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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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Contents

Editor's Preface (Magdalena Biela-Cywka, Anna Sobczak)	5
ARTICLES	
BRAD BIERDZ A Poststructural, Feminist Critique of Posthuman Genderlessness in Har- away's Cyborg	9
YII-NII LIN, WEI-CHI CHEN, HSIN-YU LIU Homosexual University Students' Perceptions of the Marriage Equality Ref- erendum in Taiwan	27
AZEEZ AKINWUMI SESAN, RABIU IYANDA A Radical Feminist Reading of Stella Oyedepo's <i>Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chest- ed</i> in the Context of Yoruba Cultural Episteme	45
BAYO OGUNYEMI Gender and Traditional Music Performance in Yoruba Land	63
UCHENNA OHAGWAM, NDUBUISI OGBUAGU Gender and Transformations: Female Activism in Tanure Ojaide's <i>The Ac- tivist</i>	77
AUGUSTINE EGUAVUON AINABOR, GRACE IYI IBE-ENWO Analysis of Factors Responsible for the State of Women Participation in Governance in Edo State of Nigeria	89
MUTIAT TITILOPE OLADEJO The Making of a Feminised Economy in the Gambia: Musu Kebba Drammeh and Batik Livelihood, 1940–2013	105
Submissions	125

Editor's Preface

Contemporary societies are increasingly focusing on issues of gender equality and human rights. Debates on feminism, gender identity, and sexual diversity have become integral parts of public discourse, influencing cultural, political, and legal changes worldwide. Each country independently shapes its legal policies regarding these critical matters.

Our journal was created in response to a need for deeper reflection on these crucial topics—gender equality and respect for diversity—that shape our daily lives and the future of societies. The goal of our journal is to create a space for the exchange of ideas and experiences that will contribute to a better understanding and promotion of the ideals of equality and social justice. We strive to inspire action, educate, and integrate diverse perspectives that help build a more inclusive world where everyone, regardless of gender, orientation, or identity, has equal opportunities for a dignified life.

In each issue, we aim to address both theoretical and practical aspects of the topics discussed, seeking to amplify the voices of various social groups and experts from diverse fields. We hope our journal will become a source of knowledge, reflection, and inspiration for you to take action in support of equality and understanding in the complex landscape of modern social relationships.

Magdalena Biela-Cywka,
Anna Sobczak



ARTICLES



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A Poststructural, Feminist Critique of Posthuman Genderlessness in Haraway's Cyborg

ABSTRACT. In this article, I want to begin to question the grammar, the understanding, the illocution, and the theoretical nature of genderlessness, in Haraway's posthuman turn. Furthermore, I want to bring to the surface a complication of the understandings of power within Haraway put into a more significant and more critical conversation with poststructural work that more fully grapples with productivity and comes to understand the discursive insinuations of gender and sexuality as simultaneously productive and violent—a mixture that should not be reduced to liberation or justness as a procession of/with the negation of gender. Even more so, within the same form of critique, I will also make the argument that specific posthumanisms such as Haraway's invocation not only disregard the productivity of gender as an essential critical space to grapple with but also that posthuman literature remands a reality yet topples the very concept that imbibes reality with substance. In particular, once we *name* gender, there is not only violence in imagining the nonexistence of gender (the absence of gender as a means of realizing/being), but also such imaginings and impossibilities descend further into a conundrum of attempting to realize a reality that no longer holds any substance of reality qua *reality*.

KEYWORDS: cyborg, posthumanism, Haraway, poststructural critique, discourse/power

Introduction

In this article, I want to begin to question the grammar, the understanding, the illocution, and the theoretical nature of genderlessness, being without gender (if we can even signify such a (im)possibility), or the absence of gender and/or the collapse of gender in Haraway's (2016) posthuman turn (Preciado, 2020; Chanda, 2016; Carrasco-Carrasco, 2022). In other words, within Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* and *Manifestly Haraway*, there is a repeated notion of a society/nonsociety (a reality) without gender, the negation or absence of gender as something to know, realize, identify with, coerce, etc. that challenges a poststructural intimation of

posthuman power/discourse in specific ways. In other words, Haraway's argument is a particular formation/performance of violence/violation/liberation/destruction without acknowledging such violence. Even more, there is also a contemplation of genderlessness that does not seriously consider the impossibility of genderlessness within the confines of reality qua *reality*, as Haraway intends to empty reality of its substantiating locus. To put this yet another way, moreover, I would like to challenge posthuman work—especially as it is coming from Haraway (2016)—to fundamentally come to terms with the productivity of gender within/of a poststructural critique and the means by which reality as utterable and being as signable come out of and from the boundaries and borders of regimentations of discourse (Butler, 1997; Foucault, 2003). In a critique of Haraway's genderlessness and pulling upon other posthuman works that mimic this intimate eschewal of the productivity and inundations of gender and discourse within our very "beingnesses," I want to caringly challenge and push Haraway's and posthuman work to more robustly think with/of the lack of gender in a posthuman space/reality or even to more imaginatively think transdisciplinarily with/alongside other theoretical frameworks such as postanarcha-feminism and/or decoloniality (Singh, 2018).

Furthermore, within/of this article, I will grapple with the post-ness of posthumanism and demand that posthuman work more intentionally think through/with the challenges to imaginative beings that they invoke, ignore, and eschew within their images of the cyborg and/or the genderless being. Using a mixture of a poststructuralist critique that informs posthumanism and work that attempts to understand the productivity of discursive power (work that locates the productive at the moment of continuous re-definition), I will argue that posthuman work, by invoking genderlessness, does a particularizing form of violence for which Haraway and other posthuman thinkers eschew or rather ignore. While Haraway and other posthuman scholars imagine and fetishize their conception of genderlessness within these spaces as "escapes" from restrictive accesses to being (Wright, 2011), they also refuse to wrestle with the ways in which gender produces such beings and imbibes our current realizations with sensibility, viscosity, and experientiality: gender thereby offering the very possibility of experiencing and/or reality. Even more so, within the same form of critique, I will also make the argument that specific posthumanisms such as Haraway's invocation not only disregard the productivity of gender as an essential critical space to grapple with but also that posthuman literature remands a reality yet topples the very concept that

imbibes reality with substance (speaking to the posthuman and yet draining such conversation of sensicality and/or what makes such discussions utterable in the first place). In other words, within this second argument, I will demonstrate that while Haraway and other posthuman scholars still imagine/theorize some reality in which posthumans/cyborgs exist or come into existence, they simultaneously and unwittingly abolish the very means of not only the normative conception of the human but conceptions of reality and existence themselves without contemplating this very denial of *reality* or contemplating more fully the language of the cyborg that necessarily retains its insidious connections to *reality* (as anthropomorphic and genealogical) and existence as a means of realizing the cyborg that no longer holds any substance or reality qua *reality*.

I want to fundamentally and foundationally question the violence and impossibility of genderlessness as seen through Haraway's (2016) posthumanism and the assumptions/arguments that a reality without gender could be "better," more "just," or more "equal" (Dvorsky, 2008; Chanda, 2016; Carrasco-Carrasco, 2022). Furthermore, I want to bring to the surface a complication of the understandings of power within Haraway (2016) put into a more significant and more critical conversation with poststructural work (Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 2003) that more fully grapples with productivity and comes to understand the discursive insinuations of gender and sexuality as simultaneously productive and violent—a mixture that should not be reduced to liberation or justness as a procession of/with the negation of gender. Even more so, within this very argument, I also intend to challenge the denunciation of dualisms that Haraway invokes—arguing instead that Haraway merely intends to reconstruct negationary being/nonbeing from and toward singularizing nonbeing. Throughout this piece, using a poststructural theoretical framework with a glance towards more radical and praxical theoretical frameworks, I want to construct an argument that takes note of the productivity of discursive regimentations such as gender and our responsibility as critical theorists to more fully grapple with these complications and flows of power. In particular, once we *name* gender, there is not only violence in imagining the nonexistence of gender (the absence of gender as a means of realizing/being), but also such imaginings and impossibilities descend further into a conundrum of attempting to realize a reality that no longer holds any substance of reality qua *reality*.

Within this article, I will construct my argument in four sections. First, I will build an analysis of Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* and their

Manifestly Haraway. Even more, while I will note that some posthuman works (Braidotti, 2022; Halberstam, 2013) seem to take up these post-structural complications with gender, race, sexuality, etc., I intend to focus on the cyborg within Haraway (2016) to push posthuman work toward more complex conversations of/around power (Butler, 1990; Hirst, 2019). Second, I will move towards our first constitutive critique, which intends to re-assess and critique the means by which we understand the flows/regimentations of power within such determinations/nondeterminations of gender and discourse more broadly. In other words, we must deal with the constructive/destructive violences, violations, and annihilations within the coordinations of cyborgian posthumanisms while noting how such violences liberate within/of such a violation. For instance, rather than uncomplicatedly identifying the image of the genderless cyborg as liberating or just, we also have to understand that such revolutions of reality are violent, destructive, limiting, and coercive. Thus, understanding such a movement of imaginative work as a re-definition of reality yet still intimately attached to limitations of discourse and the like. Our third section will discuss our second critique of cyborgified posthuman work (Haraway, 2016; Preciado, 2020; Chanda, 2016; Carrasco-Carrasco, 2022). I will argue that posthuman work relies too heavily on anthropomorphic considerations of reality qua *reality* to substantiate itself as something radically different or even as an extant ideal since it destroys its own foundations as it attempts to transcend such limitations of normative metaphysics and ontologies. In particular, even as posthuman work incites imaginative directions within/outside of human/non-human capacity, there is also a continued reliance on the linguistic/cognitive apparatuses of denoting reality within the confines of a/the reality and as an extension or as a constitution of existence qua being. In other words, as posthuman work instantiates/intimates toward some othered reality in which the cyborg or the posthuman *exists* (comes to exist), they also necessarily and recursively limit their radicality within/of their reliance on anthropomorphic attenuations and genealogically binding notions of *being*, *existence*, *reality*, and so forth (Hepburn, 1999; Derrida, 1978). Finally, within our last section, I will end with some conclusions and potential directions for transdisciplinary work that are already in process and should continue to be developed and explored to aid our imaginative directions in posthuman work towards greater radicality and more sound interrogations of power flows, discourse, regimentations of reality, existence, and the like (Spivak, 1993; Bey, 1991; Singh, 2018; Rigolot, 2020).

Exploration of Haraway's and the Cyborg's Genderlessness

In Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, a particular form of subliminal, subversive, and power-ridden movement takes place in their discussion and interrogation of genderlessness regarding their invocation of the cyborg. Even more so, given their cybernetic and poststructuralist intentions, Haraway seems to continuously play with and play at genderlessness in reductive and non-complexifying ways. In other words, they are attempting to attain/imagine some sense of reality—that was/is still reality as meta-physically determining—that was/is genderless, or to think a way around or outside of gender that allowed in some sense more or greater non-human/human liberation,” “justice,” or “goodness” within a posthuman realm (Preciado, 2020; Haraway, 2016; and Chancer, 2017). For instance, an exemplification of this in Preciado (2020) argues,

It's no longer a question of demanding our membership in humanity by denying the primate. The new face of European racism invites us to go a step further, if we do not want to reproduce exclusions and let ourselves be divided. We must reject the classifications that form colonial epistemologies (pp. 58).

To put this in more explicitly, Preciado, in line with Haraway, is arguing that the un-consideration, the negation of humanizations, and the abandonment (the rebellion from) social categories is not only the “right” way to reimagine reality and existence but is the only way to move forward toward imagining posthuman futurities that are more “just” or “liberating” regarding more expansive means of “real”izing some reality that is still incipiently regarded and invoked as real. In other words, within much of posthuman literature as well as Haraway's work, there is this intimate and almost glaring logic that attempts to delineate some reality that could be without gender, calling towards genderlessness or speaking from a supposedly genderless critical frame as a means of liberating the being/non-being of the cyborg from restrictive accesses of humanizations.

I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing. For salamanders, regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical productions at the site of former injury. The regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent. We have all been injured, profoundly.

We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender (Haraway, 2016, p. 67).

One of the primary and foundational (for there is some sense of refoundation in Haraway and posthumanism broadly) aspects of Haraway's cyborg is its always already multipliedness in which gender identity simultaneously becomes piecemeal and nothing, such that genders begin to mix and "lose" their significations within/of reality; the lines of gender moving and bending towards nonexistence and towards negating/ignoring/eschewing the regimes of truth that *move* through the constructions and regimentations of male, female, gender neutrality, third genders, etc. (Haraway, 2016; Firestone, 1970; Stross, 2006; and Dvorsky, 2008). With Haraway's work, moreover, their essay is an explication of reality and a portrayal of a potentialized future that they are arguing on behalf of and arguing toward, yet such futures, as intimated, incur/form/imbibe unquestioned violences and violations as well as a kind of illogical, incomprehensible realization that no longer seems to exist as such (Derrida, 1978; Hepburn, 1999). This cyborgified entity that Haraway defines, redefines, and constructs within the piece is a specific image of a here-to-nonexistent entity/nonentity—an imagining that necessarily confounds poststructuralism's conceptionings of power relationality, its productivity, and the very relations/constructions of reality and existence that confuses our comprehension within such framings of the cyborg/posthuman (Benson, 2014; Roberts and Joseph, 2005).

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. [...] Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (Haraway, 2016, pp. 1).

Here, Haraway begins their work with a form/kind of decryption and description of the cyborg as constituted by social, mechanistic, and bodily power. She draws this connection between her explorations and cybernet-

ic theory while still pulling her work toward Michel Foucault's biopolitics (Foucault, 2010). However, a question abounds within her work: does biopolitics speak to the cyborg if one must change the terms that we use to then speak to what may be considered "bio" or of life in regard to the cyborg (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 2003; and Weheliye, 2014)? Even more so, given Haraway's reinvocation of the social as an attenuation of the cyborg, there is a continual reliance on poststructuralism that remains internally confounding and a genealogical and anthropomorphic conception of metaphysical reality/realization that empties their cyborgian exploration of radical differentiation or actualization—that negates the possibilities of the cyborg as we bring such idealizations into "reality." Moreover, partially in line with Deleuze and Guattari, for instance, the cyborg is portrayed as "going beyond" the oedipal, as subverting the real, as becoming/unbecoming/being/nonbeing, as myth-reality-fiction, and as biological and machine. This is a complicated image and reality of the cyborg; however, this analysis demonstrates their mixture of poststructuralism and structuralism, cybernetics and genealogical inheritance, challenging their theoretical radicality and the cyborg's own realization (2016 and Lafontaine, 2007). As Haraway pictures them, cyborgs are contradictory images of reality/humanity/existence within a socializing realm that is always already defined in and by power-written discourses. Yet, cyborgs are not understandable within such discourses since they negate their realizations within their very inscriptions/productions of violence—negating the being of being or emptying reality of any substantial meaning that would inform embodiment, realization, consciousness, actuality, etc. Ultimately, this exploration will grapple with these complications and summarily challenge/push cyborgian and Haraway's thoughts.

First Critique

The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense — a 'final' irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self-untied at last from all dependency, a man in space (Haraway, 2016, p. 8).

These lines that Haraway pulls together simultaneously disregard the forms of violence they call toward regarding genderlessness and purposefully re-imagine such violation/violence/dehumanization as liberating rather than confusedly indeterminate. In other words, within this first critique, I will argue that Haraway produces a particular formation of violence and violation given the productivity of discourse, power, and regimentation underlined and explicated by poststructural theory. Even more so, I will also argue that, as critical thinkers in a posthuman theoretical space, we must grapple with the violence/liberation that such genderlessness and cyborgification produce as a complicated nexus that is neither one nor the other (Haraway, 2016; Firestone, 1970; Stross, 2006; and Dvorsky, 2008). In turn, I will argue that Haraway's conflation of Marxist structural theologies and poststructural analyses results in a confusing parody of sensemaking and nonsensemaking that reduces such violent endeavors to liberating theologies (Hester, 2010; Deleuze, 1993).

In other words, Haraway's work speaks to liberating idealizations of the cyborg without substantively grappling with the violence inherent in such an indetermination or undefinitionalization. The concept of the cyborg, when viewed from a poststructural perspective, presents a dilemma regarding its relationship with power. On one hand, it is seen as a source of liberation according to Haraway, and on the other hand, the cyborg also perpetuates nonbeing and objectification (Martin & Mason, 2022). While ignoring the violence within such "liberations" and ignoring this form of groundless ground, Haraway implaces the cyborg as a genderless nonbeing and thereby empties the locus of the cyborg of its substantiating reality and summarily expects such conceptualizations/nonconceptualizations of the cyborg/posthuman to retain idealizations and conceptualizations of existence and liberation even as such cyborgs are emptied of meaning, signification, and substance. Furthermore, Haraway (2016) instantiates a reality that corresponds to practices and realizations of dehumanization and various forms/shapes of engendered violence and violation within/of the cyborg as nonbeing, as a being without gender, etc. (Foucault, 1995; Agamben, 1998; Martin & Mason, 2022). Thus, within a poststructural critique, Haraway's cyborg illustrates a particular formation of violence within genderlessness such that once we note the productivity/regimentation of gender, we also have to understand that Haraway simultaneously invokes violence in removing gender from our understandings of being/reality (Hale, 1996). Even more so, I would also and simultaneously contend that posthuman literature should more fully and robustly engage with this

kind of critique in ways that recognize the importance of such violence in imaginative, theoretical work and the potential affects/effects of such violence as recursive, limiting, liberating, and in particular ways made-redundant—understanding the complexities/complications of violence as such rather than idealizing the cyborg or posthuman as liberating idealizations without attendant violence.

As Haraway poses an ungendered mass of cyborgification/cyborgified humanity/non-humanity/beings/non-beings as some place of possibility within theoretical work and praxical imagination, they ignore or eschew whole swathes of poststructural interrogations of reality/discourse. For instance, poststructural analysis of social formations is understood as necessarily productive/violent—an intimate arrangement that is simultaneously mutual and should be grappled with as such in posthuman theoretical explorations. Thus, stripping the gender from the human is not only impossible given the bios of the human as interrelated to gender (thereby denouncing the existence of humans and the existence of existence) but is also a violent endeavor that remains under-explored in Haraway's work (Agamben, 1998 and Weheliye, 2014).

I take interpellation from the French poststructuralist and Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser's theory for how subjects are constituted from concrete individuals by being "hailed" through ideology into their subject positions in the modern state. Today, through our ideologically loaded narratives of their lives, animals "hail" us to account for the regimes in which they and we must live. We "hail" them into our constructs of nature and culture, with major consequences of life and death, health and illness, longevity and extinction. We also live with each other in the flesh in ways not exhausted by our ideologies. Stories are much bigger than ideologies. (Haraway, 2016, pp. 108-109).

To put this another way, within Haraway's cybernetic instantiations of Marxist theologies with poststructuralist analyses, Haraway (2016) consistently and continuously invokes genderlessness as liberating, yet they do not intend to view the destruction of such regimentations of reality as necessarily violent, violating, and destructive of the very means of realizing.

Haraway consistently invokes genderlessness as just, liberatory, and radical in response to gendered violence that is only ever limitedly seen as destructive/violent in their work. As Haraway combines their conception of structural cybernetics with poststructuralist discourse, I would like

to argue that in invoking a genderless cyborg as some idealization of human/nonhuman existence, Haraway also realizes particular forms/kinds of violence that are similar to the forms/kinds of violence that gender also makes possible within gendered understandings of realization, such that an ungendered mass would be just that—not constitutive of the/a social or the/a human in any substantiating way but mere mass or matter—non-beings: “beings” that were forced into non-being and subsumed into some othered being that lacked any coordination of being or reality as substantively understood or understandable (Strózewski, 2008; Agamben, 1998). In other words, I would also continue to argue that Haraway mimics the kinds/forms of violence that they are directly opposed to within their explorations of gendered violence such that they inhere their image of the cyborg with nonbeing as a means of realizing posthuman possibility, idealizing the nonbeing/being of the cyborg as explicative of unreality (an emptied being/nonbeing that is perpetually within/of a state of liminality). To put this another way, even as Haraway gestures towards the post-structural or even the material (within her conversations of flesh), they also ignore discursive regimentations of power/reality while also instantiating their posthuman as a cyborg manifestation of continual violence and disturbance—a nonbeing without flesh—a being without being, thereby recreating forms of gendered violence while also expanding the realms of such violence towards all entities that are thereby relegated toward non-being (a fixation beyond dualisms yet also more violent in particular ways that eliminate being altogether in place of nonbeing—an indeterminacy of existence that negates itself within its own violation) (Foucault, 2003; Mbembe, 2019).

Second Critique

Continuing, I want us to move our critical engagement with Haraway’s (2016) work beyond these insidious and continuous forms of violence that flow from the un-signification of gender or the insubstantiation of gender from being/reality. I want our critical explorations to more intimately grapple with Haraway’s continual incoherent construction of cyborgian existence qua *being* and the made-inherent impossibilities/contradictions within such (non)constructions. As Haraway confers reality onto the coming into being of the cyborg, she also fixates the cyborg to a particular unreality or a nonsensicalizing instantiation of reality qua *reality* that

seems to only exist within the discourse of the human and thus of gendered conversations (Haraway, 2016; Strózewski, 2008). In other words, I would like to explore the ways in which dropping gender (by refusing to acknowledge gender/by denouncing the signification of gender in relation to the cyborg) not only commits particular forms of violence against the human form/ideal (and even such lived/unlivable instantiations) but also distinctly retains the language of existence and being which thereby limits our ability to speak towards radically, imaginative planes of existence such as the cyborg (such that the cyborg empties its reality as it instantiates its reality). To put this yet another way, I would like to focus on the contradiction at play when we theorize about some othered being yet still retain the linguistic and significatory play of being, reality, and existence as always already intimately attached to anthropomorphic and normativizing understandings of metaphysics, epistemologies, and ontologies (Derrida, 1978; Derrida, 1994).

