking sites, have influenced the choice of subject and object of my study.

As a result of involvement of interactive media in the discourse about gender fluidity, there is a chance of starting discussions on sex/gender, gender roles, and social ideas about femininity and masculinity. These discussions are possible due to our ability to send images in the media and due to the speed of internet communication. We must remember that nowadays an access to information is fast. Users of social networking sites can also give individual responses. One comment or "Like!" is enough to spark a discussion. The form of communication is simple, concentrated in a single image or an entry, which increases its suggestiveness. Although we cannot talk about a simple relationship between actions taken in the network and in the sphere of everyday life, undoubtedly the online discussions about the relationship between the sex and gender have proven that there exist changes in thinking about their boundaries, making us aware of their permeability.

Heterosexual esthetics and the logic of thinking about gender

The western culture puts sexuality in the binary, hetero-normative pattern, built on a traditionally defined gender differentiation. The pattern imposes thinking in the category of totality and naturalness of the woman-man differentiation. Because of the fact that sex is closely associated with physicality, it "produces" male and female bodies in accordance with the binary, heterosexual model, and reproduces this model by socialization. This means that western cultural models revolve around a traditional vision. They promote the binary differentiation between a man and a woman. They recognize the body as the main category for differentiating between the sexes. The models fill in femininity and masculinity with sep-

arate social content, thus creating distinct repertoires of behaviors typical for each of the sexes. The cultural models strongly emphasize boundaries between the sexes. This is the effect of the so-called cultural scenarios. William Simon and John H. Gamon define the cultural model as an instructional guide applicable in a given society, community. There are three levels of scripting: intrapersonal scripting, intrapsychic scripting and cultural scenarios. All of them are different in every social setting. When talking about the cultural scenarios, we can call them attempts to create shared meanings. The most basic types of the cultural scenarios are those that concern sexuality and gender norms. The aim of that cultural (sexual) script is to determine the limits of ideas, norms and behaviors. As a result, the binary thinking sets two different sex roles, two different, stereotypical, and what is the most important, closed habitus assigned to male/female bodies. This model is constructed by the boundaries defined by the anatomy and tradition (Simon & Gamon, 2007, p. 31–41). In this way, some ideas of femininity/ masculinity or of thought patterns are born. Later, these ideas or patterns are duplicated in other areas, such as sport and business. That cultural binary scenario does not lose its coercive power, but thanks to social organizations, social movements, social campaigns or gender/sexual education and to showing a different sexuality understanding, talking about sexuality and related issues, the binary thinking is becoming less effective. This means also that we have a possibility to discuss different points of view.

In my opinion, thanks to feminist movements and gender studies, the approach to sexes is changing. For instance, a distinction between sex and gender has been introduced. As Judith Butler claims, sex is biologically defined (by gonads, genitals, chromosomes or anatomy of body) while gender is culturally constructed. According to Butler "(...) gender in neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex" (Butler, 1990, p. 6).

Thanks to J. Butler's performativity theory, gender is starting to be seen as a creative act, which is done in accordance with general social principles. "Gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts would be no gender at all. Gender is (...) the tactic collective agreement to be performed, produced and sustained (...). (...) [It] is produced through the stylizations of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way, in which body gestures, movement and styles of various kinds constitute the

illusion of an abiding gendered self. [Gender] is created thought sustained social performance (...)" (Butler, 1990, p. 140–141). It is role-playing and constructing possibilities that gender gives us. Gradually, the categories of masculinity/femininity stop being explicitly closed.

But the discussion, which was the impetus for a change in thinking about sexuality, was in this case limited because it involved activists, academics and people socially engaged. It was not a personal statement or expressing an opinion on a massive scale.

Social networking—a step towards introducing alternative models of sexuality: a campaign example

Social networking has become a sure step towards introducing alternative models of sexuality. A network of contacts does not only connect people with each other and turns them into a group friends. Thanks to its mass character and hyper-textuality, the network becomes a tool for commenting on and shaping our reality. Social networking sites enable us to express views of a wider social group or to bring together individuals from the bottom up, who feel engaged in a certain case. We can promote a new set of norms and standards of sexual conduct, undermining those current ones.