In broad terms, for instance, Haraway's (2016) genderless cyborg/posthuman instantiates a nonbeing, or an invalidation of *being*, within the conceptualizations of specific understandings of *being* that are inherently made understandable in regard to our normative discourse of being/reality (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 1995; and Butler, 1990). Even as Haraway denounces the being of the cyborg as it is attached to normative conceptions of being/becoming, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability, Haraway still seems to place the cyborg within relation to nonbeing/being as a means of explication and attenuation of their own reality/realization that is necessarily contradictory and limiting. Haraway (2016) states, "The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century" (p. 6); "The cyborg is a creature in a postgender world" (p. 8); "the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self-untied at last from all dependency, a man in space" (p. 8); "The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence" (p. 9); and "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self-feminists must code" (p. 33). In other words, even as Haraway plays at nonbeing/being and particular challenges of humanistic being—"The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics"—they are still necessarily and fundamentally emplaced within/of normative and anthropomorphic ontologies and metaphysics as such—cyborgs *are*, as Haraway (2016) con-

tinuously explicates. Haraway's cyborg comes into being as an interplay of being/nonbeing—a liminality that Haraway seems to be playing with, and yet there is also this recursive and repetitive interplay with nonbeing and being that reinstantiates entire histories of metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological development that constantly re-integrates the human form/ideal within the cyborg and does not allow the cyborg to escape or even challenge such indeterminability (Peterson, 2011).

Even more so, although Haraway does make this explicit play with a cyborg ontology and being/nonbeing as such, they also come to this theoretical impulse from a particular vantage of genderlessness, racelessness, classlessness, etc. In other words, what I would like to draw out from Haraway's work immediately is their focus on genderlessness as indicative of the cyborg; the cyborg, therefore, in becoming the cyborg, is detached from the discursive regimentations of gender as demonstrative/productive of the cyborg itself. As Haraway delineates, the cyborg exists within a postgender world; however, how does the cyborg come into existence, or rather how does the cyborg always already exist if our conceptions of existence are not only gendered but also necessarily inculcated within our termifications of the human? How do we ever speak to the cyborg without immediately destroying the possibilities of the cyborg as such? How do Haraway's explorations, thereby, immediately lose or put into precarity their radicality when we insinuate that the cyborg "is" or that it exists? In particular, Haraway's exculpation away from gender (although inherently violent/violating and uncritically engaged with as such) insinuates an incomprehensibility as we imagine the cyborg as an existing being/nonbeing. For even as Haraway (2016) attempts a particularizing dislocation with the cyborg as nonbeing (p. 24) (a potential access of cyborg ontology), our theoretical imaginings and our linguistic ideations are still lacking and ensnared within our always already normativizing accesses to metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological explorations that are inundated by such dialectics and productivities of conceptualizations—being/nonbeing (Derrida, 1978; Peterson, 2011; Stróżewski, 2008).

Ultimately, our theoretical language is still necessarily limited and limiting to our normative anthropomorphic and genealogical theoretical inheritance as can be seen with Haraway's issuance and focus toward gender and with our interplay within/of our first critique of this article, which thereby comes to requestion whether such significations of genderlessness as being/nonbeing are simply incoherent as well as violent—whether genderlessness as such is merely a play with words rather than a substantive

imagining of virtuality/actuality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Ultimately, Haraway's reliance on genderlessness as a means of explicating the cyborg as extant signifies our intellectual and imaginative reliance on normative metaphysics and ontologies that are entrapped within/of the human and the normative as indicative of being/nonbeing, and therefore, the cyborg as an extant nonbeing/being only instantiates its incoherence rather than its atemporal or othered existence. As Haraway continuously calls toward the cyborg's being/nonbeing, as they explicate its being/nonbeing in relation to genderlessness and otherwise, they also intimate its interpolation with normative metaphysics and ontologies that therein subvert the cyborg's very rebellion and radicality (Hepburn, 1999; Strózewski, 2008).

The cyborg is stillborn. Or rather, since it is genderless, it cannot be born or die. Therefore, it cannot exist within our normative attenuations of metaphysics and ontology. Thus, it challenges posthuman work and its own theorizations to instantiate newer linguistic and conceptual detachments from entire genealogical orders of theoretical work that inhere to be all-encompassing. The cyborg's existence never was or never will be so long as we remain within the linguistic determinations and delineations of being/nonbeing, existence/nonexistence, reality/unreality, etc. (Peterson, 2011). Furthermore, within the following section, I will make the continued argument that we must challenge such theoretical/imaginative limitations with other theoretical framings that do not necessarily rely on determinations of being/nonbeing as explicative and that challenge our reliance on normative metaphysics, ontologies, and epistemologies as such—creating a posthuman, or even cyborg, time-space without creation/conception/inception and without time, space, existence, being, etc. as explicative, constructive, sustaining, or sensicalizing.

Imaginative Directions in Conclusion

Within this article, I am challenging the theoretical concept of the cyborg and posthuman. However, I am hoping that this challenge opens up the possibility of creating a continuously transgressive space of the cyborg/posthuman that remains rebellious and challenging instead of becoming incomprehensible. Furthermore, in this final section, I would like to reconsider/reimagine the challenge that Haraway makes toward and away from gender in regard to decolonial and postanarcha-feminist analyses of realization and theoretical/praxical possibilities to challenge existence as such

(Bhabha, 1994; Cruz, 2002; and Herdt, 2020). For instance, in using decolonial or anarchy-feminist understandings of radical “being” or “existence,” we may more fully or rebelliously continue to question the possibilities outside of the binarized spectrum of being/nonbeing/gender/genderlessness (Godman, 2018; Bakošová & Odorčák, 2020; King, 2017; Newman, 2021). Moreover, in response to the problems that I have pulled out of/within Haraway’s cyborg and this posthuman turn, I am arguing for a stronger transdisciplinary and imaginative theoretical impetus put into conversations with the posthuman and the cyborg. Moreover, I would also position our critical movements towards reimagining and radically reunderstanding the limits/boundaries of being/nonbeing as crucial to posthumanism, cyborgification, and questionings of othered-humanisms. Thus, I want to make use of decolonial, posthumanist, and othered-humanist scholars such as Wynters (2003) and Newman (2021) to aid our transformation without inception toward posthuman (un)groundings and other-humanist discourses that may be more liberating, just, or expansive regarding radical metaphysics, ontologies, and epistemological foundations.

To put this yet another way, I am not arguing for myopic considerations of more radical gender identifications/nonidentifications, but instead I am pointing to potentially decolonizable/postanarchival understandings of gender and beingnesses (othered determinations of existence) that go beyond, between, and over understandings of reality and coming into being (and that of being/nonbeing)—imagining a posthuman entity that may exist yet eschews the language and metaphysical constructions of existence qua humanistic understandings (Billey & Drabinski, 2019; Peterson, 2011; Derrida, 1994; Derrida, 1998; Foucault, 2003; Butler, 1997). Even more, I want to suggest that decolonial and postanarchy-feminist work act and take up space as examples of such imaginative and radical directions in theoretical intentions. Further, these transgressive, theoretical directions may allow the theoretician to come towards regimentations of power yet simultaneously question the productivity of power and its relationality beyond some social that is taken as realizing/binding within poststructuralism. In other words, as one possibility using these theoretical frameworks, I want to pose the challenge of reconceptualizing *being/nonbeing* in more transgressive ways that do not entail the nonconsideration of gender as the primary means of identifying a posthuman existence, especially if such explorations are limited in transgressing such constructions of sociality, existence, being/nonbeing, etc. (Newman, 2010; Bey, 1991; and Walby, 2005; Deleuze, 1987).

Ultimately, I want to end within/of a critical stance against the non-complex use of genderlessness as some sense of being/nonbeing that attempts to “escape” the social conceptuality of being within posthuman understandings of power while also repositioning decolonial/postanarcha-feminist understandings of (non)gender(s) or the like in relation to the posthuman towards some potential radical theoretical movement away from normativizing humanistic and anthropomorphic considerations of metaphysics and ontologies that descend from being/nonbeing. In other words, this article argues against the ignorant forwarding a kind of negationary humanization or posthumanization that attempts to remove identity from a productively-oriented and theorized social space. In response to this form of eschewal, I am attempting to produce a critique of such critical attendance to the posthuman/cyborg that hopefully continues and builds on poststructural and posthuman work. On the one hand, given our post-ness of posthumanism, we have to foundationally and wholly come to terms with the violence of genderlessness as it speaks to/from our productive-relational understandings of power, and on the other hand, if we intend to imagine a posthuman posthumanism, we must grapple with and play with other boundaries of posthumanism such as postanarcha-feminist and decolonial frameworks to transgress normative, humanistic metaphysics and ontologies as we call toward the cyborg or the posthuman rather than merely reinculcating determinations of being/nonbeing onto the cyborg or the posthuman (Newman, 2021; Godman, 2018; Bakošová & Odorčák, 2020; King, 2017).

Moreover, while I want to position decolonial and postanarcha-feminist conceptualizations as potential challenges and transgressions from a more power-coercive institutionalization/regimentation/discourse of gendered identity, gendered being, and gendered non-being, such explorations are also limited without intentional, imaginative theory and radical intentions. Thus, the challenge I am presenting in this analysis of power and gender is to present the complexities (the violence within/of liberating movements) inherent within such conversations of the social, reality, gender, being/nonbeing, becoming/unbecoming, power, biopolitics, etc. while also constructing/maintaining means of challenging the limitations of being/nonbeing as understood through humanistic, anthropomorphic, and always already normativizing frameworks for/of metaphysics, epistemologies, and ontologies that may be realized through/with decolonial, postanarcha-feminist, or other radical, imaginative, theoretical work. (Alexander, 2018; Foucault, 1995; Butler, 1997; Newman, 2010; Wynters,

2003). In other words, in/of this article, I have demonstrated the violence and dehumanizing issuances of genderlessness as coming from Haraway's work, arguing for a critical re-understanding of such insidious violation/violence. Even more so, I have also come to argue/illustrate the impossibility of realizing the cyborg within/of *being/nonbeing* such that once the cyborg comes into/toward *being/nonbeing* as a means of explication and realization (intimately interconnected with our conversation of gender and genderlessness) the cyborg murders/negates/makes impossible its own intentionality towards radical exteriority since it continues to come into and towards reality as realizing. Finally, I also preliminarily pointed towards theoretical directions such as decoloniality and postanarcha-feminism within this concluding section to challenge the humanistic, anthropomorphic, and normativizing limitations of moving toward the post-human and/or cyborg from specific coordinations of dialogic discursive regimentations that are constituted from/by metaphysical attenuations of being/nonbeing and reality qua processes of *realization*.

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Homosexual University Students' Perceptions of the Marriage Equality Referendum in Taiwan

ABSTRACT. This study examined the perceptions of 12 homosexual university students regarding Taiwan's marriage equality referendum (MER) held in November, 2018. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data, and the phenomenological approach was employed for data analysis. Four themes emerged from the data: reactions to the outcomes of the MER, emotional responses before and after the MER, perspectives on the MER, and self-reflection following the MER. The present findings have implications for counseling and education professionals as well as undergraduates in terms of homosexual students' perceptions regarding the MER and how they coped with stress following the MER. These findings also serve to remind policy-makers of the importance of protecting and advancing human rights and gender equality.

KEYWORDS: marriage equality referendum, same-sex marriage, homosexual university student

Introduction

The legislative process regarding marriage equality in Taiwan has been encumbered considerable difficulties. In 2003, Taiwan had its first gender parade, Taiwan LGBT+ Pride. In 2006, legislator Hsiao Mei-chin broached the issue of marriage equality and demanded a public hearing on the legalization of same-sex marriage, but her proposal was rejected. In 2017, Taiwan's Associate Justice ruled that restricting marriage to only that between a man and a woman was unconstitutional,

thus requiring an amendment of relevant civil codes and the enactment of same-sex marriage laws. Before any legislative change, a referendum was held on November 24, 2018. The referendum was related to various topics but included two questions specifically addressed marriage equality. Question No. 14 was “Do you agree to the protection of same-sex marital rights with marriage as defined in the Civil Code?” In total, only 30.9% of voters agreed, with 63.5% disagreeing. Question No. 12 was “Do you agree to the protection of the rights of same-sex couples in cohabitation on a permanent basis in ways other than changing of the Civil Code?” In total, 61.12% of the voters agreed, with 38.18% disagreeing (Central Election Commission [CEC], 2018). The results of the marriage equality referendum (MER) revealed that 63.5% of the voters disagreed with same-sex marriage, and that 61.12% of the voters agreed that same-sex marriage should not be incorporated into the Civil Code (CEC, 2018). These outcomes clearly demonstrated the opposition of the majority of voters to marriage equality.

Before and after the MER, the media was saturated with comments and messages that discriminated against the homosexual community, presented anti-homosexual attitudes, and criticized people who support gender equality education and same-sex marriage. This prompted considerable emotional distress among homosexual students, raising concerns regarding this demographic in response to the MER. Thus, this study explored the perceptions of homosexual students regarding the two questions on the MER from September 2018 to February 2019, covering the period 3 months before and 3 months after the MER.

1. Homosexual University Students

Homophobia is not uncommon on university campuses (Liu & Huang, 2008), and homosexual students are sometimes discriminated against on campus (Chang et al., 2013). Meyer (2003) indicated that stigma, prejudice, and discrimination against homosexual students generate a hostile environment that can increase stress and result in the development of mental health problems in this population. Thus, homosexual students tend to seek a safe space on campuses where they can be at ease (Chang, 2007). Homosexual university students commonly experience discrimination and biases (Misawa, 2010; Renn, 2017), and homophobic bullying at

schools can aggravate depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation in this group (Russell et al., 2011). Homosexual undergraduates also exhibit high levels of stress and have difficulty in constructing their identity (Chang & Chen, 2014). Female students are more concerned than male students about creating a gender equal and friendly campus and are more willing to support those in the homosexual community (Chang & Wang, 2009). By contrast, male students are more concerned about the stigma and discrimination that homosexual people encounter as well as issues related to social ethics and morality (Chang & Wang, 2009).

University students' attitudes toward homosexual individuals can affect the identity development of the individuals in this community (Liu et al., 2004). Support and companionship are crucial for homosexuals to gain strength and courage (Liu, 2003) and to facilitate their identity development (Lin, 2015). Participation in gay or lesbian clubs can also help undergraduates to learn homosexual culture and gain a sense of belonging (Liu, 2003). In these clubs, homosexual students support each other, thereby enhancing self-understanding and promoting identity development. Students develop their gender identities through involvement, coursework, and advocacy related to gender equality (Renn, 2017). Educational professionals should enhance student awareness regarding gender equality by having relevant discussions in classes, providing related books and reading materials in the library, and creating gender associations or clubs (Chang & Wang, 2009); teachers can also challenge gender stereotypes and avoid gender bias and discrimination (Chang et al., 2013).

2. Influence of Media Messages on the Homosexual Community

Topics related to homosexuality have gradually gained increased attention from the government, academia, and the public in Taiwan despite the considerable setbacks faced for the gender equality movement. Hostile messages and fierce rebuttals directed at homosexual individuals on social media became especially common shortly before and after the MER. People who oppose gender diversity are concerned that gender education would confuse children's gender identities (Li, 2011). Chang (2017) reported that when homosexual people face unfriendly or hostile messages on the internet, they experience feelings of shock, anger, sadness, offense,

and powerlessness. Such negative or hostile media messages can produce symptoms of high blood pressure and difficulties in eating, sleeping, and concentrating at work in the targeted individuals (Chang, 2017). Unfriendly remarks or attacks directed at those in the homosexual community can cause them to feel sad and doubt their gender identity (Misawa, 2010). For example, homosexual university students reported feeling angry, anxious, helpless, and disappointed after reading unfriendly messages on the internet (Chang, 2017). They adopted strategies to regulate their emotions, including maintaining boundaries, seeking support, ignoring hateful messages, and participating in activities (Chang, 2017). Improved intergroup communication and social justice advocacy can increase societal understanding of homosexual people, thereby promoting societal gender equality and diversity.

3. Impact of the MER on Homosexual Individuals Within the Political and Cultural Context

Tsai (2022) explored the impact of the MER on eight gay men with human immunodeficiency virus. The participants felt angry with the outcome of the MER, and they adopted coping methods to regulate their emotions; for example, they stopped thinking about the outcome, and they attempted to objectively and calmly consider the outcome and actively advocated for gender equality and diversity. They also confronted those making anti-homosexual remarks, offered evidence in support of gender equality, and disseminated antidiscrimination messages. After marriage equality was not supported in the MER, homosexual individuals experienced negative emotions (Riggle, 2009). Yang (2020) used polling data in 2019 to analyze the outcomes of MER and reported that voters had difficulty comprehending topics related to the MER. A small group of voters in the MER agreed to protect minority rights (such as those of homosexual individuals), and they tended to also support same-sex marriage (Yang, 2020). By contrast, the majority of the voters valued the rights of the majority and opposed same-sex marriage. Liao et al. (2022) observed that supporting same-sex marriage before the MER had a significant positive correlation with psychological distress after the MER. The mental health of minority or vulnerable groups is harmfully influenced in hostile environments where stigma, prejudice, and discrimination are commonplace (Meyer, 2003). In

sum, the MER had a radical effect on those in the homosexual community, prompting them to adopt coping mechanisms especially before and after the MER.

4. Social Impact Theory

Social impact theory (SIT; Latané, 1981) describes how individuals influence and are influenced by each other. Latané (1981) defined social impact as the impact on an individual's feelings, thoughts, or behavior of the real, implied, or imagined presence or actions of others. People are strongly affected by the behaviors of others and tend to be persuaded, inhibited, threatened, and supported through these actions (Latané, 1981). According to SIT, people's influence on others is the result of social forces acting on the individual. The effect of this social influence on people increases with the strength of the source, the immediacy of the event, and the number of sources exerting the impact (Latané, 1981).

SIT suggests that when other people are the source of the impact and the individual is the target, the impact is a multiplicative function of the strength, immediacy, and number of other people (Latané, 1981). In this theory, social impact is driven by three forces, as indicated in the equation: $I = f(S \times i \times N)$, where I is the magnitude of social impact, $f()$ is a multiplicative function of the three conditions of the social situation having an impact, S represents the power of the source(s), i refers to the immediacy or proximity of the source(s), and N refers to the number of sources or people. The total social impact is spread across all the people it is directed at. Thus, if all the influence is targeted at a single individual, they are under immense pressure to conform or obey (Evans, 2023). If the influence is targeted at many people, the overall pressure on them to conform or obey is low. SIT was adopted as the reference framework of this study for comprehending homosexual students' perceptions of the MER in Taiwan.

5. Methods

Phenomenological research aims to study the phenomena experienced by human beings. It entails a comprehensive description of ordinary conscious experience of everyday life (the life-world)—a description of things

(the essential structures of consciousness) as one individual or a group of individuals experiences them (Schwandt, 1997). It was thus deemed appropriate in the present research context.

6. Participants

Internet ads were used to recruit potential participants. Nine female and three male students from seven universities in Taiwan agreed to participate in the study; they were aged 18–22 (average 19.5) years. The participants (1) had a homosexual identity, (2) attended the research independently, and (3) were willing to share their perceptions of the MER in 2018. The second and third authors served as the interviewers. They organized a time and place for the interviews and explained the purpose, procedures, and potential advantages and risks of the study; all the participants provided signed informed consent.

7. Researchers

The three researchers involved in this study are heterosexual women with strong concern for gender issues and with full support for gender equality and same-sex marriage. Before and after the MER, they became aware of the discrimination and bias that homosexual people experienced as well as the pressure from the public, media, and people opposed to marriage equality.

8. Data Collection

The second and third researchers collected data through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The participants shared their perceptions of and reactions to the MER from September 2018 to February 2019. Each interview lasted 1–2 hours. All of the 12 participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached. The following questions were asked in the interviews: From September 2018 to February 2019, please describe (1) your perceptions of the MER, (2) your views on and reactions to messages on social media regarding the MER, and (3) your perspectives on and reactions to the opinions of friends, classmates, family members, and

others concerning the MER. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

9. Data Analysis

The authors analyzed the data following the procedures by Moustakas (1994): (1) read the written transcripts several times to obtain an overall feeling of the transcripts; (2) identify meaningful phrases or sentences that pertain directly to the experience; (3) create meanings and cluster them into themes common to all of the transcripts; (4) integrate the results into an in-depth description of the phenomena; and (5) validate the results with the participants and include their remarks in the final description.

Several methods were used to maximize the validity and reliability of the data analysis. As proposed by Gibbs (2007), the steps of the procedures were first verified and arranged into a detailed protocol, and the results were included in a database. The transcripts were checked to ensure transcription accuracy, data were carefully compared with codes, and notes were made concerning codes and definitions. In accordance with the validation strategies proposed by Creswell and Miller (2000), the researchers maintained prolonged engagement and persistent observation of the issues related to students' reactions to the MER. Multiple sources (observations, interviews, and field notes) and methods were combined to provide corroborative evidence for the elucidation of themes or perspectives. Finally, rich, detailed descriptions were created to reveal the participants and settings encountered in the interviews.

10. Results

10.1. Reactions to the Outcomes of the MER

10.1.1. Triggering Negative Emotions

When the outcomes of the MER were announced, the participants felt sad, lost, confused, and distressed. They also felt angry, hurt, weak, hesitant, and helpless. The process leading up to the MER and the final results prompted feelings of disappointment and insecurity in the participants; doubts about life and humanity also emerged. One participant said: "Of course I [feel] sad [about the outcome of the MER]." Another explained:

"In that moment (when the results were announced), ...I was crying while [watching] the votes being counted... I suddenly felt belittled." One participant said: "I have been deeply affected by the [negative MER] outcome for a while.... I felt sad." Another participant reported: "When I saw those false statements or negative remarks, I couldn't help but feel full of resentment. [I hope] those [hostile] remarks [will disappear over time]. I was quite angry [with all those things]."

10.1.2. Losing Trust in Certain Religious Worshippers

The outcome of the MER affected the participants' views of religious worshippers, increasing the doubt and confusion they felt toward religion as well as religious people. Before and after the MER, some religious people strongly criticized the homosexual community and advocated for restricting homosexual people's rights to marriage, family, and childbearing. The participants believed that the MER had caused a rift among certain religious believers. One said: "Don't they say that God loves the world? But they [certain religious believers] keep attacking and opposing homosexuals... I felt confused, just confused about what is right."

10.1.3. Being Suspicious of People

In the time leading up to the MER and once the results had been announced, the participants became keenly aware of anti-homosexual attacks both on social media and in daily life. They became increasingly suspicious of people and had difficulty trusting people. One participant said: "I am not only sad about the [MER] result, but [I have] also [become more] suspicious of human beings..." The hostility, criticism, and rumors from those opposed to homosexual rights resulted in the participants losing trust in humanity; they felt deeply hurt. One participant said: "(About the result of the MER,) I felt disappointed with human nature and humanity [as a whole]."

10.1.4. Being Angry and Disappointed with Society

The participants were disappointed by the fact that most voters opposed the propositions in the MER. They felt that homosexual people were misunderstood by the public and wondered why they could not simply be accepted as members of society. They felt rejected by society because of their sexual orientation, and that feeling was compounded by the rejection of their request for marriage equality. They were disappointed with so-

ciety in general, which was accompanied by feelings of sadness, hurt, and resentment. They desired to clarify their perspective and role in society but did not know where to start. One participant said: "Irrational criticism of same-sex marriage makes me feel very angry, and I would think that you criticized me [despite knowing] nothing about me."

10.1.5. Experiencing Adversity and Pressure in Life

The participants were concerned about their ability to survive in society, especially in the context of hostile words and aggressive actions by those opposing marriage equality before and after the MER. They reported having difficulty being part of Taiwanese society, resulting in an existential crisis. One participant remarked: "Sometimes I feel very helpless living in a society [that does not accept homosexuals], I don't know how [I'll be able to] survive."

10.2. Emotional Responses Before and After the MER

Before and after the MER, numerous false statements and rumors spread in society and online; for example, "The purpose of the homosexual activists is to turn more children into homosexuals. Your children and grandchildren are at risk" and "The homosexual activists will turn more Taiwanese people into homosexuals." These statements were met with anger from the interviewees, who even reported engaging in verbal conflicts with those opposing marriage equality, which led to negative emotions. One participant said: "I was very angry when I read some messages attacking homosexuals, and then I quarreled with them [those opposing marriage equality]."

The participants recognized the importance of their significant others' attitudes toward same-sex marriage. If those close to them held negative or prejudiced attitudes toward the HOMOSEXUAL community, the participants tended to avoid discussing related issues with them. Family members' criticisms of homosexuals led to feelings of distress and sadness. For instance, the parents of some of the participants criticized the MER and rejected homosexuals, resulting in the participants feeling alienated from their parents. One participant said: "My dad made it very clear that he can't accept homosexuality; that is, he may [expel] a gay child [from] his house." Another participant noted: "My mother said that Taiwan's president made a big mistake [in approving] the MER and [having more homosexuals] will make [things worse in] the whole country. ...at that moment, I was really sad." The participants were deeply hurt by their friends and family opposing the MER and rejecting homosexuality.

10.3. Perspectives on the MER

10.3.1. MER as Incomplete, Hasty, and Imprecise

The participants claimed that the MER was poorly designed and incomplete. The voters struggled to understand the nuances of the topic and to make an informed decision in the MER. According to the participants, the MER was drafted hastily and the process was rushed; thus, the results do not accurately represent public opinion. The participants doubted the fairness of the referendum's outcome, with one participant saying: "The information on the MER... was not complete or precise enough... it was biased and distorted.... Many people didn't know much about the MER itself." Another participant said: "I think [the MER] was hasty and imprecise."

10.3.2. Dichotomous Options on the MER Causing Conflict

Some participants argued that the MER had increased antagonism in society, blaming the dichotomized phrasing of the MER questions for conflict between those in favor of and against marriage equality as well as the limited communication between the two groups, which ultimately yielded a lose-lose situation. One participant said: "The MER has turned into a social conflict.... It has indeed [become] a serious social conflict." Another participant said: "The closer the [date of the] MER was, the more intense the conflicts (between the two parties) became."

10.3.3. Inappropriateness of the MER in Terms of Human Rights

The participants believed that human rights should not be subjected to a referendum. Being able to marry and have a family is certainly a human right, and people should not deny the human rights of others by voting against it. One participant said: "Human rights should not be [decided in] a referendum, and should not be judged by others... [Holding the] MER was a mistake."

10.4. Self-reflection after the MER

10.4.1. Focusing on Issues Related to Marriage and Gender Equality

The participants noted that the MER increased public awareness of issues related to marriage equality and diversity for sexual minority groups. People avidly discussed the MER on social media and in person. Therefore, some participants recognized the positive effect of the MER in

foregrounding topics related to same-sex marriage in public discourse. However, some participants were concerned by the strong opposition to the homosexual community that emerged because of the MER. One participant said: "Before and after the MER, [the intensity] of messages and debates [both of those opposed to and in favor of marriage equality] increased."

10.4.2. Atmosphere of Approval on Campus

The participants reported that university students tend to treat homosexual people as equals and recognize the importance of gender equality and diversity. One participant said: "...on campus, most people accept [homosexuals]." Another participant said: "Of course, my peers are supportive of [homosexuals] and recognize [same-sex marriage] as a part of human rights." The participants felt encouraged by the support for gender equality they observed in peers, staff, and faculty on campus.

10.4.3. Positive Impact of the MER

The MER helped focus public attention on issues related to marriage equality and the human rights of sexual minority groups. On this topic, one participant said the following: "[When the public] pays attention to [gender equality and same-sex marriage] issues, [they may begin to question] why so many people stand up to express their ideas (about gender equality). In the past, some homosexuals might [have been] afraid to express their needs and thoughts. Now, quite a few homosexuals stand up to [ask for their rights] and accept their true color."

10.4.4. Consistent Communication and Conflict Resolution

The interviewees observed that people should be educated on gender equality, including rights related to marriage and family. Over time, such education can increase the acceptance of homosexual people getting married, having families, and raising children. Disapproval of homosexuality or attacks aimed at the homosexual community often stem from a lack of understanding. Therefore, open communication channels between the relevant parties can promote mutual understanding. One participant said: "We need to provide a comfortable and friendly environment [where] both parties are willing to express their thoughts... only in this way can [both parties sincerely] share and understand [the perspective of the other side]." Another participant said: "I hope that in the future, homosexuals

and heterosexuals can [coexist in peace]... with mutual respect and less conflict... After the MER, both sides should keep communicating and [aim to understand] each other.”

10.4.5. Gender Equality as a Goal

The participants emphasized that the process of fighting for marriage equality has been arduous, and that eliminating prejudice and stereotypes in society would take time. One participant said: “Because homosexuality was viewed as abnormal in the past, there are [fervent] supporters and opponents [of gender equality and the rights of homosexuals].” Despite the attacks against and false statements regarding homosexuality before and after the MER, the participants expressed hope that greater understanding would emerge between groups through communication. After the MER, they reported being more involved in advocating for and safeguarding the human rights of sexual minority groups.

11. Discussion

The participants highlighted that university campuses are more inclusive and accepting of homosexual people than are society in general and the virtual world. The study participants felt supported and understood by their peers, staff, and faculty on campuses, which encouraged them to freely discuss issues related to the MER. The present results are inconsistent with those of previous studies, which have reported that homosexual students experience discrimination and biases on campus and thus require safe spaces (Chang, 2007); that they often encounter oppression or discrimination (Misawa, 2010); or that they face harassment, discrimination, and other obstacles at schools (Renn, 2017). The present results suggest university campuses tend to have a friendly environment in terms of gender diversity in Taiwan.

Before and after the MER, social media was replete with attacks, discrimination, and rumors against homosexuals. The study participants were negatively affected by hostile statements as well as biased and discriminative messages against the homosexual community on social media. According to SIT, people are strongly affected by the behaviors of others and are readily persuaded, inhibited, threatened, and supported by such behaviors; in addition, the social impact is distributed among all the people it is directed at (Latané, 1981). As the date of the MER neared, pe-

ople's anticipation increased rapidly but so did the intensity and number of attacks and negative statements from those opposing marriage equality. The impending MER resulted in higher levels of pressure and anxiety among homosexual people.

According to SIT, the effect of social influence on people increases with the strength of the source, the immediacy of the event, and the number of sources exerting the impact. When the results of the MER were announced, the participants felt rejected by the public, hurt and sad, and marginalized; they questioned how they would be able to survive in such a society. Some of the participants cried or felt stressed, hurt, or disturbed while they watched the results of the MER being announced. The present findings are consistent with those of a previous study, which revealed that support for same-sex marriage before the MER was significantly correlated with psychological distress after the MER (Liao et al., 2022). Social influence targeted at a single individual would place considerable pressure on them to conform to the norm (Evans, 2023).

One result related to the negative outcome of the MER was that the participants lost trust in humanity and human nature in general, with particularly strong distrust aimed at people with certain religious beliefs. Another negative effect was that the participants began to doubt themselves and their gender identity. To a certain extent, the present results echo those of related studies; for example, homosexuals feel hurt and impaired by false or offensive comments and attacks on social media (Chang, 2016). Homophobic bullying aggravates depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation in homosexual people (Russell et al., 2011). Homosexual individuals experienced negative emotions after marriage equality was not supported in referendum (Riggle et al., 2009), and hostile and homophobic bullying as well as discriminative messages or attacks on social media (Chen, 2020) and in their daily lives which resulted in homosexual individuals feeling angry, sad, and hurt, which contribute to their powerlessness and hopelessness (Chang, 2017). The present results highlight how the mental health of vulnerable or minority groups is negatively affected in hostile environments where stigma, prejudice, and discrimination are commonplace (Meyer, 2003).

After the MER, the participants gradually adopted coping methods, including seeking support from peers, expressing their thoughts among friends, and participating in homosexual advocacy groups. For those in the homosexual community, being a part of gay or lesbian clubs provides them with support and companionship, strengthens their courage, and produ-

ces a sense of belonging (Liu, 2003); homosexual people also adopt coping mechanisms to regulate their emotions; for example, maintaining boundaries, seeking support, responding positively, and advocating for gender equality (Chang, 2017).

Despite the challenges they faced, the participants remained committed to investing in gender equality organizations; performing pro-homosexual advocacy and social actions; helping to reduce prejudice, bias, discrimination, and stereotypes against homosexual individuals; and increasing public understanding of homosexual people, same-sex marriage, and other gender equality issues. The present results are consistent with the aforementioned results of Chang (2017). Seeking support from peers and friends helps homosexual university students become more aware of and accept their own emotional reactions as well as understand and accept diverse opinions, ultimately helping to relieve stress and stabilize their emotions. This notion is consistent with the principles of SIT: when more people share the impact of an external social force, the overall burden is reduced. The present results echo those of Chang, You and Wang (2013), who argued that students should enhance awareness of gender equality by using gender equality materials, engaging in gender education activities, breaking gender stereotypes, and avoiding gender bias and discrimination.

12. Implications

Referendums should be carefully designed and avoid dichotomous options. Debates and discussions before referendums are critical tools to clarify relevant details and enhance the public's comprehension of the issues being voted on. Gender equality laws and norms are crucial to protect the human rights of disadvantaged or minority groups; and these rights should not depend on the outcome of a referendum. Mass communication professionals should convey objective, rational, and balanced information, as well as promote diversity and equality in society. Counseling and educational professionals should also advocate for equality in terms of marriage and family, in addition to striving to eliminate gender prejudice and discrimination. Future research can focus on communication and understanding between the homosexual community and other groups to foster greater acceptance, fairness, and justice on campus as well as in society.

Conclusion

The outcome of the MER prompted feelings of rejection and marginalization in homosexual university students; they also experienced considerable stress and questioned their survival in Taiwanese society. Before and after the MER, those in the homosexual community were the targets of attacks and discrimination both on social media and in daily life; they began to doubt the meaning of life, religion, and religious worshippers; they lost trust in people and society in general; and frequently felt sad, disappointed, frustrated, helpless, and hopeless. All these negative emotions and reactions peaked when the results of the MER were announced. Fortunately, homosexual undergraduates felt supported by their peers, faculty, and staff on campus. They gradually learned to cope with stress, sought support from homosexual clubs or LGBTQ groups, and attended activities to advocate for gender equality and diversity on campus and in society. A positive outcome of the MER is that it stimulated dialogue among various parties in society and increased public awareness of gender issues. The interviewees in this study expressed a desire for increased respect and acceptance of same-sex marriages and families; to reach this goal, they remain dedicated to promoting gender equality and harmonious interpersonal interactions both on campus and in society.

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A Radical Feminist Reading of Stella Oyedepo's *Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* in the Context of Yoruba Cultural Episteme

ABSTRACT. Feminist ideologies have permeated literary creativity and criticism across the globe. In this direction, literary writers have been adopting different styles in their feminist narratives reflecting and refracting conditions of women in patriarchal society. In the handling of feminist ideologies in literature, literary writers have been localising the tenets of feminism to reveal various experiences of women in male-dominate society. Stella Oyedepo, a Nigerian playwright and author of *Rebellion of Bumpy Chested* has engaged feminist ideology in critical discourse in her play. This paper adopts the tenets of radical feminism to content-analyse the play with a view to evaluating the consistence of the women's action with the concepts of womanhood, wifehood and matrimony in Yoruba context. The actions of women, as shown in the plot of the play, are antithetical to the societal expectations of the gender specification of women. Their actions are culturally abnormal because Yoruba conception of womanhood has been violated in the agitations of women for better life and unbridled freedom. Radical feminism in Yoruba context is counter-productive because it breeds acrimony and disorderliness in society because Yoruba people believe in the ideology that men and women should complement one another for societal harmony.

KEYWORDS: gender stereotype, Stella Oyedepo's *Rebellion of Bumpy Chested*, gender stratification, feminist movement, literature and gender

Introduction

The spate of gender discourse in African literature is phenomenal considering the volumes of creative literatures on the ideal of gender relations and conflicts (Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*, Bate Besong's *Three Plays*, Gcina Mhlope's *Have you seen Zandile?* Tess Onwueme's *Three Plays* and

Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of Bumpy Chested*, etc.). Some factors such as western education and gender advocacy have contributed to the redefinition of gender identity in art and life (Akoh, 2015; Evwierhoma, 2002; Akorede, 2011). With this development, there is a redirection of focus on the subjective representation of human sex and gender in literary creativity as reflected in literary creativity and criticism (Evwierhoma, 2001; Akorede, 2011; Sesan, 2014; Sesan & Ugwuanyi, 2019).

The subjective representation of human sex and gender is lop-sided favouring the patriarchy until the recent time that female writers have been redressing the subjective representation of women in literary texts. Male writers began with writing as a reactionary tool against colonialism and all its attendant problems such as racism, socio-economic stratification and dehumanisation of Africans on their own continent but [un]consciously marginalises women's invaluable contributions to societal harmony (Echeruo, 2017; Achebe, 1988, 2000; Wa Thiong'o, 1986, 1997). The thematic paradigms of the literary texts of the period were cultural renaissance, identity quest and nationalism. Notable African literary writers such as Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Camara Laye (Cameroon), Ousmane Sembene (Senegal), Labou Tansi (Cameroon), Tawfik Al-Hakim (Egypt) and Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt) have addressed cultural and national issues in their respective texts from different sociological and ideological orientations with marginal representations of the active roles of women in the whole socio-cultural and political matrix of events. This trend, perhaps, is informed by the patriarchal structure of the authors' societies. In Africa, the patriarchal structure enables male dominance in private and public lives.

African female writers who emerged in the 60's, 70's and 80's came with the feeling of being marginalised in literary production and consumption and hence the urge to tell their own story in their own way (Evwierhoma, 2002; Akoh, 2015). This feeling influenced the subject matter and thematic orientation of their texts. In their attempt to redefine their gender identity, some of the female writers present their male and female characters with some degrees of prejudice in favour of women. The characterisation of female characters in some of the early texts by female authors unconsciously/unknowingly celebrate patriarchy and further question the essence of sisterhood among women as represented in some of the plays of Irene Isoken Salami-Agunloye such as *The Queen Sisters* which is full of treachery and intra-gender conflicts among the women characters.

In the dramatic genre, which is the focus of this paper, there is thematic taxonomy based on the response of female playwrights (from the first generation to the present generation) to gender issues in life and art. In the light of this, there is three thematic taxonomy—sympathetic, apologetic and radical¹. In sympathetic theme, female playwrights only reveal the inequity and injustice that women suffer in a patriarchal society without any solution. In apologetic theme, female playwrights understand and acknowledge the dominance of men in a patriarchal society and for this reason, the female characters surreptitiously plead for a space and identity no matter the position they occupy in a patriarchal society. The female playwrights, through the dialogues and actions of their female characters arrive at a conclusion that the gender stereotype and configuration of the society cannot be altered no matter the extent of the struggle. In the end, they plead for opportunity and space. This situation is often seen in the resolution of the conflicts in the play as seen in Tess Onwueme's *Go Tell it to Women* (1997). The radical theme, however, presents women who are confrontational in their approach to women liberation in some of the plays written by female playwrights. In the radicalist theme, negotiation has no place as female characters abandon their stereotypic gender roles of motherhood and wifehood and do the uncommon and unacceptable things within patriarchal conventions. Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* (2002) is one of the plays with radicalist theme. She patterns her interpretation of African gender in consistence with the radical posture of western feminism. The radicalisation of feminism in the play is reflected in language, characterisation and thematic perspectives with the assumption of changing women marginal representation in literature and life. This approach to feminist/gender discourse, however, is antithetical to African gender relations.

Oyedepo's radicalisation of feminist ideology in the play, perhaps, problematises its reception and perception by African audience and critics. Despite that Oyedepo is one of the female prolific playwrights of the contemporary time, *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* with some of her plays has not received critical literary attention unlike the plays of Tess Onwueme. The play's attempt to alter the patriarchal gender configuration

¹ This thematic taxonomy was first used by Azeez Akinwumi Sesan (2018) to summarise the themes of all the plays written by Nigerian and by extension, African female writers. The critic argues that theme of any play by female playwrights will fall within any of the thematic taxonomy.

may account for the poor attention it has received from literary critics who believe in the masculine orientation of African society.

Among the few literary criticism of Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* are John Yeseibo's "Stella Oyedepo and the Feminist Vision in *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested*" (2013), Ngozi Ndegwu's "Resistance or "Shadowboxing": A Study of Irene Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge* and Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of Bumpy – Chested*" (2009) and E. B. Adeleke's "Interrogating Misconceptions of Feminism in Tracy Chima Utoh's *Our Wives have Gone Mad Again* and Stella 'Dia Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested*" (2017). Yeseibo examines the plot and theme of the play in relation to women's revolution in an attempt to enforce gender equality. The critic does not critically situate the play within African gender configuration and sex roles. Critiquing *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* alongside *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, Adeleke avers that Oyedepo has gone to the extreme in her representation of women's rebellion and struggle against patriarchal domination. As engaging as Adeleke's essay is, it does not contextualise the women's gender representation and feminist struggle within African gender configuration and sex roles. Like Yeseibo, Adeleke focuses more on the plot, characterisation and theme of the play with little emphasis on the play's cultural context.

***The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* and Misconceived Intertextuality²**

Some critics such as Yeseibo (2013) have argued that Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* enjoys intertextuality with Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and J.P. Clark's *The Wives' Revolt*. This paper has a contrary view considering the ideological contexts of the three plays and critical interpretation of intertextuality as an approach/theory of literary criticism.

Julia Kristeva's conception of intertextuality establishes the fact that no text is novel because it has some bond/link with a pre-text (a literary text that had been previously published before the text). The link between

² The notion of misconceived intertextuality is used to mean that Oyedepo's play does not share semblance in plot, subject matter and theme with its precursor texts. In the context of this paper, misconceived intertextuality is used to nullify arguments of previous critics and scholars that Stella Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* enjoys intertextuality with Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and J.P. Clark's *The Wives' Revolt*.

pre-text and 'new'³ text can be found in the overall narrative gestalt of the texts as represented in characterisation and ideology of the texts. If one goes by Roland Barthes' view that "any text is a new tissue of past citations" (39), one will be tempted that Yeseibo is absolutely correct for saying that *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* has intertextual reference with *Lysistrata* and *The Wives Revolt*. It (*The Rebellion*) is only a new tissue of the past citation of the basic subject matter (confrontation to challenge the status quo of patriarchy) of *Lysistrata* and *The Wives Revolt*. This argument holds by considering only the surface level of interpretation of the text. At a deeper level of interpretation, *The Rebellion* has a different ideological orientation from the two plays—*Lysistrata* and *The Wives Revolt*. Despite the difference in the ideological orientations of the three plays, one cannot overrule the fact the subject matter of *Lysistrata* and *The Wives Revolt* may have influence on the Oyedepo while writing *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested*. In this line of thought, this paper corroborates Mary Kolawole's (8) view that:

The basic premise is that the writer is first a reader of texts before he becomes a writer of one. So the work of art is influenced, deliberately or not, overtly or implicitly, by other texts, ideologies, literary traditions or linguistic patterns and belief systems of a particular social milieu.

On the above assumptions that Oyedepo might have been influenced by the ideological contexts of the precursor texts, *Lysistrata* and *The Wives Revolt*, it is imperative here to consider the plot and subject matter of the three plays. This will afford this paper the opportunity to argue adequately the idea of misconceived intertextuality among the three plays.

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* is a classical Greek comedy which centers on the role women played to put an end to incessant wars between two Greek states—Athens and Sparta. In the play which was first performed in 411 BC, women are tired of the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta. The concern of the women is that they often lose their husbands and sons in the war which seems to be unending. Under the leadership of Lysistrata, all the women in Greek embark on sex-strike by depriving all their husbands access to sex. The women know that Greek men cannot

³ The word new is used in the context of this paper for want of appropriate term. In the view of Julia Kristeva and other theorists of intertextuality, no literary text is new because of inherent and explicit connection in the themes, subject matter and ideological orientations of literary texts.

do without sex. With this approach, the war is brought to an end and the whole conflicts in the play are resolved.

J.P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt* (1991) centers on women's struggle to ensure fairness and equity in the sharing of money given to the community of Erhuwaren by an oil company. The men in the community claim that the money will be shared into three "equal" parts—one part to all the males in the community, the second part to all the females in the community and the third part to all the elders. The women are opposed to the men's definition of "equal" parts because all the elders are men. This is the genesis of the conflicts in the play. The elders are of the view that the only way to subdue the women's agitations is to disempower them economically. To this end, there is a pronouncement that all goats in the community should be confiscated knowing full well that goat rearing is one of the sources of wealth for women in the community. The women see this pronouncement as an injustice and an abuse of their rights. They migrate out of the community leaving the domestic activities for men/their husbands. Lives become unbearable for men who find it awkward doing all the domestic chores. Besides, the men of Erhuwaren do not have access to sex with their wives. The resolution of the conflicts in the play is that men agree not to share the money anymore. Instead of sharing the money into three "equal" parts, everybody (men and women) agree to use the money to build a school for the community.

Stella 'Dia Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* (2002) centers on the women's revolt to ensure equal opportunities with men. As stated in the women's manifesto as given by Captain Sharp, women want to occupy some positions that men occupy in the society. The women adopt military approach by undergoing military drilling under the command of Captain Sharp. At home, women abandon all their traditional roles of womanhood, motherhood and wifeness. They go to the extreme of beating and assaulting their husbands. All the men, at the inception of women's rebellion are helpless and hapless. There is resolution of the conflicts in the play when Akanbi and Jolomi engage in role-reversal by doing what is expected of the female sex. At this point, women realise that their rebellion does no longer have effect on men.