The new media, and the Internet in particular, allow us to publish and pass on to other people information that deviates from the accepted standards. Initiative is on the part of the audience, who become co-writers. By using words, images and comments that are distributed among friends, they introduce a new repertoire of behavior and sexual norms. In this way, the open communication distributes new content like a domino, going beyond spatial boundaries. Thanks to mass "likes", sharing and commenting on discussions, new topics are introduced to a public debate. As a result, sexual and cultural norms are reconstructed. Global social connections give us a possibility of promoting alternative concepts of sexuality and undermining the dominant discourse on a massive scale. Thanks to this, the concepts are noticeable. This way of acting is called "a subversion". In one of her works, Judith Butler suggests the following definition of this term: a subversion is "(...) exposing and challenging those culture mechanisms which produce the binarity and non-transferability of gender; it is an action which seeks to break the hetero-dogma and to open the hermetic discourse of contemporary

culture onto the potential that gender performativity brings" (Skowrońska, 2008, p. 279–280).

A social networking campaign created by FCKH8, a clothing company that supports the LGBTQ+ community by selling T-shirts with pro-equality and anti-sexist slogans, is an example of engaging social media in subversive actions. A motto for the campaign are Chaz Bono's words: "to me, gender is between your ears, not between your legs" (Bono, 2009).

In 2013, Iggy Pop took part in the campaign. He had been photographed wearing a dress, which is typically feminine attire and an attribute of femininity. This photo is a clear sign of going beyond the boundaries of sexual order. Additionally, the visual message has been reinforced by the verbal comment: "I'm not ashamed to dress 'like a woman' because I don't think it's shameful to be a women" (Pop, 2013).

It is an objection to treating femininity and masculinity on the basis of opposition and domination. Gender equality means going beyond the patriarchal limits that have been set. Adopting attributes of another sex does not make a person ridiculous. Man loses nothing of his masculinity by wearing a dress because what we consider to be masculine or feminine is only a socially accepted rule.

Users of social networks can directly affect, comment on and react to a post. For instance, this photo with Iggy Pop interested more than four thousand users. There were a lot of comments under the picture, the people began to exchange their opinions, and some of the users were even joking about Iggy Pop looking better in a dress than his girlfriend. Others thought that the musician looked stupid and ridiculous.

The motto was used again in 2014. This time, it was added to a photograph with David Bowie and Tilda Swinton, or actually with David Bowie as Tilda Swinton and Tilda Swinton as David Bowie. The motto was reinforced with the visual message—how easy it was to confuse a woman with a man, using only the binary type of thinking. This is because a visual or outer change of sex is easy, it shows how easily we can break a division into a male and a female. Our patterns of femininity and masculinity are completely artificial creations that are culturally constructed. Gender is how we feel, it exists in our bodies and outside of them, but everything starts in our heads "gender is more complex and way more an internal state of being than you may have realized" (Unknown, 2016). Users of one of social networks agreed that the photo of Bowie and Swinton could help us explain and understand the idea of gender better.

Another example of subversion in the social media is a photo of Lady Gaga, or her alter ego Jo Calderone, which was on the cover of the Japanese edition of the fashion magazine for men "Vogue" in 2010. This is a unique image for several reasons. Firstly, it was designed to be the cover of the magazine. The purpose of such a photo is to attract readers' attention and to indicate the main theme of a given number. The photo has to match a profile letter and profile readers. It should provide customers with an image of their own future, the dream "I". "Vogue Hommes" Japan is the international high-fashion magazine for men and it needs attractive models who can be featured on its covers. Jo Calderone seems to meet this requirement. Although the picture is mysterious and artistic, it conveys a complicated message. We are not sure who is on the cover, this is not an easily recognizable character. It is also difficult to read the message of images and link them with the content of the current number. Therefore, I believe that this is not a typical cover photo. Of course, at this point we can ask about a purpose the picture serves. Is it the picture of Lady Gaga's alter ego or is it just another performance of a flamboyant singer, who keeps building her career on controversies and crossing cultural boundaries? Even so, the costume of the opposite sex that she is wearing puts gender outside the binary continuum. The cover photo gives us another reason to talk about what sex really is and what creates sex, as the appearance is important in the identification of one's gender. What is more, the appearance can be misleading.

These pictures, transmitted, commented on and published on profiles of both organizations and individuals triggered a massive debate. This would not have been possible if the social media had not been so popular, peculiar and interactive. They have changed the way we talk about gender. Commented on by friends, popular images enable us to have discussions not only on a massive scale. From now on, we can express our own opinions on a massive scale. The strength of social media is the ability to express opinions and views, to create forums that present views and to comment on visual and virtual reality (Krok, 2011, p. 50). The pictures did not go unnoticed, were not lost in the sheer volume of data transferred. As we could see in the comments under the photographs, the pictures gained both supporters and opponents promoting the concept of gender. The people commenting on Iggy Pop's pictures paid attention to a man looking good in a dress and some women even said: "he looks better in a dress than I do". Here, we can say that in same way Iggy escapes the topic of gender specification of the body,