Considering the years of first publication/performance of the three plays, one can say that Oyedepo is influenced by the plot of the two precursor texts (*Lysistrata* and *The Wives' Revolt*). Despite this observation, this paper argues that Oyedepo is not consistent with the ideology of the two texts. This inconsistency informs the notion of misconceived intertex-

tuality in this paper. The first issue which is clear in the plot of the three plays is that women in the precursor texts do not use militancy and radical confrontations to achieve their goals. Rather, the women in *Lysistrata* and *The Wives' Revolt* use boycott and peaceful demonstration to achieve their goals. In *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested*, however, the women use militancy and confrontation. They go to the extent of being violent against their husbands and other men who cross their path. Besides, the women in *Lysistrata* and *The Wives' Revolt* embark on boycott to restore peace and justice in their respective communities. This paper reiterates here that the women in *Lysistrata* embarks on sex-strike to stop the war between Athens and Sparta while women in *The Wives' Revolt* emigrate from their community to ensure that justice is done in the sharing of the money given by an oil company. Women in both plays have state/national interest in mind while taking their actions. In the light of this, the women can be called a womanist because of the roles they have played to ensure harmonious relationship among everybody in the community irrespective of sex, race, age and socio-economic background. This argument is consistent with Alice Walker's (xi) description of womanist as "black feminist or feminist of color who loves other women and/or men sexually and/or non-sexually, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength and is committed to "survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female". The women in *Lysistrata* and *The Wives' Revolt* are committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people by restoring peace and justice into their respective communities. The people of Erhuwaren are able to have a school with the action of the women who insist on equity and justice in the sharing of money by the oil company. With school, there will be enlightenment and sustainable literacy in the community. In *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested*, however, the women fight for unjustifiable reasons. They only want to alter the status quo and further create chaos in the society. Their actions are not meant to restore any peace and order in the society. The rebellion of the women in the play has no ideology. This view is premised on the opening of the play when Captain Sharp, the leader of the rebellious women, engage members of Bumpy-Chested Movement in military training in preparation for their physical combats with their husbands in their respective homes.

With the above explanation, this paper has established the fact that there is misconceived intertextuality in the comparison of *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* with *Lysistrata* and *The Wives' Revolt*. The three plays are different in ideology and representation of women ideals and struggle

in a patriarchal society - there is preponderance of rascality in the *Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* while *Lysistrata* and *The Wives' Revolt* have no form of rascality.

A Radical Feminist Reading of *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested*

Radical Feminism, a sub-set of Western Feminism, advocates a total liberation of women from the control of men. Radical feminists poised to remove all forms of male super-ordination in the society. Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) is one of the books which prompted and promoted Radical Feminism in the western and European countries. In Firestone's (11) view, "the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself: general differences between human beings would no longer matter naturally". With the deduction from Firestone's view, this paper avers that radical feminists are not hardened male-haters as some critics such as Valerie Jean Solanas in *Scum Manifesto* (1996) make us believe.

Reading Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* within Yoruba socio-cultural context, this paper is of the view that the playwright has mixed up the ideals of radical feminism with Yoruba cultural episteme of gender relations. Her education in Europe (Wales), perhaps changes her worldview about gender relations in Yoruba society. Though the women in the play want to alter the status quo of gender relations in an unnamed Yoruba society, their approach and tactics are not consistent with the expectations of women in that society. In Yoruba cultural milieu, women are not expected to be violent and rascal except in extreme situations such as reactions to domestic violence.

In an attempt to put the radical feminist reading of the play in a critical perspective, this paper critiqued the manifesto of the Bumpy-Chested as stated by Captain Sharp, the leader of Bumpy-Chested Movement (B.C.M.). She states that:

Our activities henceforth must have a volcanic impact on the status quo of men vis a vis women. This existing order must be blown into billions of infinitesimal fragments! A new order must emerge. This life of drudgery to which women have been sentenced throughout the ages must alter for a better one.

Men should be asked to descend from the Olympic (Sic.) heights in which they have carved an exclusive niche and shake hands with women on the platform of equality. Women must emerge from a state of submissiveness to that of parity if not of dominance.

(*Rebellion*, 16–17)

This paper sincerely appreciates the fact that Captain Sharp wants a better gender representation and social status for women. The vehemence of her language betrays the credibility of her project within Yoruba cultural episteme. Oyedepo, through the characterisation of Captain Sharp and other rebellious women, presents a gender/feminist ideology which is antithetical to indigenous Yoruba gender relations. In Yoruba context, there is no gender chaos in relation to sex roles and identities because individuals identify and acknowledge his/her privileges and limitations. This is because the convention of gender relations accords respects to individuals particularly within their respective spheres of influence. Yoruba women had not felt marginalised and exempted from roles meant for them. The only claim they can make is lack of adequate representation in public administration but with relative improvement in the contemporary time. This is not say that they were not represented in the traditional settings. The king-in-council was not and is not complete without Iyalode (head of women) and Iyaloja (head of market). These are important offices in Yoruba traditional and modern palaces. One interesting fact here is that Iyaloja has an absolute control on all men and women selling in the market. Besides, Olori (the king's wife) and Iya Oba (the king's mother) also play significant role in the administration of the kingdom. They are advisers to the king and anyone who wants a favour from the king usually passed through the two powerful women in the king's life.

Oyeronke Oyewumi's *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse* explicates the variables of hierarchy and social relations in the traditional African society and how these variables had not influenced or disturbed harmonious gender relations. The critic argues that in Oyo-Yoruba culture "the 'physicality' of maleness or femaleness did not have social antecedents [as the] principle that determined social organisation was seniority, which was based on chronological age" (13). Oyewumi argues further that:

Okunrin [male] is not posited as the norm, the essence of humanity, against which Obinrin [female] is the Other, nor is Okunrin a category of privilege.

Obinrin is not ranked in relation to Okunrin; it does not in and of itself constitute any social ranking. (33)

With the above illustration, this paper argues that Oyedepo has misplaced the focus and ideology of the play because the indigenous cultural practice never upheld and executed gender disparity between men and women. Captain Sharp's rascal speech and action betrays the essence of womanhood in African context. She and other women have the problem of insubordination to the African family structure which emphasises patriarchy. This is the natural order which differentiates Africa from Europe and America with radical feminism. Captain Sharp executes the manifesto of the Bumpy Chested Movement (B.C.M) with high degree of absurdity—women are subjected to rigorous military training.

Captain Sharp's allegation against the patriarchy is that women are excluded from public offices. While addressing Oye and Jolomi, Captain Sharp states that:

Now, the synopsis of the women's demand is this. We want equal opportunity with men. This means for example that the society should remove the prejudices which prevent women from getting into the highest positions like Heads of State, Governors, Vice-Chancellors and a lot of other ranking positions including high spiritual offices like that of the Pope or the Sheik.

(*Rebellion*, 75–76)

Women's demand is not novel. At the time of the publication of this play in 2002, women have been occupying public offices. The argument here, therefore, is that the playwright does not have a clear feminist ideology while writing this play. She, perhaps, wrote the play as a farcical comedy for the purpose of entertainment [a piece of information which is deduced from the appendix page of the play]. Before her retirement from Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Stella Oyedepo was a Senior Principal Lecturer. At the time of the publication of this play, she was the Executive Director of Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture, Ilorin. The brief biographical information of the playwright, therefore, reveals that she is not a victim of marginalisation. As argued earlier, she is exposed to western feminism through her stay and education in Wales. The exposure to gender relations and women's status in Wales might provide the playwright with the background information about feminism in the play. Her feminist orientation is reflected in her debut play, *Our Wife is not a Woman* and other plays such as *Brain Has no Gender*.

Wales is a country in Southwest of Great Britain. Oyedepo's reading of Wales' history and literature, perhaps, informs her radical posture in the play. In 1897, there was formation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) under the leadership of Millicent Fawcett to agitate for the franchise of women and equal representation with men in public offices. A more militant group, Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), was initiated in 1906 by Emmeline Parkhurst and Mary Gawthorpe. The second militant group was radical in its approach to ensure parity of men and women in public spheres. The actions of women in *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* is similar to the actions of the members of Women's Social and Political Union. In the play, the playwright has not engaged in constructive dialogue with her society about the status of women. In the play, Oyedepo fails to acknowledge the fact that her knowledge of women's status in Wales is not conclusive. To this end, it is relative and it cannot be used to appraise the status of women in Yoruba cultural context. Uduopegeme J. Yakubu's (153) view is instructive here that:

That knowledge is always open to further possibilities implies that its constitution at any given time is never conclusive, thus any claim to objectivity or non-partisanship is, at most, very relative and tentative. This tentativeness indicates the deliberate choice to suspend disbelief. Such an act of suspending reflects the limits of human reason, beyond which objectivity is assumed as given only because, for whatever reason (s), we can no longer stretch our capacity to understand. At such points, we believe that we have attained an objective-phenomenon.

The playwright believes that her diluted visionary ideology has equipped her to attain an "objective-phenomenon" with representation and characterisation of women in the play. Though the play was first written in 1984, it was first published in 2002. Before the play's publication, it had been performed on Nigeria's theatre stages. This information reveals a critical issue that the playwright has had the opportunity to review/revise some of the feminine issues raised in the play. For not doing that, it shows that she claims that her knowledge of women status and feminine issues is conclusive and for this reason, she "can no longer stretch" her "capacity to understand" the dynamism of gender relations in Yoruba culture. The inability of the playwright to stretch her capacity to understand the dynamism of Yoruba gender relations is seen in the fact that women have been occupying public offices long before the publication of the play in 2002. In

2001, Dora Akunyili [though an Igbo woman but her instance is relevant to present discussion] was appointed as the Director-General of National Agency for Foods and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) during the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Besides, Nigerian universities can lay claim to female Vice-Chancellors. In the light of this argument, Oyedepo's case, through the characterisation of Captain Sharp, is not valid for women status in Yoruba culture.

The women in the play are just men-haters who do not want to subscribe to the convention of marriage. This is another area where the playwright has got the radical feminist ideology wrong. The ideology of radical feminism is not disruption of marriage but a struggle to give women more visibility in public spaces and offices. In Yoruba culture, marriage is sacrosanct and it is in this institution that essence of womanhood is assessed and accepted. Marriage, both in real life and fiction, is perhaps, the most circumscribing factor in a woman's life (Remy Oriaku, 77). A woman is expected to be devoted and dedicated to her in-laws, the husband and the children. It is through this devotion that women get their right space in marriage. The women in the play see the performance of their conventional duties as being ordered around. This is why they abandon all responsibilities at home including cooking, breastfeeding and total care of home. Based on the fact that the women's action is antithetical to Yoruba culture, Jolomi asks Falilat, one of the rebellious women of Bumpy-Chested Movement (B.C.M.) the following question.

So the performance of your normal marital duties which nature allotted to you, right from the beginning of creation, is now tantamount to being ordered around?

(*Rebellion*, 31)

In Yoruba culture, any woman who puts up the attitude of the rebellious women is seen as irresponsible and ready for divorce or separation. On the other hand, the women in the play are radical and at the same time want to keep their marriages. Their actions are not tolerated within Yoruba cultural ideology. This paper corroborates its view with Helen Chukwu-ma's (8) that:

The true test of the woman continues to be the marriage institution. In this closed-in-arena, every married woman is to fight out her survival as individual. The marriage paradox lies in the fact that it is both sublimating and sub-

suming. Through it a woman attains a status acclaimed by society and fulfils her biological need of procreation and companionship. Through it too, the woman's place of second-rate is emphasized and too easily she is lost in anonymity to the benefit and enhancement of the household.

Chukwuma's view establishes the fact about the essence of woman and marriage in Yoruba culture. A woman should know how to fair the weather. In the traditional Yoruba culture, women were given the chance to work beyond the home front—they were farmers and traders. They were earning income and the same time performing their conventional roles as wives and mothers. On the other hand, the women in the play are “are *schizophrenic*, their personalities fragmented by their desire both to accept and reject their conditions” (Florence Stratton, 147). The rebellious women in the play, to show their fragmented personalities, engage in professions which are supposedly meant for men in traditional and modern Yoruba societies. Among these professions are palm wine tapping and commercial transportation in taxi and on motorcycles (popularly called *okada* in Nigerian parlance). In major cities of Nigeria such as Ibadan, Port Harcourt and Lagos, it is not strange to see women engage in commercial transportation and yet some of these women act responsibly to keep their homes [as revealed in the dialogues of the present researchers with these women]. That women engage in a profession meant for men does not make them radical. It is only a tell-tale sign of the contemporary economic realities of the country which require survival of the fittest.

What Oyedepo has presented as the plot and subject matter of the play is a symptom of “urban dislocation and postcolonial transformation” (Wumi Raji, 219). The critic uses these two concepts to reveal the rupturing effects of Afro-European contacts on African episteme and indigenous belief system. These two phenomena have redirected our perception of realities within African context with the inclusion of Yoruba cultural episteme. The women in the play fail to be submissive to the will of men because of their sophisticated learning, as demonstrated by their leader, Captain Sharp. Colonial encounter with western education and civilisation makes Yoruba women feel marginalised and oppressed because of westernization of the indigenous thought system and cultural episteme. While agitating for parity with men, the rebellious women go to the extreme as demonstrated in their act of husband battery and assault. For instance, Falilat and Jolomi beat their respective husbands. In Yoruba context, what is common is wife-battery (a phenomenon that modern arrangement has

been frowning at through the efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other governmental agencies). Even in a worse situation when a wife beats her husband, it is not a public discourse in Yoruba context.

As hard as Oyedepo tried to imprint radical feminism on Yoruba literary map, she [un] consciously faults her own view with the presentation of women with reservation for the goals of Bumpy Chested Movement (B.C.M.). The home of Oye and Sarah (a couple) negates the radical feminist ideology of the playwright. The couple live within the Yoruba cultural configuration of sex role specification and gender identity. Despite the ongoing radicalism/rascality of the rebellious women, Sarah still lives harmoniously with her husband. She also prepares and serves the food as and when due. A careful reading of the play reveals that Captain Sharp is aware that her effort of women liberation will be frustrated by some moles among the women. The dialogue between Ashake and Tara reveals this:

ASHAKE: It is quite a surprise that people like Sarah will want to remain slaves to their men despite efforts to set them free. People like you are frustrating our efforts.

TARA: This is the point which Captain has been emphasizing. She warned that there would be some who would pledge one thing, and do another thing in the secrecy of their homes.

(Rebellion, 56–57)

The above point validates the significance of gender socialisation (a process of informal training which spells out sex role and identity as well as societal expectations about the gender of male and female individuals from childhood) in Yoruba societies. Sarah is an example of one the Yoruba women who have been immersed in the gender socialization in relation to marriage and marital harmony. With the effect of gender socialization, radical feminism cannot survive in Yoruba societies.

With the inconclusive end of the play, this paper is of the view that Oyedepo is not convinced where to align her ideology. The conflicts in the play are resolved with role-reversal by Jolomi and Akanbi who dress and act like women. This development takes women (particularly Salwa and Tara) by surprise. Chris Dunton's (107) view validates the position of this paper that:

The final moments of the play remain open-ended as two of the women, Salwa and Tara, discuss the struggle, first agreeing that equality is perhaps an unrealistic goal and that the confidence of the B.C.M is hubristic; then recognizing

the primacy of true love in human relations, finally, however, agreeing that, if not the struggle precisely as defined by the B.C.M., then the struggle to identify new and far more just ways of organizing relations between men and women must continue.

The above view is consistent with the ideology of African feminism which underlines cooperation, constructive dialogue, gender harmony inclusiveness for humane society.

Conclusion

This paper's focus is the radical feminist reading of Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of Bumpy-Chested* within Yoruba cultural contexts. The ideology of the text, as revealed by its plot, subject matter, action and characterization, is polemical. The playwright's desire for women liberation, perhaps, had been influenced by her education and exposure in Europe while on studies. What the playwright has missed in her presentation of the actions and characters of the play is that there is difference between African and European gender perception and representation. The rebellious women in the play have not properly coordinated their actions as what they do is not consistent with Yoruba perception of gender roles and relationship. The "open-ended" (adopting Dunton's expression) conclusion of the play shows the middle-line that Oyedepo eventually takes on the radical feminist ideology in Yoruba life and art.

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Gender and Traditional Music Performance in Yoruba Land

ABSTRACT. This paper discusses gender as a social reality from the perspective of the Yoruba people of South west, Nigeria. The paper hypothesizes that, the composition of Yoruba musical ensembles and the people's musical activities, replicate their worldview of gender. Therefore, portrayal of Yoruba as a patriarchy society may not be adequate in representing the people's view of the gender concept. The paper employs the practices and conventions in Yoruba traditional music ensembles to navigate the entire gamut of the discourse. Using ethnographic approach, data for the paper were collated from the six Yoruba states of Nigeria using mixed methods of interview, observation and bibliography. It hinges on the theory of gender complementarities, by Olajubu, 2003), the paper establishes the relativity of gender in Yoruba land. Though the Yoruba cultures is gender sensitive, the people, by their practices, see each of the sexes as complimenting the other and not subordinate or subservient. Therefore, sex to the Yoruba people is an expression of human physiology beyond an object for social stratification.

KEYWORDS: gender, patriarchy, ethnographic, ensembles, social stratification

Introduction

Discourses on gender have taken the front burner with scholars, who, though from varied disciplines, delve into the subject conscientiously. Of a higher interest in the array of discourses is how gender as a social reality is being used to negotiate society balance, particularly in Africa, where gender belief system has been largely crowded by foreign influences. The concept of gender, as it was in the pre-contact or pre-colonial era in Africa, is said to have been altered with new ideas and orientations that are barely unknown to the continent. These new ideas are seen as imposition of western gender identities and narratives on Africa and Africans. This is also coupled with the emergence of new cultures arising from global-

ization and civilization that are ravaging the continent. In the context of this study, which is, Yoruba land, it is not uncommon today to sexualize gender or use it as a form of social stratification or hierarchy. This practice, as explained by (Oyewumi, 1997; Olajubu, 2003; Muraina & Ajimatanraeja, 2023), has no root in traditional Yoruba land where sex did not confer social advantage but restricted to mere means of reproduction and identity. This discourse, has stated earlier, has heightened in recent times with the upsurge of new terms like feminism, inequality, afro-centricism, westo-centricism. Feminism for instance is a European term used in the advocacy of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. All these are terms that were imported into the Yoruba sociological life and were never in existence in the traditional Yoruba society setting. As explained by Oyewumi (1997) gender was not an organizing principle in Yoruba land prior to colonization by the West. The social categories “men” and “women” were non-existence and hence no gender system was in place.

As varied as the thoughts on gender is, so also are these thoughts argumentative and contradictory. (Muraina & Ajimatanraeja, 2023). The new concept of gender in practice, portrays Yoruba as patriarchal- a society that allows men dominance in areas that cut across social, religion, and political strata of the society. (Oyewumi, 1997). Some other opinions tilts towards complementarities of sexes- each of the sexes are not distinguishable on the basis of social relations but compliments one another in creating social balancing. (Olajubu, 2003). As submitted by Muraina & Ajimatanraeja, (ibid) ‘the Yoruba society holds tightly to the heteronormative gender category- this term considers heterosexual as the norm.

To the best of my knowledge, discussion on this topic have been more intense within the ambit of a few disciplines such as Sociology, Anthropology (Rusak, 2004, p. 218), with very little residing in the field of ethnomusicology. Because music carries cultural and sociological values within it, it will not be out of place to give the idea of having an ethnomusicological view of the topic a consideration. My hypothesis in this monograph therefore is that since music reflect the social experience of a people and community, an examination of the musical life of the Yoruba people should give an insight into the gender construct in the Yoruba thought system. ‘It seems clear that gender as a construct should necessarily accommodate multiple paradigms in order to remain valid in scholarly discourses’ (Olajubu, 2003, p. 66).

The study, therefore, aims to contribute to the discourse on the place of gender in Yoruba society by drawing references from the organization

of Yoruba traditional music ensembles as well as the components of the ensembles that reflect the ways the people perceive the gender system. In this essay, I will be interrogating the concept of gender in Yoruba land by taking a look at the organization of traditional Yoruba music rendition and performance whether or not it embodied the people's gender systems. I will look at the social significances of gender in the organization of these musical ensembles and musical performance. I intend to support my argument with ethnographic reports garnered from various locations of Yoruba land over a 5-year period. This paper will be used to interrogate positions of scholars that had postulated on the topic; gender. One of the things this paper is set to achieve is that, with the acknowledgement of gender disparity in Yoruba land, (male and Female sexes), whether gender in Yoruba drumming translates to hierarchical formations or it is a mere binary opposition with no significance on social relations. And whether by undertaking a critical examination of musical practices of the people further understanding of the people's perception may be achieved. Doing these will require me to transverse the borders of two disciplines- Sociology and Ethnomusicology.

The Yoruba people are concentrated in the south western states of Nigeria. A substantial population of these people is also found in the west coast of Africa and southern America states of Brazil, Haiti, Cuba and a few other nations. The cross-Atlantic slave trade experience has been a major contributor to the displacement of Yoruba people and the distortion of their belief system and culture. Like most nations of Africa, music in Yoruba land is symmetrical to life in its entirety. The social organization of Yorùbá society, which makes people the center of all activities allows situations or, circumstances in the land to have corresponding music or musical performances. There is music for the commemoration of all activities embodied in the cycle of life. Music is employed to mediate conflict, instigate wars and social dialoging just as it is used to construct and deconstruct societal values and ethics. (Bernard, 2023). Yoruba music has evolved over the time. The pre-contact era in Yoruba land saw the people with their own type of music that is generic to them. This category of music is called traditional music. Though still in existence, Yoruba traditional music has been largely altered by foreign invaders, to the extent that, today, the music has waned in influence and patronage. Another category of music prevalent in Yoruba land is the neo traditional or contemporary music. Music in the category is that that have elements of foreign influence. In this study, since my focus is the place of gender before the interference of foreign bodes, I shall sample the Yoruba traditional music.

Yoruba traditional music is both in vocal and instrumental forms. (Akin Euba, 1990; Vidal, 2007; Olaniyan, 2003; Ogunyemi, 2020) There are also solo and chorus formations including male and female. The two can also join in an ensemble. Unaccompanied vocal music exists in the form of chants, poetries and recitations. Focus in this paper will be on ensemble music. Although it is generally believed that females in these ensembles are relegated to singing and dancing, there are cases of female only ensemble just as there are male ensembles. For example, Abebe ensemble in Ile Ife, Sabarikolo Ensemble, Okemesi Ekiti, Igbe Oba, Lagos Island, Obitun Dance, Ondo, and so many are wholly female ensembles. In female ensembles, the women take up the responsibility of playing musical instrument, composition as well as singing and dancing. Musical elements like songs, poetry, instruments and instrumentation as well as ensemble formation and performance, will form the objects of study.

Literature Review

As briefly mentioned above, there had been significant number of theses focused on gender in music. This paper takes cognizance of submissions that dwell on the social relevance of gender construct in general and Yoruba land in particular. Koskoff's (1987) is noted as one of the books that focuses on women in music. In her book, *Women and Music in Cross Cultural Perspective*, Koskoff published a series of articles that emphasize the involvement of women in varied musical activities across several cultures of the world. Koskoff's collections also focus on subversion of women in some of these identified cultures in addition to laying emphasis on gender disparity in musical performances. Dunbar (2021) attention was focused on the under-reportage of female musical activities. In her book, *Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction*. Dunbar states that the problems of underrepresentation of women in written report, visual Images and recorded anthologies that reach the public persists, 'the issue was first addressed in the 1980s when feminist scholars began to share narratives that expanded the global music lens to include women' (p.42). While these two books were focused on the place of women in the global world of music, and authors have dwelled on the social realities of gender, there is no evidence of the amount of the worked carried out in Yoruba land.

Oyewumi (2007), for instance, in her book, *The Invention of Women: Making of African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*, where she argues

that the term gender was unknown to Yoruba sociology in the ways it was known and expressed in the European world. Gender, according to Oyewumi, was not an organizing principle in Yoruba land prior to colonization by the west, 'the social categories "men" and "women" were nonexistent and hence no gender system was in place' (2007). She affirms the existence of the distinct reproductive roles for Obinrin (Female) and Okunrin (Male) in Yoruba land but they were not used to create social ranking or hierarchy (36). Oyewumi (ibid) states further that:

Sex has been a frame work for gender construction in western culture through so many centuries that on some occasions it has been asserted that sex and gender are the same, but this cannot be said of the Yoruba. The Yoruba's concept of gender as in some other culture is not unitary monolithic or rigid. (47)

The submissions of Oyewumi have generated (perhaps still generating) a lot of debates with scholars taking varied positions on the issues she raised. Fadipe, 1970; Olajubu, 2003; Sarah, 2019; Muraina, 2023) have published divergent views of this same topic. Some of these scholars challenged Oyewumi's submission particularly that which says that the absence of gender differentiated categories in Yoruba language underscores the absence of gender conceptions. Taking a swipe at the submission Olajubu (2003) whose work, *Women in the Yoruba religious sphere*, belongs to the general genre and tradition of feminist gendered study, says, the Yoruba society holds tightly to heteronormative gender category. Though she does not subscribe to the assertion that the Yoruba society is male dominated, she asserts that; The Yoruba worldview is rooted in holistic harmony, hence the principles of relatedness is sine qua non of the people social and religious reality (p. 2). She goes further saying that:

Yoruba is essentially culture bound and should be differentiated from notions of gender in some other cultures. It is a gender classification that is not equivalent to or a consequence of anatomy at all times. Yoruba gender construction is fluid and is modulated by other factors such as seniority (age) and personal achievements (wealth and knowledge acquisition. (8)

Mathew (2014), in her book *Aje & Aje; Gender and Female Power in Yoruba Land*, criticizes Oyewumi's assertions saying; Oyewumi over emphasizes the point in such a way that, if taken at face value, dismisses many of the vital roles female power has played within Yoruba land

throughout history. My argument in this article hinges on the complementarities of the sexes in Yoruba land as expressed by Olajubu and others in her category.

Beyond the field of sociology and anthropology, are the scholars of ethnomusicology who have also taken interest in the topic; gender, as it relates to the field of music particularly in Africa (Euba, 1990; Vidal, 2012; Omojola, 2012; Barz, 2004; Kubik, 1994; Oludare, 2018). Each of these have written about the involvements of women in music organization and performance in Africa in general and Yoruba land in specific. For its relatedness to this study, I will dwell more on Oludare's article *Masculinity and Femininity in Yoruba Traditional musical instrument*. In his article, Oludare examines the social and musical factors relating to the gender status and nomenclature of masculinity and femininity of Yoruba traditional instruments, as well as their musical and extra-musical functions.

In his views, the organization of Yoruba instrumental ensembles in Yoruba land is in a replica of their family system.

The Yoruba culture sees the gender (femininity) role of the mother as the creative and procreative image of the family, through her guidance, vocal articulation and leadership qualities. So also, are Yoruba traditional instruments treated as a family of feminine and masculine symbols, with the biggest and leading instrument referred to as mother (Iya-ilu) instrument.

Though paper is largely in consonance with the position of Oludare (2018) as canvassed in his paper, I will examine it in relation to the submission of Olajubu. This I will do by categorizing gender not as biologically determined but rather culturally determined in Yoruba land.

The study is qualitative design and descriptive in nature. Primary data for this study were collated during my ethnographic survey of the states of Yorùbá land in Nigeria, which is consisting of Òyó, Ògùn, Lagos, Òṣun, Èkìtì, Ondó and other adjourning States that also have large concentration of Yorùbá people such as Kwara and Kogi in the North Central Nigeria. Primary data that I used in this study were collated using mix methods that include interview, direct observation, focus group discussion. Secondary data were sourced using existing library and other bibliography materials. In all, a total of 12 music ensembles of different categories and taxonomies were purposively sampled across the states that make up the population of the study.

Theoretical Framework

This study hinges on the complementarity theory of Olajubu (2003). Olajubu in her book, *Women in Yoruba Religious Sphere* argues against the notion earlier created that gender as a social relation was in practice in Yoruba land. She says the fact that Yoruba worldview assigns certain features exclusively to one gender or the other and seeks to offer explanation for any breach of those clarifications' points to the existence of gender construct amongst the people (9). Olajubu would not deny the existence of gender construct in Yoruba land but says it does not translate to the notions of oppression and the domination of one sex over the other 'because it is mediated by the philosophy of complementarity, which is rooted in the people's cosmic experience.

In buttress of her position, Olajubu (ibid) ctd Sofola 'The Yoruba worldview is rooted in holistic harmony hence the principles of relatedness are the sine qua non of the people's social and religious reality'. This theory of complementarity will play a major role in mediating this topic. This theory will be shore-up by a conceptual frame work that is drawn from a Yoruba proverb, *otun we osi, osi we otun, lowo fi n mo*. (to achieve a clean hand wash, the two hands must wash in complimenting of one another). This is predicated on the order of corresponding dualism.

Analysis of Findings

In any circumstance of the Yoruba people, there exist two opposing sides not necessarily working in dissonance but in unison in achieving sonority. The negative and positive are treated as an essential order to synergise the existence of man in his society. The reason, being that the functionalism of the Yorùbá society is predicated on the principle of binarism. That is, in all circumstance of being, the Yorùbá social order attracts two face views which are not only distinctive but conditionally complementary. This is otherwise known as the models of socionics dichotomies. In Yoruba land for instance, *Ikú* (Death) is conditional to *Ààyè* (Life), *Ire* (Goodness), is conditional to *Ibi* (Misfortune), Obinrin (Female) is conditional to Ọkùnrin (Male), *Òsì* (Left) is conditional to *Ọtún* (Right), *Ayé*, (Earth) is conditional to *Ọrun* (Heaven), *Bẹ̀ẹ̀ni* (Affirmative) is conditional to *Bẹ̀ẹ̀kọ* (Negative). The Yoruba aphorism that explains this concept is *Tibi ti ire la da ile aye* (the world is predicated upon the good and the bad prisms). Even

though these 'usages and many more as highlighted stands parallel apart in ideation, their complementarity is instructive to life and living in Yorùbá land. No one of all these can exist, in the mind-set of the Yorùbá people, in isolation of the other. Therefore, the patriarchy nature of the society may not be absolute since female as complementary of male is prerequisite in attaining a balance society.

Yoruba traditional music ensembles, are a part of layers of communal activities that are used in the engagement and negotiation of beliefs and religious practices of the people. The art of drumming for instance, goes beyond generation of sound. Drumming is a part of other activities that are representation of the people's sociology and philosophy. The Ayan family in Yoruba land is associated with drumming and they are the custodians of Ayan, the Yoruba god of drums (Euba, 1990; Villepastour, 2010; Olaniyan, 2011, Samuel, 2012). Thereby making drums anthropomorphic as a result of which its practices are ritualised. (Ogunyemi, 2022). Every child born into the Ayan family is a devotee of Ayan, and also a potential drummer. The initial insight into the place of gender in the organization of Yoruba ensemble is noticed at the point where rituals are performed for the off springs of Ayan. As many rituals as are performed for Ayan offsprings from birth till death, the female gender is not exempted from any. Although the order of these rituals may vary from one sub ethnic group to the other, in all, both genders are all recognised and considered essential in the attainment of fluidity in the polity.

In relations to gender construct, music ensembles in Yoruba traditional setting can be categorised into three. Those that are male denominated. Those that are exclusive to female gender and those that are not restricted to any gender. In the first category are such ensembles like; *Bata*, *Agba*, *Gbedu*, *Igbín*, *Agere*, *Ipese* and a few others. These ensembles are phenomenal musical experience across the Yoruba space. Each of these ensembles is also attached to at least one Yoruba pantheon. A situation that classifies the ensembles as sacred. *Bata*, for instance, is two-headed conical shaped drums that is dedicated to Sango, the Yoruba acclaimed god of thunder and brimstone. See more in Villepastour (2010). *Agba* is the musical ensemble of the Ogboni cult. It consists of sets of upright drums that are found and performed in the enclaves of the Ogboni across the Yoruba space. Ogboni cult according to Idowu (2005, p. 77) is a 'powerful traditional attitude (in the) 'moral represents(s) the traditional attitude (in the) moral, legal, social and political life" of the Yoruba. The group, Idowu explains further, wields enormous constitutional powers" in the religious, judicial and political spheres and that its members are the de facto law makers

in their respective enclaves. Gbedu is another Yoruba sacred-royal drum that is exclusive to the Oba (kings) of the Yoruba people and the kingship institutions. Gbedu is the sceptre of kinship. It represents the institution of kingship. Igbin ensemble is the dedicated ensemble to Obatala the Yoruba God of purity and divination while Agere ensemble is associated with the hunters and Ogun the Yoruba God of Iron. The participation of women in all these ensembles mentioned above is regulated. The restriction placed on women participation in these ensembles, though, seemingly discriminatory, it is energised by the communal ethos which consider women of reproductive age a risk in the chamber of the drums/gods because of the menstrual flows. During their menstrual period, Yoruba people consider as impure, filthy, unclean and unfit to have close encounter with the stools of these gods. This is one of the restrictive cultural beliefs, stigmatizing practice and gender stereotypes, though not peculiar to the Yoruba people, that is being discouraged. 'The Yoruba believe that some mysteries are harboured in the vulva of a woman which contains power to neutralise charm through contact' (Bernard 2023, p. 83).

In an oral interview with Chief Ojo, a traditional chief and a drummer from Erin-Ile, Kwara State it's only women of reproductive age that are restricted from any contact with some instruments. The reason being that 'it is a taboo for women who is experiencing her monthly flow to access the sacred confines or altar of any god in Yoruba land' Ojo said.

A similar view is shared by Chief Jimoh Seliu Akerele, the Aro of Oto Awori who is the custodian of Gbedu Oloto, 'Gbedu Oloto is considered an altar of worship for the king. It is venerated, propitiated and highly revered. Like any other gods in the land, many taboos are associated with the drum. While it is not forbidden for women to come in contact with other drums in the ensemble, they stay clear of *Iyalode* being the mother drum and the sceptre of the ensemble, 'because in Yoruba land women are considered unclean during their monthly flow.

This position is also buttressed by Familusi (2012):

A menstruating woman must not participate in the sacrifice to Obatala, Yoruba divinity of fertility and other religious activities. Obatala is renowned for whiteness and this symbolizes purity (as Menstrual period is believed to be a time impurity of defilement) also, they are forbidden from entering into any sacred places because they could render all objects there ineffective.

However, a new layer has been opened in this construct. Women who had attained menopause enjoy some level of indulgence in this regard. Since this category of women are no more experiencing the monthly flow, they enjoy a relatively equal status with men in certain instances. This new practice is what Alaba (2004) expresses in his work, *Understanding Sexuality in the Yoruba Culture* where he says that there is no known Yoruba cult, which has no female representative, not even the Oro, bullroarer cult. In all ensembles sampled in the course of this research, the imagery of male and female is recreated but not in the contest of sex or reproduction but rather in that of functionality and value placement.

The principal drum in the musical ensembles sampled for this study is tagged with the prefix “*Ìyá*” which literarily means mother in Yoruba Language. Therefore, we have names such as *Ìyá ilù dùndún* (the mother drum of Dùndún) *Ìyá ilù Bata*, (the mother drum of Bàtá), *Ìyá ilù Gbèdu* (the mother drums of Gbèdu). In all these, the *Ìyá ilù* plays the dual roles of rhythm and melody (Melo-rhythm), that are employed in the process of improvisation and extemporization. The two (Improvisation & Extemporization) are compositional idioms that characterise Yoruba musical heritages. *Iya Ilu* is called the lead drum since it is central to all activities in the ensemble. *Iya Ilu* is not subordinate to any other drums even though it is not wholly independent too.

As said earlier in this paper, the literary meaning of *Iya* in Yoruba land is mother, but a simple translation of the word may not be enough to understanding its conceptual meaning in Yoruba worldview. Therefore, for a better understanding of the place of gender in these ensembles, it is imperative to explore the conceptual meaning of *Iya* in Yoruba language. Yoruba words like *Iya Aye*, *Iya Ajibola*, *Iya nla*, *Iyami Osoronga* come with derivational suffix; *Iya*. *Iya Ajibola* for instance is a name adopted by the members of Ogboni cult to reference Edan Ogboni which is the sceptre of Ogboni cult. The name describes the essence of the *Iya* status in Ogboni cult and by extension, in the Yoruba worldview, Olaiya (2021) says, *Iyami* are the carriers of *Ase* (Authority). They favour the acquisition and wisdom of beings and they transmit it to the Orun (heaven) through settlements already consecrated to them, initiations and the realization of constant offerings and ebos (np). *Iya aye*, literarily means mother of the world. In Yoruba land the word *Aye*, (the world) is also used to reference the metaphysical powers. *Iya Aye* therefore are women that are believed to possess the metaphysical powers ruling the universe. These are women who patrons the demonic spirit world. They are also common as initiates of Osugbo cult, Gelede cult, Ogbon cult. “They belong to a group

of spiritual being called Ajogun' Olaiya (ibid). Olaiya goes on to define Iyami Osoronga as representing the female ancestral power and the mystical elements of the woman in their double aspect: protective and generous, dangerous and destructive. Iyami Osoronga is the appellation for the witches. The coven of witches in Yoruba and is not exclusive to the female. There are also male members of the occult. Awolalu and Dopamu (1974). This goes to show that the word Iya may not depict gender in the real term of the meaning in the western world.

My argument above is that a deeper reflection of the word Iya reveals a several layers of meanings that if explored may provide insight into the Yoruba worldview of Iya in their musical ensembles beyond the narrow scope of a mere sexual nomenclature. Iya as a name for the mother drums in Yoruba land, though sexualised connotes spirituality and power. It has no correlation with the female gender.

Another layer in the organization of Yoruba musical ensemble that illustrates Yoruba's worldview of gender is constituted in the rhythm section of most of the ensemble. The rhythm section of Dundun ensembles for instance, consists of two principal drums, Omele Ako (male rhythm drum lead rhythm player) and Omole Abo. (female rhythm drum). The same goes in the Bata ensemble. In the two ensembles, the Omele Ako also known as Omele Isaaju in Dundun ensemble leads the rhythm line while the Omele Abo, otherwise known as Omele Atele in the Dundun ensemble corresponds the lead. Because the naming of these two instruments is denominated in sexuality (Ako and Abo) (Male and female), it shall be used to interrogate my position at this juncture. An examination of the sonic components of these two musical instruments shows that Omele Ako is higher in pitch than the Omele Abo. However, none of the two is superior to the other. Both the male and female drums, Siamese in nature, work simultaneously in providing rhythm line. This has further established the complementarity nature of gender in Yoruba land. The functionality of these two drums in this ensemble is not premised on any idea of gender or sexuality but relational complementarity.

While acknowledging the patriarchy nature of Yoruba people, Alaba (2004) is still able to highlight the complementarity relationship between male and female in Yoruba land. As he puts it:

Both males and females in the Yoruba culture have access to power, albeit relatively. However, the patrilineal lineage system practiced by the Yoruba gives apparent upper hand to the males. But in reality, the males derive spiritual power from the females who, in their wisdom, prefer anonymity in most cas-

es. The main idea is that behind every powerful Yoruba man there is at least a woman – mother, wife or wives, concubine(s), and daughters(s). A case in point is that of Orunmila and Aabo, his wife. She ably assisted her husband to properly entertain Mr. Death, Mr. Sickness and Mr. Esu, his mischievous guests, in spite of Orunmila's financial handicap...

It is also important to examine the circumstance of the non-involvement of the female gender in certain musical events and renditions in Yoruba land. The non-inclusion of women in the performance process of some musical ensemble in Yoruba land, according to my findings is not discriminatory of the body-type of women. Examination of the ensembles where women are restricted shows the ensemble are sacred ensembles and largely domiciled in the grooves of specific pantheons. They are, though musical instruments, anthropomorphic and objects of worship. This opinion is general across the Yoruba space. For instance, Iyalode, the mother drum of the Gbedu ensemble of the Oto Awori people of Lagos state is a deity. It is venerated and propitiated like any other gods in Yoruba land. Iyalode has all the attributes of a god yet it is a drum.

It is important to state that women are not cut off in music performance in Yoruba land. There are music ensembles dedicated exclusively for women as well as men. There are also ensembles forbidden for women. There are musical forms which are either exclusive, restrictive or inclusive of the women fold. Examples of musical form exclusive to the women are Yùngbà also known as rárà. Ìgbè Olorì, Ọbitun, (maiden dance) Èkún Ìyàwó, bridal song and many others. Gẹ̀lẹ̀dẹ̀ is another genre of Yorùbá musical plays that is designed for the celebration of female gender.

Through the application of musical arts, which may come either in form of song, chants, speech song, dance drama, poetry (drama in Africa is intertwined with music), spoken verses, the Yoruba women had made themselves relevant. While there is a school of thought that attributes greater success in vocal music and vocaling to the women some others like Omojola (2014) have also submitted that the women in certain regions of Yoruba land are involved selected traditional drumming activities.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates gender in the worldview of the Yoruba people using the organization of Yoruba musical ensemble and other musical activities as study. Exploring the ethnomusicological option to navigate the

study, it scrutinizes the place of gender in Yoruba social realities. It discusses how the composition of musical ensemble, the organization of the musical activities and musicologizing in Yoruba land give insight into the worldview of the Yoruba people on gender and sexuality. In other words, the study posits that the organization of Yoruba musical culture reflects the people's belief in the collaborative nature of life which reflects in the complementarity of the genders. The paper did not dispute patriarchy nature of Yoruba society but further establishes the indispensability of female as an essential component of Yoruba social organization, It also establishes that even where events or objects are sexualized it connotes a deeper meaning contrary to the European interpretation. The study also acknowledges the forbearance of women in certain musical activities but goes further to say that the circumstance excluding women in some musical activities cannot be compared to what operates in the western nations See Rusak (2004, p. 85–88) in the accounts of Rusak, discrimination against women was prevalent in the music circle in Europe. It took the evocation of the civil rights acts of 1964 and other laws dealing with gender discrimination in the other cities of Europe before more opportunities were created for women in the orchestra. Therefore, the new realities of gender associated with the Yoruba people are convincingly are creation of the western ideals which is also an offshoot of colonialism. The realities are not a true representation of the worldviews of the Yoruba people of gender. The paper did not set out to refute the patriarchy nature of Yoruba society, but to reinforce the complementarities of sexes in Yoruba land.

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Gender and Transformations: Female Activism in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*

ABSTRACT. There are some gender expectations and roles that are traditionally assigned to the woman which are both psychologically excruciating and potentially limiting. Many times, gender issues centre around male and female experiences; and the rationale behind feminist writings is to correct negative conceptions raised by male writers about women, and how women can recreate their world and rightly manage their social space. Over time in history, women have maintained that the decisions which men make, often have far-reaching consequences on them; to this end, they have chosen to get involved, questioning their roles, negotiating more roles, taking on greater responsibilities and are exploring newer approaches to addressing social problems. The study seeks to unravel some transformational endeavours of women in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*. Through an analysis of samples of related reviews on gender writings, the paper explores practical strategies of women to seek redress and as such transition from the precarious margin of social experience to the centre. Drawing from nego-feminism theoretical framework, an African feminism strand developed by Obioma Nnaemeka, which consist chiefly in negotiation, balance, compromise, and complementarity; the analysis examines how women have negotiated their roles in their bid to make significant social changes and transformations. The article finds out that gender politics is graphically etched and dramatised in many African literary texts, but the form portrayed in Ojaide's *The Activist*, is therapeutic, palliative and nurturing. It concludes by identifying gender stereotyping as a key impediment to gender and transformations.

KEYWORDS: transformations, roles, negotiation, input, nation-building.

Introduction: Gender and Transformations

In the past, the words, "sex" and "gender" were employed interchangeably. However, many psychologists who were influenced by the ideas of Rhoda Unger (1979), have adopted a more precise definition of the two terms. *Sex*, was used to refer to person's biological maleness or female-

ness; while *Gender*, refers to the non-physiological aspects of being female or male—the cultural expectations for femininity and masculinity. This distinction is significant because it focuses on the fact that many female-male differences in behaviour or experience, do not spring naturally or automatically from biological differences between the sexes (Lips, p. 5).

Gender, according to the World Health Organisation, refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviour and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other (p. 1). As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. This is referred to as intersectionality. Gender interacts with, but is different from sex, because it (gender) refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs (WHO “Gender and Health”, p. 2). Gender and sex are related to, but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person’s deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth.