using culturally accepted sexual attributes. The readers of the post focus on the attributes of femininity: the purse and the dress. Because of these sexual attributes, the picture remains the subject of a discussion and invites people to express their opinions on the notion of sex. There are statements about the futility of hiding masculinity. A man remains a man, even if he is a man wearing a feminine outfit. Another photo covers an issue of ease with which people are able to transform their bodies, giving them new forms—gender. It provokes us to say that sex/gender is a liquid, constantly played with and created with the use of tools available in a given culture. Because of the motto “Gender is between your ears, not between your legs”, the photo stimulates a discussion about classification as a man or a woman. Many people, in their comments, point out that doctors determine sex on the basis of a child's sexual organs. So sex depends on what you have between your legs. In the case of this photo, the issue of transformation into the opposite sex, through putting on outfits of the opposite sexes, seems to be not that important. Of course, the image is admired because of the idea behind it, which is “cheating” its audience in terms of gender of the characters in the picture, but the idea itself is not surprising. Perhaps this is the result of images that the characters from the photo have created—androgynous beauty, a feature which both Tilda Swinton and David Bowie are famous for. Maybe these people have inured us to their sexually ambiguous and androgynous images.

It seems to me that the use of their images in the campaigns aimed at fighting for gender, and the play with their own appearance, highlight perfectly the concept of “body” in general. The body is only the surface on which matters are recorded. The body itself takes on meaning only through the process of determining sex—by using the anatomy, attributes or identity. You can read the image of Lady Gaga in a similar vein. The scandalous singer breaks boundaries by showing that gender can be understood in a new post-structural way and that it can be treated as a unit that is not assigned permanently and definitively.

Summary

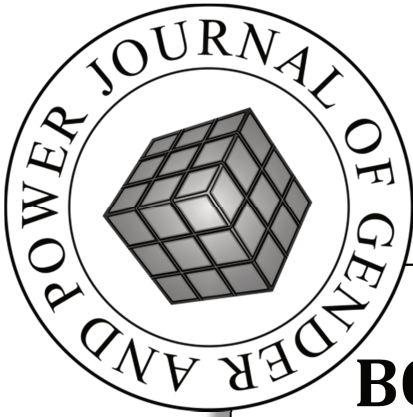
Thanks to social networking, the photo of Iggy Pop wearing a dress or Bowie and Swinton dressed up as each other or the alter ego of Lady Gaga can “live their own lives”. The pictures circulate between users of

portals, the people can talk about the images or just comment on them because the content of communication is controversial. It opposes the treatment of masculinity and femininity on the basis of opposition and domination. The message evokes a massive discussion because it undermines culturally created sexual differentiations. It shows that the things which we consider to be male or female are the social creations and the gender equality means going beyond the patriarchal order. Social networking has become a sure step towards the introduction of alternative models of sexuality. Why is that possible? In the last few years, there has been a change in the nature and the importance of social networking sites. A network of contacts does not only connect people with each other and turns them into a group friends. Thanks to their mass character and hypertextuality, social networking sites have become a tool for commenting on and shaping our reality. They enable us to feel engaged in a certain case as grassroots. We can promote a new set of norms and standards of sexual conduct, undermining those current ones. We can not forget that thanks to our phones, we can receive that kind of grassroots messages very quickly. I think that the appearance of such images, which have been previously obtained from our friends or from different social organizations, on our private profiles shortens the distance to some kind of topics. These topics become closer to us because we can comment on them, initiate significant discussions, get to know different views, agree with them or disagree. As it turns out, topics that were at some point unfamiliar or insignificant to us, can later become close to us. For this topic, I perceived sex for the situation, process but not to the individual feature. Only the images that disturb our idea of the appearance of a man and a woman, reproduced and transmitted by members of a social network, through their persuasiveness and presence on a mass scale are able to bring a new sense of understanding gender. The new media are becoming the extension of our senses, the contemporary perception is reduced to schemes, logs and short pieces of information and I think pictures are an excellent way of subverting the binary view of gender. These pieces of information say more than great campaigns or academic discourse. Their social significance is increasing. Therefore, I believe that the subversion in the social media is an important issue in the discussion and research on the social and cultural dimensions of human sexuality. It is so persuasive and influential that it can surely be regarded as a modern philosophical catalyst for a change.

Ethical approval: This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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BOOK AND JOURNAL REVIEWS

Tomasz Gmerek. *Polityka apartheidu w szkolnictwie RPA. Geneza, rozwój i konsekwencje*. Poznań 2017: Adam Mickiewicz University Press. Pp. 291.

The characteristic of the Republic of South Africa's school system during the apartheid period has not been dealt with in depth for a long time. Previous works, especially in Poland are limited to history, linguistics, geography and political science aspects. Racial issues and the role of gender and power which are the key in this publication were often poorly presented in the past. The latest publication by Tomasz Gmerek published in Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza will give a reader a complex picture of the utterly repressive apartheid state in this part of the world.

Tomasz Gmerek is among the most well-known scientist in comparative education and sociology of education field. He is a Professor at Adam Mickiewicz University (Faculty of Educational Studies) in Poznań. His main research focuses on the selective and stratification function of education in various locations around the world. As a member of Multicultural Education and Social Inequality Research Department at Adam Mickiewicz University he made himself know for the following publications: *Education and social inequality. Comparative case study of England, Spain and Russia* (2011), *Education and ethnic identity of minorities living in the polar regions: a socio-educational study* (2013). There are also numerous published articles outlining the past-present history of different school systems and their sociological aspects. The newest book is undoubtedly based on long term research dedicated to the South Africa factual data.

The aim of author's work which is clearly presented in the widespread introduction is to call a question about political influence on education during the apartheid times. In the introduction author presents general ideas of the book which can be situated between the sociology of education and comparative pedagogy. This part specifically describes previous research and publications which can be treated as a base of the present book. With this in mind author explains problems and hopes discovered while writing. There are four elaborated chapters in this book. Language of the introduction is very personal and clearly inviting with smooth connection to the following chapters.

Chapter One according to the author "takes up the issue of the link between racial segregation and processes of social differentiation leading to the emergence of a specific form of stratification in which race plays the crucial role" (Gmerek, 2017, p. 288). Throughout this part writer refers to several theories of social closure, concepts and theoretical categories which are helpful with understanding the problem. In the literature author often tends to refer to general

words such as: racism, racial segregation and apartheid which are clearly explained in section one. Gmerek draws our attention to the relation between social segregation phenomenon and social diversity process which leads to the situation where race plays the crucial role. The first part gives fully useful and justified data which helps with understanding the following chapters.

The second section is focused on the systematic analysis of the origins of the apartheid policy in South Africa schooling. The development and consequences of this process were raised also in chapter three and four. The author focused on historical contexts of the policy of racial segregation as well as the future shape of educational institutes until 1948. The reader will also find other highlighted analysis of the religious, economic, political and social conditions which have influenced on the formation of societal differences. The four issues were selected in order to draw on them special scientific attention: "trends in the development of schooling, against the backdrop of historical events in the systematically colonised areas of South Africa; the language situation; the process of shaping the teaching profession; and the development of higher education" (Gmerek, 2017, p. 288). This chapter represents valuable and innovative approach in this particular publication.

The next chapter looks at the question of how the education system functioned under apartheid times in the context of mentioned previously aspects such as: social, economic, political, demographic and social processes. The six new issues are discussed by the author in this section. This raises many questions regarding selected contexts in terms of South African education system and the process of indoctrinating younger generations in a racist ideology. Another issues are selective function of this particular education system, teacher training whilst apartheid times and function of political language in terms of racially segregated schooling. The final matter in question shows in what way higher education as a subject to segregation along racial lines functions and changes.

The final chapter which also summarises the publication is the fourth one. The evidence from this part points towards the idea of possible ways in which the education system worked during the process of political transformation to a democracy. In general, this section also refers to six principal issues listed by the author: "the way South Africa's current education system was reformed and now operates; changes in the goals of education system in terms of its socialisation function and changes in the sphere of the social values promoted in the system at present; changes in selection function of the reformed education system; the current situation of languages in South Africa's educational system; changes in the education of teachers and the problems experienced by this profession in South Africa; current changes in the higher education system" (Gmerek, 2017, p. 290). An incredibly clearly and logically narrative construction of this chapter is very diversified by its language and content.

This work has led me to the conclusion that education department documents and statistical analyses made by South African Institute of Race Relations are significant part of the analysis in presented title. In this paper we have plenty of statistical information and data referring to the situation of individuals

from several race categories before and during the apartheid times. The author of this book managed to present the differences in access to education among people with various racial background and their achievements. Taken together, these findings highlight a remarkable role for getting to know better undersides of the apartheid policy in education in the Republic of South Africa. What is more important, the book shows many aspects of apartheid policy in terms of teachers education, gender inequality and social stratification.

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Renee Engeln, *Beauty Sick. How the Cultural Obsession with Appearance Hurts Girls and Women*. Warszawa 2018: Buchmann. Pp. 416.