Gender inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls puts their health and well-being at risk. Women and girls often face greater barriers than men and boys to accessing health information and services. These barriers include restrictions on mobility; lack of access to decision-making power. In some parts of the world, the bias against manifests in varying forms of depictions and imagery. The female gender is often depicted as passive, emotionally unstable, psychologically infantile, masochistic, penis-envying, which many female writers have criticized and rejected. But through many women advocacy organisations, policies, awareness groups, programme and activities, some of the matrixes of male domination and the objectification of women are brought to the fore, and the platform upon which women can challenge and correct such cultural prejudices established by society against them has also been created. For many female writers whose pen has continuously been used to dismantle patriarchal “forces” against women, the woman, in reality, is not “the weaker sex,” but “the weakened sex”. Thus, inherently in the woman

is the will power and capacity to do more, become more and transform society beyond the imagination of their male counterparts. It is against this backdrop that this article, "Gender and Transformations..." is so named. By "transformations", we refer to a marked change in form, nature or appearance; it is an extreme radical change. Patriarchy gave rise to feminism, and feminism is a consciousness raising theory, where women strive to enlighten fellow women on the need to look inwards, look beyond their confinement and expand their world in spite of their femininity.

Transformation is a process which liberates the woman from unhealthy and oppressive gender straightjackets. Transformation processes help the woman find her true self, empower herself as well as heal herself and her relationship. Transformation is simply the journey of the woman towards self-recovery and self-redefinition.

In his introduction to chapter eight entitled, "Feminism", Charles E. Bressler, recounted Judith Viorst's 1972 version of the fairy tale, *Cinderella*. In that version, Viorst presented to her audience a re-created, transformed and new Cinderella:

The new Cinderella now has opinion of her own [...] Asserting her own independence. The new Cinderella refuses to be shaped by her society. The new Cinderella refuses to be defined as the nonsignificant other. Unlike the old Cinderella, she will not allow herself to be shaped by her society (p. 179).

As it is evident, the recreated Cinderella debunks the false standards and ideas concerning women and their portrayal in life. Hence, we can lucidly say that transformation liberates not just the hands and feet of the woman, but the mind also, and inspires the woman against remaining as a dependent creature who blindly accepts the commandments of her patriarchal society. They must reject the idea that women are mindless, weepy, helpless creatures who must wait for a man to come and make their lives meaningful.

The idea of "transformation" in the context of this article was aptly captured by Blessing Diala-Ogamba:

[...] with the earlier male writers, women were relegated to the background in most African societies so that patriarchy can maintain authority. However, with education, persistence, consistent, hard work and collaboration, women have attended higher status to gain freedom and operate on the same level with their husbands and men in general. All these successes are not easy to

come by, but with diligence, women continue to exploit different strategies to liberate themselves and revalue their positions as effectual and contributing members of the society (p. 149).

The contemporary African novel has featured women with extreme capacity for change and new ideas. Women, working with men have created progress and better functioning societies. These women have demonstrated cohesion, collaboration, consensus and complementarity in their spirited efforts at building a better society.

Theoretical Framework: Nego-feminism

Nnaemeka (2004) coins the term nego-feminism to speak to the tensions and aspirations of African feminisms. She speaks of this as the feminism of compromise, contending with the multiple aspects of patriarchy on the continent and dealing with this in an African-specific way:

First nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation; second nego-feminism stands for “no ego” feminism. In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance. African feminism[s] (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines (p. 22).

Thus, nego-feminism is a guide for dealing with the feminist struggles that occur on the continent; it considers the implications of patriarchal traditions and customs and aims to dismantle and negotiate around these. Nego-feminism also hopes to detach personal gain and pride from the overall goal of achieving equity for women—thus ‘no ego’. This is not always the case, as with all ideological constructs, the practice of nego-feminism on the ground is subject to emotionality, personal goals and even ego. However, aspirations for a more complete form of nego-feminism remain a noteworthy goal.

Tanure Ojaide’s Short Profile

Tanure Ojaide was born in Delta State, an oil-rich but economically impoverished part of Niger Delta region of Nigeria. He attended a Catholic

Grammar School and Federal Government College, Warri. Ojaide was educated at the University of Ibadan, where he received a bachelor's degree in English, and Syracuse University, where he received both the M.A. in Creative Writing and Ph.D. in English. Ojaide is a Fellow in Writing of the University of Iowa; his poetry awards include the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Africa Region (1987) amongst many other local and international awards.

Ojaide is currently the Frank Porter Graham Professor of Africana Studies at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship (1999/2000) to collect and study the "Udje Dance Songs of Nigeria's Urhobo People." He has twice received the Fulbright fellowship (2002/03 and 2013/14), and the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship (2016). He has read from his poetry in Britain, Harbourfront (Canada), International Poetry Festival, Medellin (Colombia, 2013).

His poetry collections include, but not limited to *The Fate of Vultures* (1990), *The Blood of Peace* (1991), *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007), *Waiting for the Hatching of a Cockerel* (2008), *The Beauty I Have Seen* (2010), *Songs of Myself: Quartet* (2015), and *The Questioner: New Poems* (2018). Some of his novels are *Sovereign Body* (2004), *The Activist* (2006) and *Matters of the Moment* (2011).

In *The Activist*, Nigeria's acclaimed poet, Tanure Ojaide, brings his sharp sensibilities and writing skills to prose storytelling. The protagonist makes a reverse trip from America to a home whose young and able are straining at the leash to escape to the perceived comforts of the West. Ojaide weaves a compelling narrative that illuminates the contradictions of state and society in contemporary Africa. In his estimation of Ojaide's novel, *The Activist*, Chidi Maduka hinted that "...the novel uses an intellectual hero and a female activist to underscore the gravity of the social injustices meted out to the oil-producing communities, and to point out that these injustices have to be put to an end through the activities of the revolutionaries from the region" (p. 80).

Gender Transformation Platforms

Gender transformation platforms are programs and interventions that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, promote positions of social and political influence for women in commu-

nities, and address power inequities between persons of different genders (Social and Behaviour Change, p. 1). Gender transformation platforms create an enabling environment for gender transformation by going beyond just including women as participants. Gender transformation platforms are part of a continuum of gender integration, or the integration of gender issues into all aspects of program and policy conceptualization, development, implementation and evaluation.

Gender transformation platforms can serve to address multi-leveled power hierarchies in communities that impede an individual's ability, particular the woman's ability to make decisions about his/her health. For women, this can include (but is not limited to) health decisions such as access to health services, condom use, partner reduction, and birth spacing. These approaches strive to shift gendered community perspectives and social relationships towards perspectives of equality that allow both women and men to achieve their full potential within a society. Research has shown that when women are empowered—whether socially or economically, they become transformed, and can take on stronger and higher roles and responsibilities, not just for the economic wellbeing of their families, but for nation building.

What we find in Tanure Ojaide's fiction, *The Activist*, is a group of transformed women, who are poised to correct the narrative of their community. Ably led by two female characters—Mrs. Timi Taylor and Ebi—the wife of the Activist, women of several occupations ranging from “women farmers, fishers, traders, priestesses, chiefs, lawyers, lecturers, doctors were mobilized for communal interests (*The Activist*, p. 237), under the umbrella name Women of the Delta Forum (WODEFOR). Their objectives include, but not limited to: “...seek permanent peace” in the area following rising spate of violence and the wanton destruction of lives and property fueled by oil-politics in the region.

Female Activism in Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*

The Encarta Dictionary puts the word, “activism” as “vigorous and sometimes aggressive action in pursuing a political or social end (n.p.). Some of its associated synonyms are direct action, political action, social action, involvement, engagement, crusading, politicking, to name some. Of the aforementioned synonyms, engagement, crusading and social action are manifest forms of activism in Ojaide's *The Activist*.

Female activism had not been one of such front burner issues in African women writings; what has occupied the literary and critical landscape of many African female writers and critics are such issues as self-realization, self-actualization, self-discovery, resistance against male domination, as seen in the works of writers like Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Amma Darko, and others. Although, there were attempts on women struggles, but female activism as we find in Ojaide's *The Activist* was not a common approach in many foundational African female writers' texts. Ojaide's style of female activism or crusading, manifests in the form of a movement of women with a sense of extreme solidarity aimed at achieving a common objective. Through the actions of such characters like Mrs. Timi Taylor and Ebi—the wife of the Activist, women of several occupations ranging from “women farmers, fishers, traders, priestesses, chiefs, lawyers, lecturers, doctors were mobilized for communal interests (*The Activist*, p. 237), under the umbrella name, Women of the Delta Forum (WODEFOR). Their objectives include, but not limited to: “...seek permanent peace” in the area following rising spate of violence and the wanton destruction of lives and property fueled by oil-politics in the region. In their deliberations, they identified “a litany of woes that the Niger Delta women were suffering from” (*The Activist*, p. 240).

Female activism in Ojaide's *The Activist*, can pass for social action. It was a gathering of women to explore answers to the enormous environmental ruin meted on their ecosystem. It was an attempt to bring about peace after many senseless ethnic crises involving three ethnic groups—Urhobo, Izon and the Itsekiri in the Warri axis of the Niger Delta region. Initiated by Mrs. Timi Taylor and assisted by Mrs. Ebi—the wife of the Activist (the story's protagonist); these two women mobilized hundreds of other women to speak up against the continued damage of their airspace, farmlands and rivers, wrought by oil multinationals' activities.

In their deliberations, the Mrs. Timi-led women group, who were later christened Women of the Niger Delta Forum (WODEFOR) made some striking demands on the oil multinationals and the federal military government as contained in their communique:

- Devise and adopt means of making the environment safe from pollution and attract real development.
- Demand clean and healthy water supply from the oil prospecting corporations operating in the region
- Pay attention to the health needs of the people through the provision of well-equipped health facilities.

- Remediation or repairs of some environmental damages.
- Recruitment of women into oil corporations.

The women further resolved that they would seriously engage across these three leadership in the Niger Delta State: the leadership of the oil corporations, the military government; however, if these talks failed, they unanimously agreed:

If the talks with the oil company and the military government failed, they would look for unconventional ways to compel them to act. They would start with persuasion but if that failed, they would have to confront those ruining them and their environment with the power they possessed. Bell Oil Company and the Federal Military Government might be mountains, but the women knew they had precedents in their customs of defeating tyrants. What would compel the oil company and the military government to act remained a secret they would keep till they wielded the weapon (*The Activist*, p. 244).

Basically, the thought and resolve to pursue the above agenda by these women, substantiated the veracity of the assumption that the woman is existentially not a *weaker sex*, but the *weakened sex*. The woman's silence, more often, is simply an orchestration of patriarchy to keep her as the "other". This resonates with Simon De Beauvoir observation in her book, *The Second Sex*:

To say that woman is mystery is to say, not that she is silent, but that her language is not understood; she is there, but hidden behind veils; she exists beyond those uncertain appearances (as cited in *The Norton*, p. 1410).

In defining the woman exclusively as the "other", the man is effectively denying her humanity. Having stated this, De Beauvoir therefore concluded that "...an existent is nothing other than what he or she does." (as cited in *The Norton*, p. 1410). Whether male or female, the roles, and outcome should be the core determinant.

This women group—WODEFOR mobilized two representatives—Mrs. Timi Taylor and Mrs. Ebi to join the delegate of the people who were to fly to the United States to attend the United Nations Conference on Oil Exploration. Their objective was to report both in letters and in photographs on the destruction meted on the land and water of the people from whose soil oil exploration is being carried out. They were to show in pictures and in words the squalor, neglect, underdevelopment and the huge marginaliza-

tion which the natives are exposed to following the insensitivity of both Bell Oil Company, other foreign oil corporations and the government of Nigeria. Sadly, the journey was aborted by the government through some immigration officers at the airport; however, these women were never deterred in their resolve to get it right for the health and wellbeing of their children and the unborn generation. As a key representative of WODEFOR and leader, the passion to deeply engage women for social action and transformation, prompted Ebi to pursue a doctorate degree after giving birth to her first child. After acquiring this terminal degree and having a child, Ebi resigned her appointment with the university in order to manage the newly-established newspaper outfit, *The Patriot* owned by her husband—The Activist. With this added assignment, Ebi expressed hope that she would have a wider platform through which the objectives of WODEFOR will be known to a larger audience:

[...] she was appointed the manager/publisher of *The Patriot*. She felt she would be in a position to better promote the interests of the Niger Delta women in such a strategic appointment. She would do a bi-weekly column, "Women Matters" together with managing the paper (*The Activist*, p. 292).

Although the newspaper is the brain child of the Activist, but Ebi made it serve as a vehicle for driving the vision and goals of WODEFOR: "The paper...showed in coloured and black-and-white photographs the damage done to the environment (*The Activist*, p. 293). With support from WODEFOR and several other Niger Delta Sate indigenes, the Activist contested for the position of the state governor, and won. However, prior to his election, "...he was invited to speak at the annual convention of the Niger Delta People's Association in Washington, DC...the Activist made the flight, and, as protocol required, he and Ebi flew first class on British Airways from Lagos to London and then change planes to Washington, DC (*The Activist*, p. 345).

What is known as WODEFOR, started as a reconciliatory effort initiated by Mrs. Timi Taylor following the heinous ethnic clash among the Izon, the Itsekiri and the Urhobo which left scores of people, including pregnant women and children dead. To nip this bloody crisis in the bud, Mrs. Taylor mobilized hundreds of women ranging from women farmers, fishers, traders, priestesses, chiefs, lawyers, lecturers, doctors and women of other occupations (*The Activist*, p. 237). Her primary objective was for reconciliation and peace building. However, as representatives of the individual

women group began to voice their dissatisfaction with the activities of Bell Oil Company and the complicit attitude of the government to their plight, the need to give a stronger voice to the ordeal of these women in order to mobilise support and bring about change became clearer to Mrs. Taylor. So, together with intellectuals like Mrs. Ebi, an organisation was established with the acronym, WODEFOR (Women of the Niger Delta Forum). Its line of activism or clamour for change, would begin with persuasion, but if that fails, they would switch to confrontation.

Conclusion

For decades, women have been stereotyped as “the weaker sex” due to supposed physical and even intellectual fragility—which many times, are not true; thus, limiting their incursion into more male-dominated trades or professions, such as engineering and construction. But in the last one hundred years and counting, women’s roles have changed dramatically across the world. In contemporary time, women have demonstrated remarkable shift in gender roles by their input and output across various fields of human experience. It is what we call, “gender and transformations”. Through their lived experiences, they have not only rebelled against the status quo, but are generating amazing results to counter and correct gender stereotyping.

Gender stereotypes, for instance, in the workplace manifest sometimes as fixed beliefs and assumptions people have about how men and women tend to behave. It includes which traits people believe men and women have in their professional roles? Stereotypes are often based on social norms and tend to overlook the individual female personalities, training, skills and professionalism. Owing to this, many female workers end up being treated as abstract categories rather than as professionals with marked skills.

Allowing gender stereotypes in the workplace, can be really harmful because it has the possibility of limiting a female worker’s potential and choices. Furthermore, it creates expectations and pressures that frequently result in discrimination, harassment, and lower job performance, to say little of the diminished life satisfaction. Given the opportunity and the right atmosphere, women are willing to apply themselves in a renewed and sustained efforts at making complementary inputs into society. It is on this note that this study has carefully demonstrated that women were not

the “weaker” sex, but the “weakened” sex; and are now ready to make significant inputs in nation building while maintaining peaceful co-existence with the male gender.

The persuasion approach adopted by WODEFOR, continued and was quite fruitful as Mrs. Ebi engaged both her academic and journalistic platforms to garner support for WODEFOR. She continued her campaign and support for the group with her later position as the first lady, after her husband won the governorship election in the State. Following this, the form of activism in the Ojaide's *The Activist*, is not only female-driven, but intellectual and peaceful. Ebi's new position as “the State's First Lady” (*The Activist*, p. 347), will not only signal a new milestone, but would also afford her the resources to advance the course of WODEFOR as well as position the State's women and girls for greater accomplishments. By carefully engaging the idea of negotiation and assuming a “no-ego” posture as a wife, in spite of her doctorate degree, Ebi did not only win the love and attention of her husband—the Activist, but she also enjoyed conciliation, collaboration, consensus and complementarity in her home. This is indicative of the African feminist's vision of a peaceful, wholesome and integrative society, favourable enough to foster gender symmetry, the recognition and inclusion of the female, as well as mutual respect.

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Analysis of Factors Responsible for the State of Women Participation in Governance in Edo State of Nigeria

ABSTRACT. The paper analyzed the factors responsible for the state of women participation in Governance using Edo State of Nigeria as a case study. It examined the level of influence of women participation in state governance in Edo State of Nigeria. It also assessed as well the extent education influences women participation in the governance of Edo State of Nigeria. In order to achieve the above objectives, two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The population of the study was 4,625 key politicians across the three senatorial districts in Edo State while the sample size which was determined using the Taro Yamani formula was 368. The Chi-Square(X^2) test of proportion was adopted in the analysis of data. After statistically analyzing the data obtained from the primary source, it was found that there is low participation of Edo Women in the governance of Edo State of Nigeria. It was also found that there is a relationship between educational attainment of women and their low participation in the state governance of Edo State of Nigeria. The implication of the study is that there is need for policy action on the part of the state government in order to encourage more women to participate in the governance of the state. The paper recommended among others that the Edo State government should as a matter of deliberate policy, encourage girl-child and women education to enable more women access quality education that will equip them to face men in the field of politics and governance in the state.

KEYWORDS: education, gender imbalance, governance, politics, women participation

Introduction

Women's participation in governance the world over has been at the front burner of every political debate. Of the numerous women issues being addressed globally, one notable aspect that is very crucial in attaining the goal of gender equality is giving more women the opportunity to

participate in politics and decision-making. In Nigeria, and Edo State in particular, politics is presumed to be a man's domain, where no woman needs venture into because of the patriarchal nature of our society which tends to promote discrimination against women, low level of education of the girl-child, the traditional perception of women's role in the society, socio-cultural/economic factors militating against women as well as apathy or lack of interest on the part of women. According to the United Nations Statistics Division (2020), data from 133 countries shows that women constitute 2.18 million (36 per cent) of elected members in local deliberative bodies. Only two countries have reached 50 per cent, and an additional 18 countries have more than 40 per cent women in local government.

Worthy of note is the fact that the low representation of women in the governance of Edo State has over the years not received scholarly attention. Women underrepresentation in the governance of Edo State is not only an indication that there has not been a full democracy in place but lack of women in governance means that the state will not be able to benefit from the potentials and contribution of women in terms of the overall development of the state. There is need for Edo state government to consciously promote gender equity in political representation so that both male and female can contribute equally to the overall development of the state. This view is supported by Devlin and Elgie cited in Hadjis (2003), Aderlini (2004), Maveneka (2004), Hamadeh-Banerjee and Hadjis (2013) with regard to the benefits of women's political participation. They have, in their researches, found that women parliamentarians add new dimensions or different emphasis to a range of health, legal and social policy issues, such as HIV/AIDS and property right. That, an increased number of women in parliament in Rwanda, has contributed to setting a platform for development, empowerment and advancement of women in all sectors. Thus, it is strongly believed that increased women participation in the governance of Edo State will promote comprehensive development, empowerment and the advancement of the cause of women and children.

To Adenike (2013), despite being a patriarchal society, Nigeria has a rich history of women breaking the mould to participate in political governance. To her, our pre-colonial history is replete with the exploits of Queen Amina of Zaria, who led armies to drive out invaders from Zaria; and Moremi of Ile-Ife, whose sacrifice for her people speaks of selfless leadership that we are so bereft of these days. Our recent past speaks of prominent women leaders like Fumilayo Ransome Kuti, a crusader and challenger of despotic leaders,

who led Egba women on a protest against taxation, Margaret Ekpo, a prominent civil rights activist; and Hajia Gambo Sawaba, who championed the cause of the oppressed in Northern Nigeria. Iyalode Tinubu of Lagos exemplifies the rich participation of women in the economic scene. The legacies of these women are at risk of extinction (Adenike, 2013). In Edo State of Nigeria, the political arena is not different from other parts of the world as there is political imbalance in favour of men. Women are rendered nearly invisible and excluded from the political space which is often regarded as the male preserve, thereby depriving the state from benefiting from their potentials and contribution to development.

Literature Review

Oronsaye-Salami (2005), observes that one of the greatest challenges of the Edo woman today, as with all Nigerian women, is her exclusion from the political space and her invisibility in political affairs. Arising from this invisibility, it is obvious that only few Edo women have actually gained access to the political arena in Edo State. Since the creation of Edo State in 1991, women representation in governance has always been minimal below 30% affirmative action as against 50/50 in other parts of the world like Germany (Oronsaye-Salami, 2005). In spite of women's efforts in the mobilization of voters, their contributions are often trivialized. Since women constitute a substantial portion of Edo State's population, excluding them would rob the state of fresh ideas and inputs in governance, thus posing a significant threat to democracy. Arising from the above, it is clear that since the introduction of civil democracy in Nigeria in 1999 till date, governorship and deputy governorship positions, position of speaker or deputy speaker of the legislative house in Edo State have been dominated by the males to the detriment of the females. Besides, there has been no evidence to show that Edo women have ever been given opportunities to contests these posts. There is a need to make a case for Edo women in these positions in the next political dispensation come 2024 governorship election. Edo State is no doubt, wasting precious resources today as she abandons thousands of women, talented women for that matter, who are ready to use their professional expertise in public life, but are unfortunately underrepresented in the positions of political leadership in every sphere in the state.

Women's political participation can be classified as inclusion in the (1) Executive branch as female head of the country, cabinet members, or

heads of the government, (2) Legislative branch, as representatives in the parliament and national assemblies and (3) judicial branch. According to Agbalajobi (2021), there are few women in political and leadership spaces in Nigeria. Currently, only seven (7) out of 109 senators and 22 of the 360 House of Representatives members are women. She went further to explain that factors such as women's poor access to education hence poor access to gainful employment, and high cost of politics prevent women from standing for political positions. Often, women don't have enough money to pay for the mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms required by political parties to run for positions on their platforms. To Aluko (2011), the absence or under-representation of women in the very process of decision-making and implementation undermines the fundamental concept of a democratic form of governance which assumes that participation and representation in all areas and levels of public life should be equally available to women and men. Singh (2011) is of the view that exclusion of women from decision-making in politics more often than not, results in policies and schemes which are at best indifferent to women's realities and at worst, contribute towards their future marginalization. Inclusion of women and giving them power in political institutions furthers involvement of women's voices in decision-making all-round the globe.

According to Banda (2021), the continent has long committed to improve gender equality in political decision-making as shown through the Maputo Protocol that offers specific provisions on women's political participation. At global level, Sustainable Development Goal Five on gender equality provides for the increase and meaningful participation of women in political decision-making. This global agenda to be achieved by 2030 will remain a dream if Africa does not change its systems, practices and policies to ensure that more women sit on the political decision-making table. Dimkpa and Wilcox (2008), in their study titled "Perceptions of Women on Factors responsible for low Female Participation in Politics in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria", adopted a survey design to study a sample of 200 women comprising 122 married and 78 unmarried women selected from two institutions namely University of Port-Harcourt and University of Port-Harcourt Teaching Hospital, all in Rivers State. The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and chi-square statistic at 0.05 level significance. The result revealed that lack of finance was the main factor responsible for low participation of females in politics as indicated by 91% of respondents. Others included poor self-image (84.3%), religious attitude (79%), socio-cultural attitude (77%) and

lastly, lack of education (74%). The study however, recommended that the National Council of Women's Society should organize workshops for educating women and campaigning for attitudinal change in them, while Federal Government should fund campaigns for women vying for elective positions among others.

In Kenya, Kasomo (2012) observes that women make up a little above half of the entire population and constitute a critical portion of promoting democratization of political system in the country. However, available data shows that they are underrepresented in political appointments in government. The reason possibly responsible for this state of affairs, could be that adequate attention and solution have not been given to gender issues in electoral politics. This gives upper hand to men to the detriment of women.

Nigeria's Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Coalition Shadow Report (2008) states that from the 2006 census, women represent 48.78% of the national population of Nigeria, but this population of women has never found commensurate expression or representation in Nigeria's political life and decision-making processes. Women are underrepresented in the National Assembly, at the State Houses of Assembly, and at the local government councils. They are either completely absent or grossly underrepresented. The report went further to state that the challenge of low participation of women in governance and decision-making is beyond the usual assumption that "there are no suitable women" to occupy vacant positions and or take up political appointments. The systemic denial of women of access to leadership and decision-making is further exacerbated by the patriarchal hierarchy of the Nigerian society.

A UNDP (2009) found that in many states in Nigeria, during the 2007 elections, 15 states (Edo State inclusive) and FCT did not have women as members of their legislative houses. In fact, women's political participation in decision-making in Nigeria has continuously been on the downward trend across states... At the level of government, participation in politics is still dominated by men. Ajibade, Ocheni and Adefemi (2012) in their work "Factors Militating against Women Active Participation in Politics in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria" investigated factors working against women in actively participating in politics. The population of the study consists of franchise age which is 18 years and above. A total of 550 women were selected from eleven wards, adopting the multi-stage cluster sampling method. Data for the study were obtained through triangulation of quanti-

tative and qualitative methods. Out of the 550 questionnaires administered, 450 were suitable for analysis. Data obtained through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive technique such as frequency counts and percentage while data collected through interview method were content-analyzed. The study revealed that factors such as Low level and or lack of education, inadequate financial resources, enlightenment and lack of clear policies by political parties towards women’s political ambition, are responsible for the low level of participation of women in politics. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that political parties should have a clear policy with regard to women’s political ambition, as this will help women to know how to go about their political venture.

Table 1. Comparison of Women representation in 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria

Position	No of available seats	No of women elected in 2003	No of women elected in 2007	No of women elected in 2011
Presidency	1	0	0	0
Senate	109	3 (2.27%)	9 (8.26%)	8 (7.34%)
House of Reps	360	21 (5.83%)	25 (6.94%)	12 (3.33%)
Governorship	36	0	0	0

Source: Gender Audit and IPU PARLINE Database, 2012

Statement of the Problem

Despite the freedom to participate in politics by both eligible men and women in Nigeria, the political scene in Edo State has been highly dominated by men-folk at all levels of governance even though evidence abounds that women constitute more than 50 percent of Nigeria’s population as they continue to be underrepresented as voters, leaders and as elected officials at all levels of governance in Edo State.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of influence of women participation in state governance in Edo State of Nigeria.
2. To determine the extent education influences women participation in state governance in Edo State of Nigeria.

Methods and Materials

In order to achieve the above objectives, two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The population of the study was 4,625 key politicians across the three senatorial districts in Edo State while the sample size which was determined using the Taro Yamani formula was 368. The Chi-Square(X^2) test of proportion was adopted in the analysis of data.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formulated for the study were tested.

1. H_{01} : There is no statistically significant difference in the level of influence of women participation in governance in Edo State of Nigeria.
2. H_{02} : There is no statistically significant relationship between education and women participation in state governance in Edo State of Nigeria.

Table 2. Distribution of key Respondents across the three Senatorial Districts of Edo State

LGA by Senatorial District	Councillors	No of party exco	L.G. Chairmen	Vice Chairmen	Secretaries	Supervisory Councilors	House of Assembly	State Exco
Edo South							24	23
Egor	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
IkpobaOkha	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Oredo	12	264	1	1	1	6	-	-
Orhunmwon	12	264	1	1	1	6	-	-
Ovia North-East	12	264	1	1	1	6	-	-
Ovia South-West	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Uhunmwode	11	242	1	1	1	6	-	-
Edo Central	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Esan Central	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Esan North-East	11	242	1	1	1	6	-	-

Esan South-East	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Esan West	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Igueben	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Edo North	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Akoko Edo	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Etsako Central	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Etsako East	10	220	1	1	1	6	-	-
Etsako West	12	264	1	1	1	6	-	-
Owan East	11	242	1	1	1	6	-	-
Owan West	11	242	1	1	1	6	-	-
Total	192	4224	18	18	18	108	24	23

Source: Ainabor's Field Survey, 2021

Table 3. Frequency distribution of returned valid questionnaire by local governments of Edo State

LGA by Senatorial District	Questionnaire Administered	Questionnaire returned	Percentage Administered	Percentage Returned
Edo South				
Egor	20	20	5.4	5.4
IkpobaOkha	20	20	5.4	5.4
Oredo	22	22	6.0	6.0
Orhunmwon	22	22	6.0	6.0
Ovia North-East	22	22	6.0	6.0
Ovia south-West	20	20	5.4	5.4
Uhunmwode	20	20	5.4	5.4
Edo Central				
Esan central	20	20	5.4	5.4
Esan North-East	20	20	5.4	5.4
Esan south-East	20	20	5.4	5.4
Esan west	20	20	5.4	5.4
Igueben	20	20	5.4	5.4

Edo North				
Akoko Edo	20	20	5.4	5.4
Etsako Central	20	20	5.4	5.4
Etsako East	20	20	5.4	5.4
Etsako West	22	22	6.0	6.0
Owan East	20	20	5.4	5.4
Owan West	20	20	5.4	5.4
Total	368	368	100	100

Source: Ainabor's Field Survey, 2021

Table 4. Level of Women Participation in Politics and State Governance

Questionnaire items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
i. The level of women participation in politics and state governance in Edo State is very encouraging.	-	-	86	23.4	192	52.2	60	16.3	30	8.2
ii. The level of men participation in politics and state governance in Edo State is very encouraging.	260	70.7	34	9.2	40	10.9	8	2.2	26	7.1
iii. Men participate more than women in politics and state governance in Edo State.	242	65.8	51	13.9	30	8.2	29	7.9	16	4.3
iv. Women have occupied political positions more than men in the political governance of Edo State since 1999.	32	8.7	52	14.1	253	68.8	23	6.3	8	2.2
v. Women participate actively in party activities and political rallies.	34	9.2	262	71.2	48	13.0	18	4.9	6	1.6
vi. Women like being card-carrying members of their political parties.	50	13.6	204	55.4	30	8.2	60	16.3	24	6.5

Source: Ainabor's Field Survey, 2021

Table 5. Education and Women's participation in State Governance

Questionnaire items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
i. There is a relationship between education and women participation in the political governance of Edo State.	26	7.1	158	42.9	81	22	65	17.7	38	10.3
ii. Educational level of women has been responsible for low participation of women in the politics and governance of Edo State since 1999.	64	17.4	187	50.8	62	16.8	41	11.1	14	3.8
iii. Lack of financial opportunities on the part of women can be responsible for their low participation in politics and governance in Edo State.	20	5.4	181	49.2	101	27.4	66	17.9	-	-
iv. Poor self-image or self-confidence of women is responsible for their low participation in politics and governance in Edo State.	26	7.1	229	62.2	49	13.3	38	10.3	26	7.1
v. Apathy or lack of interest is a factor militating against women participation in politics and governance in Edo State.	2	.5	277	75.5	40	10.9	39	10.6	10	2.7
vi. Fear of failure to perform on the part of women is responsible for their low participation in politics and governance in Edo State.	-	-	252	68.5	36	9.8	64	17.4	16	4.3
vii. Edo State government should make it a matter of policy to promote gender equity in allocating positions in government.	44	12	241	65.5	-	-	73	19.8	10	2.7

Source: Ainabor's Field Survey, 2021

Decision Rule for Hypotheses Testing

As a general rule, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance, if the P-value is less than 5% (0.05) i.e. $P\text{-value} < 0.05$. Here, H_0 is rejected and the H_1 is accepted. This rule was applied in testing the hypotheses formulated for this study.

Hypothesis One

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the level of influence of women participation in state governance in Edo State of Nigeria.

In order to test this hypothesis, the respondents' opinion on the subject of analysis were obtained and tested for difference between levels of influence of women participation in governance. The Chi Square (X^2) test of goodness-of-fit was used to determine the difference in the level of agreement with the statements concerning the difference between men and women in participation in state governance in Edo State. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Chi Square Test on Level of Women Participation in Politics and State Governance in Edo State

Scale of Response	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	X^2 Value	DF	P Value
Undecided	26	73.6	597.978	4	0.00*
Disagree	8	73.6			
Strongly Disagree	40	73.6			
Agree	34	73.6			
Strongly Agree	260	73.6			
Total	368	368			

* Significant at 5% critical level

Discussion of Results

The test showed a significant difference in the level of participation in political governance between men and women in the state as expressed by the respondents with Chi square value(597.978) significant at 5% lev-

el since the P-Value(0.00*)<0.05. This implies that men significantly participate more than women in politics and state governance in Edo State. Therefore, the null hypothesis under test is rejected as the study found a significant difference in the level of influence of women participation in governance in the study area.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: There is no significant relationship between education and women participation in state governance in Edo State of Nigeria.

In order to test for this hypothesis, education was selected and tested for its effect on the level of participation of women in the governance of Edo State using the chi square test of goodness-of-fit. A summary of result is presented in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Chi Square test on Education and women participation in state governance

Scale of Response	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	X ² Value	DF	P Value
Undecided	38	73.6	146.538	4	0.00*
Disagree	65	73.6			
Strongly Disagree	81	73.6			
Agree	158	73.6			
Strongly Agree	26	73.6			
Total	368	368			

* Significant at 5% critical level

Discussion of Results

The result showed that education significantly influences women participation in the governance of Edo State with the Chi square value (146.538) significant at 5% level since the P-- Value(0.00*)<0.05. The null hypothesis under test was thus rejected. The conclusion is that the level of education limits women participation in state governance and the general leadership in Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

1. The study revealed low participation of Edo women in politics and state governance as men participate much more than women in the governance of Edo State. This finding significantly agrees with Tong (2003) whose study of gender gap in political culture and participation in China revealed that women's traits negatively correlated with political culture and participation measures, and that of Dimkpa and Wilcox (2008) whose study of perceptions of women on factors responsible for low female participation in politics in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, revealed that women's poor self-image, religious attitude, socio-cultural attitude, and lastly, lack of education are responsible for the low level of women participation in politics and governance.
2. The study also revealed that education has been responsible for women low participation in the state governance of Edo State. For instance, the low level of educational attainment of majority of Edo women has been found to be responsible for their low participation in the governance of Edo State. The inability of women to have access to finance or financial support due to their level of education, also affect their level of political participation. This is why Edo women have not been able to participate like their male counterparts in the governance of Edo State. The study revealed that educational level of women has been responsible for women's low participation in the governance of Edo State. As regards education being responsible for low participation of women in politics and governance in Edo State, the study agrees with the work of Shvedova (2007) on "Obstacles faced by Women in Parliament: *Beyond Numbers*", using Sweden and India as case studies. The result of the study revealed that illiteracy and limited access to education are socio-economic obstacles impacting on women's vertical mobility in politics. This is true as only the few well-educated women in Edo State possess the boldness, courage and the means to compete with the men in the politics and governance of the state.

Recommendations

1. There is need to address the discrimination against women in the governance of Edo State by allocating political positions to women

on quota basis. A gender quota or representative law that will help the state to achieve this and be committed to the Affirmative Action on women representation should be passed by the State House of Assembly. This will enable more Edo women to participate in the governance of Edo State. Also, political parties in the state must change their programmes and attitudes that tend to perpetuate discrimination against women, if gender equity in political participation in Edo State is to be achieved.

2. Educational level of women has also been found to limit women in participating in politics and governance in Edo State. Edo State government should as a matter of deliberate policy encourage girl-child and women education. This will enable more women to have access to quality education that will give them all it takes to face men in the field of politics and governance.

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The Making of a Feminised Economy in the Gambia: Musu Kebba Drammeh and Batik Livelihood, 1940–2013

ABSTRACT. This work examines the growth of Batik textile art in the works of Musu Kebba Drammeh in The Gambia. While African societies were swayed with the colonial economy, this paper unravels how textile art was a resilient economy, yet little scholarly attention is paid to it. Furthermore, it elucidates how sustainable livelihood reflects in the heritage and tradition of Kebba's work in The Gambia. Livelihood process in her work creates a perspective to understand women's influence on indigenous entrepreneurship. The fundamental objective is to analyse Kebba's influence in the growth of Batik textile art in the Gambia. The historical method is adopted to explain the dynamics of times in the growth of Kebba's work at Latrikunda. Most studies focus on the description of the art, with little reference to the actors involved and how the social, political and economic system influence their work.

KEYWORDS: Batik Art, Musu Kebba Drammeh, livelihood, The Gambia

Introduction

Batik design is a branch of art that involves making patterns on fabrics. It is a type of visual art that is expressive of the environment and human mind. The end product of design on fabrics, comes with an artistic creation that requires not only tourist appreciation but should amount to commercial impact. Batik is a profound textile artwork in West Africa. Few literature within West Africa examines the textile art. Scholarly literature abound on textile art, but mostly written by scholars outside West Africa (Picton & John, 1989). While textile art is an ancient tradition in Africa backed up by archaeological evidences, there are typologies of production of textile art with various traditions of origin. Art in African history is traced to ancient Egyptian civilization as evident in renowned Egyptian portraits (Hartwig, 2015, p. 275). Before Arab and European incursion into Africa several societies possess artistic creations. The existence of these

artworks, depict a heritage that profoundly expresses the civilization in Africa. Also, it projects the talent and finesse for creations which shows the richness of the human brain.

Batik histories in West Africa have been traced to Dutch-Indonesian presence in Africa, however, the lines of origin are quite obscure. The most recent encounter is traced to the nineteenth century return of African soldiers in West Africa. Undoubtedly, the line of skill transfer is obscure, but Batik work became prominent in postcolonial West Africa. In spite of the challenges of identifying the traditions of origin of Batik, the global interactions with twentieth century West Africa aided the supply value chain for African inspired Batik textile art.

During the Trans-Atlantic trade era, much of these artistic creatives were shipped out of Africa to Europe. Production of art works still continued in times of adversaries that constrained Africa till the twentieth century. The phases of imperialism and colonialism obviously depicted how Africans have been disempowered for centuries and thus, unable to advance even at the attainment of independence. While modern infrastructure were made in to Africa to aid colonial rule, artistic creators were resilient to continue production and recreated the learning practices required to foster continuity. In the words of Catherine Fourshey:

The colonial state had thwarted the precolonial education system and apprenticeships to a large extent by banning, undermining, and otherwise trying to end various historically developed educational practices and apprenticeship programs while pushing for greater engagement in cash-cropping and migrant labor schemes (Fourshey, 2019).

The traditional education systems jettisoned in The Gambia favoured the rise of new class of women exposed to formal education. Fourshey (2019) highlighted how new class of elite women emerged in colonial Gambia, without considering the status of women that are not educated in formal settings. Therefore, Musu Kebba Drammeh's life is analyzed to vary the dimensions of women's experiences in The Gambia.

The biography of Kebba's artistic creations revolves around the production and marketing of Batik design. Kebba was born in the colonial era of 1940. At eight years she started learning from her mother which is a typical model of girl child education in traditional African societies. The learning curve lasted till the 1960s when she started independent Batik design production in The Gambia from the 1960s till her death in 2003.

Other factors are the role of Islamic history, practice and solidarity in Kebba's family as a daughter of a Marabout; and the legacy of precolonial intergroup relations that suffices till contemporary times in West African history. Similar works are those written on Chief Nike Okundaye of Nigeria (Adeleke, 2020).

The geographies of being an itinerant marabout is justified in Arnold Hughes explanations about the social and economic setting of The Gambia, where religion was a strong factor in understanding the realities. (Hughes, 2006) Reference to Arnold's work is fundamental as there are dearth of research on the history of The Gambia. Unlike the case in Abeokuta (Nigeria), where there were several women dyers in the first half of twentieth century, (Byfield, 2002) rarely are there documentations about women dyers in The Gambia (Njie, 2023). Accounts showed the linkage of Batik work across West Africa, Saros from Sierra Leone introduced the work of Batik into Abeokuta, and it was an art learnt from the Mende of Sierra Leone. Few women like Kebba took up the craft of fabrics art. In the map of West Africa, such connection is inevitable because Christopher Fyfe's description of trade relations in West Africa (Fyfe, 1968) shows that communities converge to trade thus, the exchange of commodities influenced transfer of skills.

Judith Byfield's work on Adire producers in Abeokuta puts into context the variants of fabric/textile art spread across West Africa. In the case of Nigeria, Abeokuta is a space of agency and institution for production and marketing. It also depicts how Yorùbá women create entrepreneurial spaces for livelihood while it features cultural relationships expected of women in lineages and associations. The fact that women in these spaces were independent producers also imply how women and motherhood identities are constructed at work and in lineages. This work posits that public motherhood (Byfield 2002) is a phenomenon in West Africa, where women exercise mentorship and agency in extended lineage settings and community. The manifestation of public motherhood is in line with Asuwada philosophy that puts communal collaboration as a way of life (Akin Makinde, 1988). Oladejo in a study of black soap production in Olode village in Ibadan (Nigeria) also explains how communal cooperation and inter-village relations enhanced women's entrepreneurship in black soap production and marketing (Oladejo, 2021). The camaraderie of communalism created in Madam Jojolola's compound of Abeokuta where Adire production started in Nigeria typifies how communities in West Africa work together in pre-colonial societies (Byfield, 2002, p. 92–95). Kebba's work

in Latrikunda portray the gendered approach to understanding industrial settings preexisting before colonialism. Studies in the informal sectors in West Africa have shown that most women's work in urban settings does not fit into the existing ideas about work and developing classes (Sheldon, 1996, p. 5). Kebba's Batik design and fabric art fits into the irregular initiatives' women explore to make a living. Mostly, the colonial economy accounted for women's concentration in residues of work culture from the precolonial economy. To Abeokuta women, Adire work was a like a cult of collaboration of several women from networks of lineages (Byfield, 2002, p. 94). Thus, re-creating the kind of work culture prevalent in the precolonial economy. This is similar to Kebba's way of operating the Batik factory in The Gambia. Furthermore, Kofo Adeleke's *Bàtami á dún ko ko kà: A Biography of Nike* give a detailed analysis of how a variant of Kebba in Nigeria grew and organized the work of Batik over time (Adeleke, 2020). Strictly, a biography, Nike Okundaye's life was analysed as a wholistic, this book considers the connection between the rural and urban important, as it explains the transitions in women's lives across West Africa. The experience Nike relayed about transition of her life as a Batik designer implies a lot for perceptions about artistic creations. That, in the 1960s, few Africans recognized the essence of artistic creations, but now, the situation changed (Adeleke, 2020, p. 81). Studying Kebba's situation in the Gambia creates a perspective to understand how artistic creations are valued across spaces in West Africa.

While colonialism created a modern life across Africa. Villages in Africa remain centres of civilization and enlightenment in custody of tradition. Despite the colonial influences in The Gambia, Kebba chose to stick to live within village traditions. Everyday life in the village defines African communalism and it was a heritage to uphold even in the context of colonialism. Africa is an open economy as analysed by A.G. Hopkins, (Hopkins, 1973) the colonial economy was just a continuum; hence it was normal to have Europeans exploring in new forms in the twentieth century. Through a communal entrepreneurial system, Kebba created a work space. The cash crop economy was rife when Kebba was born in 1940.

The precolonial subsistence system that sustained communities were replaced with commodities that suited the export—import economic system. Also, rural-urban migration from villages to the cities shifted access to labour. In spite of this, Kebba took advantage by engaging few people who chose to remain in the village by creating an agency around the art work of Batik. Several factors hindered women of Kebba's time from acquiring

education. Kebba belonged to a generation of Africanism where men had absolute control over resources, hence it was difficult for women to own land and make independent living (Njie, 2023). Furthermore, Islamic education for women was not also accessible because Islam in Africa was largely paternalistic in practice. Similarly, western education was rarely accorded to young girls rather, the girls were left in the homes and trained to learn domestication from homes. Therefore, Kebba's learning started at 8 years as she watched Batik art from her mother in the 1940s. Invariably, motherhood was functional as an agent of teaching traditional functional education. According to A.B. Fafunwa, traditional African education consists of seven cardinal principles all tied to the philosophy of communal education (Fafunwa, 1973). These principles emphasized by Fafunwa defines the type of education Kebba was exposed to. Thus, unravelling the role of women in the development of vocations and livelihood through the agency created by Musu Kebbah Drammeh in the development of Batik textile art in Gambia. Oladejo (2022) and Nwafor (2021) set the pace for this perspective by aggregating the connection between textile, fashion and society in Nigeria.

Methodology

Kebba's Batik work is located in the long historical process in West African history. Several histories in West Africa focused on precolonial and colonial milieus with less emphasis on the postcolonial realities and what manifest after western modernity. Western modernity subjugated Africa historically and philosophically to European cultures (Lamola, 2017). The colonial era was the climax that mainstreamed Africa into Western Modernity.

Thus, Kebba's Batik work is situated within the context of non-conformism to western modernity, rather enmeshed in a process of reconstructing African modernity. The residue of non-conformism to western modernity reflects in the way African indigenous culture and skills survived and re-make itself.