Sometimes think I could take on the world but first... Oh my God, my eyebrows need plucking, and, oh my God, my legs need shaving; and my pores need cleansing and my skin needs toning; and my boobs need padding and my hair needs combing. These words are the lyrics of Siwan Clark, who expresses in this way how oppressive and restrictive our culture is. It concerns especially girls and women, who are often assessed for their appearance and not achievements. The cited lyrics open the book, titled *Beauty Sick: How the Cultural Obsession with Appearance Hurts Girls and Women*, written by Renee Engeln.

Renee Engeln is a professor of psychology at Northwestern University. Her articles have appeared in many academic journals, such as "Journal of Health Psychology", "Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology" or "Psychology of Women Quarterly" (Northwestern, 2019). She directs The Body and Media Lab, which focuses on issues surrounding women's body images, such as negative body talk and media images of women. The impulse to write the book were her students, who put their looks above other obligations such as work or studies. On the basis of scientific findings and interviews with many women Engeln has evaluated the role of beauty in our life and in her book gives advice on how to resist the beauty obsession.

The publication consists of an introduction, five chapters, a separate part with notes, index, acknowledgments and a note about the author. Each chapter is divided into smaller sections. Every chapter presents a woman's story, centered around her attitude toward her own body. The author emphasizes that interlocutresses do not constitute a representative sample of all women. She has interviewed predominantly white Americans, but also non-white ones including

Latino, Asians and Portuguese women whose ages range from seven to almost sixties.

The first part of the work explains what the beauty obsession is. Engeln presents research which shows that one-third of five-year-old girls want to look like a lady from television, and forty percent of girls aged 5–9 wish to be slimmer. This demonstrates that beauty sickness develops very early, when girls discover that their major asset is attractiveness. We can blame our culture: concentrated more on woman's appearance than her words, acts or personality. The obsession with beauty deprives women of time, energy and money, and causes anxiety and depression. Thanks to this chapter a reader can assess if the described problem concerns her, if she is also in the habit of treating herself as an object, confined just to a body.

The following chapter shows how the beauty sickness impacts women. Engeln gives readers a sense of what self-objectification is, when a woman becomes a supervisor of her own body, looking critically at it. At this point, the author dispels a myth that criticism of weight, called "fat talk" and body shaming are a motivation for healthy behavior. Actually, this kind of shame leads to mental disorders such as depression, anorexia or bulimia. I agree with Engeln that since the ideal of beauty is elusive, embarrassing whomsoever because they are unable to reach it, is unfair and unreasonable.

The third part concentrates on the relationship between the beauty obsession and the media. The author notes that we are surrounded by unrepresentative and unrealistic pictures of objectified women from the internet, television and magazines, carrying a message that good looks guarantee a success and happiness. They increase body dissatisfaction in women and the focus on appearance reduces the perceptions of women's competence. Moreover, the popularity of social networks and digital photography, make women feel constantly observed which translates into endless self-control of appearance.

After knowledgeable description of the beauty sickness, the author goes on to the strategies of dealing with this phenomenon. She begins with ineffective ones. Engeln refers to researches showing that neither a critical attitude towards media, nor affirmation of own beauty, are helpful—they draw women's attention to their looks. It is worth remembering that we are biologically and culturally sensitive to the beauty, but we can diminish the importance of it, for instance, not discussing an appearance. An answer to the problem of body objectification can be focusing on body functionality. Looking at body from the viewpoint of its usefulness can increase the body acceptance.

The book raises an important issue of the role of beauty in our culture. According to CBOS research report 2017, 87 percent of Poles attach great importance to own appearance and 20 percent are not satisfied with the reflection in the mirror (CBOS, 2017). Other study shows that over 80 percent of polish teenagers want to be prettier. Moreover, the vast majority of them find the ide-

als of beauty in popular culture (2013). In my opinion, the purpose of the book has been achieved—Renee Engeln both has explained the notion of beauty obsession and has presented a few strategies to deal with this problem.

The undeniable strength of the publication are the researches cited by the author to support her arguments. Part of them was conducted by Engeln or her associates, which makes the author an expert on this subject and a trustworthy person. In addition, Engeln refers to many works, especially articles from scientific journals. The evidence provided in the book has convinced me it is better to not say anything about someone's appearance than to pay compliments. The author's passion and anecdotal stories from her life enrich the work with authenticity and a lightness, despite the importance of raising issue.

Renee Engeln has dedicated presented book to all girls and women who are fighting for better future. I will recommend this work not only to women and girls but to everyone who cares for others, in particular to parents and teachers. They raise the younger generations and have the power to contain the beauty sickness. The interesting narration and excellent writing style make reviewed publication an inspiring, eye-opening and thought-provoking reading.

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