Kebba's Batik work was a resilient endeavor in the milieus of colonial influences. Kebba was born in the colonial era of 1940, it was until the eve of Gambian independence in the 1960s that she started production. In essence, Kebba's birth time and the period of starting Batik work was a phase in the historical process of Africa's colonial encounters. Further-

more, Kebba's work is not in isolation to the global economy, hence the frameworks of economic transitions are considered. From the oral interviews with Kebba's descendants, it is established that family and communal entrepreneurship is a source of sustainability in the livelihood systems. Invariably, there are flows of economic informality which also resonates with Hopkins explanation that the economy is open (Hopkins, 1973). West African trade networks that existed since the Trans Saharan and Trans-Atlantic trade, served the itinerant exploits of communities without colonial boundaries. Fifteen oral interviews were conducted. From the oral interviews the itinerant, open, and informal nature of economies across West Africa manifests. The legacies of Kebba's factory in Latrikunda, available online served as a digital means to screen video documentaries of Batik designs event after the demise of Kebba. The project explores interdisciplinary works interfacing with studies in the informal sector and textile art studies in West Africa.

Kebba and the Marabout Experience

The Marabout derived from the Arabic word—*Al Murabitun* signifies a scholar/teacher who guides people on the part of Islam. Marabouts in the West African context is part of the Sufi order and Muslim brotherhood spread around the Senegambia region. From the fifteenth century, Marabouts are basically Wolof by ethnic identity and they are itinerant across West Africa because of their job to guide and teach Islam. Kebba was from a family of Muslim scholar and a grand Marabout with ancestral connections to Mali. The chain of migration to Gambia first had contact with Nui-mi before settling at Latrikunda (current Kanifing) (Drammeh, 2023). As it is typical of Africa, settling in new areas is an aftermath diplomatic connection and favourable intergroup relations. Abdalai Drammeh (Kebba's father) had favourable relationships with Badjan family, who were autochthonous land owners in Latrikunda. *Kunda* was a family suffix synonymous to followers of Drammeh. The followers adopted Kunda as an identity to distinguish their status. Literally, Kunda is a Mandinka ward for domain or settlement.

Kebba's ancestry are prominent Marabout. Kebba's father—Abdalai Drammeh was an itinerant Marabout whose tentacles spread across West Africa. His ancestry as a Marabout has linkages with Mali, Senegal and The Gambia. Being a Marabout Abdalai's itinerant nature exposed his family to

movements across West Africa, which is typical of the traditional ways in the precolonial era.

Kebba moved around in her childhood, as being itinerant was part of learning and socialization in pre-colonial African life. While Abdalai Drammeh was a spiritual itinerant, her daughter used the itinerant experience as a learning curve. Before colonialism, movements across West Africa were open and it enhanced cultural interchanges. Such contacts reflected in how Kebba learnt textile art from Mende women in Sierra Leone. Kebba's contact with Mende women was also similar to the experience of Madam Jojolola of Egba.

That Kebba became itinerant in the marketing of Batik is typical of how West Africa had been a transitory commercial space. According to Bala Saho Gambia evolved from how trade around the river and Atlantic Ocean with Europeans led to its making in the 16th century. Gradually, series of migrations led to formation of Gambia (Saho, 2019).

Work at Latrikunda

The Gambian-Senegal history before colonial rule showed connections bound by language and culture. Latrikunda Yiringanya as fully spelt was a village in the colonial era and in the early years of Kebba's practice (now an urban area). The name Latri was given to describe a noble that migrated from Senegal. The forms of migration indicate inter-ethnic relationships which showed Africans were not strange bed fellows. At the centre of such relationships was the exchange of culture and skills, where in African communalism is significant.

Kebba established her work space in Latrikunda (Ceesay, 2011, p. 17). Latrikunda factory, is an industrial setting sufficed as it were dug into the ground to enable dyeing of fabrics. Kebba's work at Latrikunda initially started off for communal appreciation of artworks, but the process transformed into large scale buying by tourists in the Gambia. Latrikunda became a place of convergence for production and marketing of Batik. Watching Kebba work at the dyeing pit using indigenously made manual technologies was a form of tourist attraction. Production of Batik was a performance in itself that made Latrikunda a centre of attraction. The commercial worth of Latrikunda aided the direction of Gambian tourist policy, therefore, the government keyed into organization of tourism fairs to increase patronage from Las Palmas, UK, USA, among others (Ceesay,



Figure 1. Metal plate showing the location and address of Kebba's factory in The Gambia

Source: Fieldwork

2011, p. 17). Work at Latrikunda meant a lot for the growth of Gambian tourism. Kebba's artistic creations was a cynosure to project Margaret Trowell's concept of launching Africa's designs into the world. Gambian government aided marketing of artistic creations of outside Africa. Her work had global visibility as she was part of the entourage in the Gambian Culture Tour of North America and the Caribbean. In the words of a foreign visitor to Latrikunda.

It is a place where you can find all the kinds of African art and batik. There were so many people from other countries who came to buy some of the paintings made by her, everybody is welcome here! (Ceesay, 2011, p. 18).

In the documentation of colonial era in the archives, arts and crafts subsisting in Africa were classified as '*native industry*'. The concept of the classification complexified the meaning of what is tradition and modern in Africa. The concept of native industry in colonial lexicon enabled the differentiation of modern industrial setting. Basically, the mindset of Africans changed in this regard as the native industry was regarded as unfit and primitive, thus, not essential to modern growth. The misdirected conception of native industry and modern growth enabled her to focus on indigenous production of batik when it was obvious that colonialism

regarded uneducated peoples as primitive and not significant for economic development. Kebba's work of Batik was self-defining as it created economic oriented internal self-rule. Without recognition from colonial government, she took up the arts and craft space to create a cosmopolitan Gambian attraction to the world. While the government created by Britain in The Gambia was shaping its ideal of a modern world, Kebba's traditional status in the village use an alternative form is shaping its own Gambia. By the Mid 1960s, Kebba was already in her mid-twenties and had become an established fabric artist. Thus, she gave custody to the tradition of Art, such that the tradition being regarded as primitive transformed to a point of tourist attraction. Her work defies nativity and primitiveness associated with African crafts by reinforcing it with modernity.

Making Meaning of Kebba's Designs

Kebba's designs features fashion communication. The designs on textiles gives the buyer and tourists message about history, heritage and culture. The designs are symbolic as they convey meanings that Erving Goffman regard as essential to keep appearances in a manner necessary for identity representation and valuation (Goffman, 1956). Thus, the Kebba's work is a maker and determinant of fashion trends and it communicates values, beliefs and national heritage. The Batik cloth depicts what Jean Allman regard as a political language that contests, challenge and unify (Allman, 2004). The symbolism reflects in the techniques of tying and dyeing, and the choices of waxing done on textiles. The outcome of the designs makes the wearer a conveyor for fashion communication. The designs also serve as content for griots to sing at Latrikunda, while tourist visit to purchase.

The fabric on which Kebba makes prints are cotton cloth imported from Europe especially from British and Dutch companies (Roschenthaler, 2015, p. 700). Importation of cotton cloth into West Africa was part of the global trade flows. The texture of cotton cloth made it suitable to work Batik arts and dyes on it. In the twentieth century African countries had industrial settings to manufacture cotton. This enabled craft uptake in textile design. Production of Batik designs on cotton cloth is entangled in foreign influences, as cotton was not solely produced in Africa. But the consumption of fabrics in Batik is a factor because it is used to define culture. Kebba's Batik designs depict a language of clothing for The Gambia. It answers

question about what the society chooses to express, and also rehearse the history that underpins the society. While dresses don't speak, the patterns on the Batik speak. The designs from Kebba offers a perspective to understand dress histories through drawing, dyeing and visuality. The designs are thus historical and interactive. Batik designs in Latrikunda rarely depicts nor criticize colonialism and westernization, but more emphasis is placed on making the global customer reflect on African representations on the fabrics.

Family and communal entrepreneurship is a process that enhanced sustainable operations of the factory at Latrikunda. From her home and factory, Bakary Conteh from Bassori village wine and dine with other learners (Conteh, 2023). Living "as an apprentice the most fundamental means of learning was constant learning and offering labour to support production.



Figure 2. Samples of Kebba's designs

Source: Fieldwork

Beyond production and marketing the end users of Kebba's designs on fabrics also utilizes it as decorations. Batik designs interprets the culture and environment of Africa. This affirms the fact that cloth is part of culture.

While the texture of textiles used in pre-sixteenth century Africa rarely provided the nature of dress worn, the influences of Trans-Atlantic trade accounted for more of what is understood of African dress in contemporary times. Be that as it may dress as adopted a long the trade routes linking North to West Africa, showed lots of Islamic influences. Dani Lyndersay (2011) puts into perspective how the influences of Islam and Trans Saharan trade mattered in how dress is constructed on the body. Similarly, Renne (1994, p. 3) explains the way cloth is absorbed among the Bunu (central Nigeria), hence cloth is used to construct and reproduce ideas about the social world. The Bunu example places premium on cloth as a reflection of social life and it enables the understanding of technologies and knowledge of production acquired across generations. The art of Batik design is typical of generational knowledge passed on. Al Bakri's account as cited in Levztzion and Hopkins showed that people wear robes of silk and brocade in the West African royal courts of eleventh century (Levtzion & Hopkins, 2000). Cloth became a prominent unit of exchange in the sixteenth century.

Kebba's nephew described her as almost a man, as she did things that women ordinarily could not do in Gambian society (Musu Kebba Drammeh – Pioneer Woman Boss in Entrepreneurship Urban – YouTube). This affirms scholarly expositions that textile practices is a gendered work peculiar to women (Auslander, 2014). Most societies gender the work of cloth as an exclusive for women, that, the skills involved are acquired domestically, but they became source of power and independence (Goggin & Tobin, 2009). The gendered meaning Kebba made of Batik design in the Gambia spans through domestic and public space, nexus with diplomacy. Therefore, Kebba created a market space for Gambian tourism (Musu Kebba Drammeh - Pioneer Woman Boss in Entrepreneurship Urban - YouTube). Latrikunda became a space of consumption allowing foreign exposure to Gambian culture.

Accounts of the Batik industry shows that Kebba was not the only expertise, there were other professionals. While Kebba made meaning of Batik in Latrikunda, Amie Krubally, was another woman that made meaning of Batik. Amie actually established a school and introduced a different method and used her designs to portray the histories of her joint Malian—Gambian heritage. Unlike Kebba, Amie attended formal school and she had more leverage to foreign exposure. She left Gambia to San Francisco in the USA.

Artistic creativity is a feature of design. It manifests when the art work is completed and it shows in the stage of marketing. Artistic creations from Africa have been a major connecting source between Africa and Europe. It

is quite challenging to label artistic creation as generic across Africa. There are heterogeneity of artistic creations and borrowed artistic skills. Thus, the meaning or ancestral origin of design are difficult to understand. Yet, art works and designs are associated to postcolonial societies based on cultural values manifest from the nineteenth century.

Artistic creations are wide and expresses lots of versatility about how best Africans create designs. Kerstin Pinther and Alexandra Weigand's edited book—*Design Histories between Africa and Europe* explains the various platforms in which designs from Africa are promoted in the global space, there by depicting transcultural transfers (Pinther & Weigand, 2018, p. 5–7). Transcultural transfers of artistic creations are not a new phenomenon in Africa as highlighted by Pinther and Weigand. African governments from the immediate postcolonial era adopted transcultural transfers of artistic creations. Thus, modus operandi is rarely evident until unraveled in the context of how governance is structured. Tourism department and agencies became entangled in the process of transcultural transfers as they became vehicles of marketing and communicating artistic creations. From imperialism to colonialism, world fairs and exhibitions prominently served as tools of conveying Europe and elsewhere into Africa. This also became an avenue for Africa's exposure to the global space. That of Africa is often regarded as primitive and taken as the 'other' that ought to be improved. Based on the politics of otherness, African tourism institutions "package" artistic creations to fit into the otherness.

Of recent, Achille Mbembe came up with ways of understanding Afropolitanism and gave in the thinking about the vastness of Africa beyond Africa (Mbembe, 2007, p. 26–29). Afropolitanism, thus allows the thinking that Africa is not necessarily the 'other' but a part of the global order. Fashion Afropolitanism have proved to be globally dynamic. The ways of primitiveness often associated with Africa is dislodged in the artistic creations. Hence, Kebba's work is a testimony to how primitiveness is faceless in the context of the commercial forces driving African fashion and design in the global system.

As African government established agencies for projecting Africa to the world, Margaret Trowell (1904–1985) moved from Europe to Africa to import foreign arts for practice, where she settled in Uganda in 1953 to establish art work studio for pottery, ceramics sculpture among others. The system portrayal of Europe into Africa did not necessarily undermine traditional craft work, but recognized the fact that Africans had the existing skill sets.

Practitioners have criticized the dearth of documentation on art markets in Nigeria. (O'Leary, 2018) As an art connoisseur, O'Leary discovered that the flow of commerce in art businesses is not documented. Thus, little attention is paid to the context and nature of artistic creations. Yet, evidences show that Nigerian art market thrives favourable with that of South Africa. However, in the general history of West Africa, art production and marketing cuts across communities. Kebba evolved the markets for art in the Gambia, even when there was no documentation of marketing strategies and sales.

Haruna Drammeh in describing Kebba categorized her as a trailblazer in the Batik industry. In the quest for succession, Haruna recounted how she involved family members in production and marketed Batik to the world, not only promoting her artistic creations, but initiating legacies of succession (Musu Kebba Drammeh - Pioneer Woman Boss in Entrepreneurship Urban - YouTube). Also, Kebba's was part of a marketing revolution of the art market in the 1990s, until the millennium. This era witnessed global attention to exhibitions and trade fairs.

Kebba and Tesiti-Tesito of the 1970s in The Gambia

In the oral tradition of West African societies, the griots are phenomenal in the chants of praise singing. The griots are a compendium of history and philosophy of societies. They relive the past and bring to fore memories of generations. The philosophical aspect of the griots chants is a perspective to unravel phenomenal realities that occurred in the past. Hence, this reflected in how Yankuba Saho a griot from The Gambia sang about Kebba in the 1970s and 1980s (Conteh, 2023). Yankuba constantly visited Kebba's factory in Latrikunda to sing. This period was at a time when tourists visited Latrikunda, thus Yankuba praise signing was not just about Kebba, but an embodiment of how African communal system is relived, since it was a site of tourist convergence. A philosophy profound in praise singing Kebba was the Tesiti Tesito. It was a slogan depicting self-reliance. Tesiti Tesito manifests the exactitude of Kebba's work because it makes meaning of work in the society where opportunities are stifled due to rural urban migrations. The colonial economy had segregated job lines, where there is a civil service and the informal sector. Therefore, survival in the latter had to be defined and developed by the individual, thus, giving a perspective to describe Kebba as an entrepreneur. Tesiti-Tesito is a philosophy

of self-reliance that connotes how Gambians source for livelihood (Gaibazzi, 2010). It was a common lyric in the chants of the griot in Latrikunda as at the 1970s (Conteh, 2023).

Furthermore, Tesiti-Tesito thoroughly depicts means of livelihood. As explained by Kate Meagher, informal economies are a making of individuals determined to survive (Meagher, 2010). Hence, the forms of organization and connections developed there in are manifestation of how Africans survive and create an economic system favourable for prevailing circumstances. Singing Tesiti-Tesito in Kebba's factory was also a means of expressing solidarity among workers, in order to have a sense of belonging and self-esteem suitable for the promotion of the business. Yankouba Saho singing in Kebba's workspace is an indication that singing and dancing was part of African life, and as a griot, he relives memories of the past.

Stephanie Bonifant's study of textiles in the Gambia articulates its feature as a work and industry that enables survival. According to her:

In the Gambia, the textile industry is a prevalent form of artistic expression as well as a profitable trade. Walking down the street it is rare to find a shop without some amazingly beautiful, tie-dyed fabric and handmade batik cloths. Most of the people you pass on the street are adorned with brightly colored clothing that is elaborate and intricately designed (Bonifant, 2000).

Stephanie's experience points to the contemporary relevance of batik as a source of livelihood. It testifies to the fact that Kebba's initiative is real and reflects Tesiti Tesito for survival on the streets in The Gambia. A philosophy that emerged from the songs of the griots at Kebba's factory, which depicts survival.

Kebba's Art Work and Gambian Tourism

The colonial government concentrated mostly on locating spaces for democratic development in post-independence Africa. This also resonated with Kwame Nkrumah's thoughts about a seek ye the political kingdom and every other shall be added unto you" (Mazrui, 1993, p. 105). The nationalist struggles had reached a peak that political independence was all that mattered. Also, the UN Charter had resolved to cede independence to colonies. However, economic independence of African nations remained hanging, because the commodities of exchange remain the same, as Africa

was used as a space to market manufactured goods and fetch raw materials. The trade system failed to take cognizance of the resilient skill systems remaining in Africa. Indigenous skills in Africa feature resilience. While postcolonial government departments were established, the tone of policy was to create enabling environment for foreign visits to Africa. As sites of tour, entertainment and anthropological scene, rural areas in Africa were regarded as merely useful for the wildlife, rivers fall, and other natural resources therein. In the midst of this African arts and crafts thrived. Few artists took advantage of this. Postcolonial tourist policies in Africa enabled art marketing. Art marketing became prominent and it formed the essence of redefining African values and heritage in postcolonial Africa. Development evolved around the works of indigenous artist. As a channel of marketing the Gambia to the world Kebba was a major participant in Gambian art marketing in the 1960s and 1970s (Ceesay, 2011).

In the early 1990s, The Gambian government recognized the tourist attraction and revenue the crafts available offered for national development. The state intervened in developing a tourist market a research study was commissioned in 1993 (Silcox, 1993). In the report, handicraft of about twelve categories were recognized and all produced through indigenous skills and technologies. Handcrafts were critiqued for low quality and considered a risk in context of the growing completion in the global market. However, the report attempted to draw the handcraft businesses into an agglomeration that strips it off of informality. A major recommendation is to lump hand craft business under the management of a non-governmental organization. This recommendation is a manifestation of how African industrial settings are regarded as primitive. Planning to bring all handcraft business based on the report was a way of drawing owners from private entrepreneurship to state entrepreneurship. With funds from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), trainings on market-driven product development and quality control were implemented for artisans. This intervention to American government was a diplomatic effort and also an aftermath of the cold war. USAID's history was an offshoot from John F. Kennedy's Administration in USA. At a period when there was tacit scramble for the world along capitalist and socialist ideologies. The US peace corps was established to offer aid to the Third World by John F. Kennedy. Therefore, USAID'S interest also resonates with promises Kennedy made to African Americans for better rights once his presidential victory suffices. Thus, a major reason for the USAID funded research on The Gambian handcraft was to enable availability of quality products for

African Americans, as the target consumers (Silcox, 1993). Kebba's factory at Latrikunda was officially given a business name as MKD Batiks and Tie-dyes (Silcox, 1993, p. 20).

However, recommendation on product development tend to water down the skill initiatives in Batik designs. The idea projected implied that Batik design should be produced based on consumer specification and not producer's initiative. Yet, the varieties in producer's design of Batik gives the customer the ability to make choices.

The Gambian government regarded the handcraft industry as lacking standards and thus invited USAID funded intervention for improvement. The industry was perceived by government as incapacitated, thus a human resource development approach was introduced for product-driven efficiency. Unlike it were in other African states, the Gambian informal sector of handcraft production was based on communal conglomerations and not necessarily unified as an informal association. This is a deviation from informal sector (Lindell, 2010, p. 1–3). The call for USAID intervention in 1993 was the state realizing inefficiency and vulnerability, thus calling for unification of handcraft business owner to train them for desired results, with a view to have a tourist market suitable for foreign buyers. The report of the intervention showed how foreign concerns take interest in shaping Gambian Tourism. Kebba's business transition from informality to the formalization process feature clash of capitalism. This reflects in Ulla Wagner's summation that Gambian Tourism ought to bring development, rather it is an extension of dependency, where the operations of the handcraft industry are influenced by foreign interests (Wagner, 1981).

Conclusion

Kebba died at 63 in 2003. Her designs continue to manifest in the Twenty-first century. Sustaining Kebba's workspace is also embedded in African culture of succession, notions of lineage continuity and communalism. Kebba laid the foundation for family entrepreneurship by accommodating her family members for work and learning the business of Batik. After Kebba's death, Fatou Ceesay, Kebba's niece manages the Batik factory (Fatou Ceesay, 2023). Fatou continues as the manager with the support of Kebba's son and granddaughter. Fatou having studied in France and know little about Kebba, but she took the business side of Batik passionately as she sees it is a family legacy. While Batik work is expressive and communi-

cative, connections with tourists and foreign influences overtime in Gambia's history working with Kebba shaped the lives of her nieces and nephews, as such, Haruna Drammeh, a nephew, garnered such experiences to foreground in media entrepreneurship through the operations of Paradise TV in The Gambia. With the growth of western education, Kebba's descendants have attended universities. Unlike it were when she accumulated labour through African communalism and Islamic lineage cooperation and solidarity in her lifetime, now, her legacies of Batik designing are sustained by generational business interests.

The colonial government regarded Kebba's work as a category in the cottage or native industry. However, the making of self-government in African states had Africans evolving new ways of engaging the modern in its 'primitive' state. Achille Mbembe's definition of Afropolitanism already manifest from the 1960s in the works of Kebba in Latrikunda. The work connects arts, designs, and architecture in contemporary times. The contemporary economies of Africa and specifically West Africa have question marked the essence of fabric art made manually. The African designs and story lines on the fabrics rarely matter any longer. Nina Sylvanus book—*Patterns in circulation: Cloth, Gender, and Materiality in West Africa* explains the influx of global interest in the types of fabrics consumed (Sylvanus, 2016). It is established that Vlisco Netherlands have the long history of producing African textiles even before. And Margaret Trowell's postulation of driving African artistic creations into the world as she did in Uganda already manifest across Africa. However, at the death of Kebba in 2003, Afrofuturism in the artistic creations from Africa had set in, hence, Batik is basking in Afrofuturism, where Africans and African diaspora use the batik designs handmade from Africa as an alternative for self-expression and assertion of the black identity. The global visibility of handmade Batik from Africa also crossed the colour line as other races make meaning Kebba was born at a time when Vlisco already manufactures textiles for Africa's consumption. Yet, reveling handmade Batik designs speaks volume of the African culture being recreated in original artistic forms and very interpretive of the everyday life. The level of globalization in production of textiles into Africa also involve the Chinese. The Nana Benz textile commerce in Togo dwindled during the SAP era thus, contemporary Chinese production of Ankara have revived the Nana Benz and also created class segments in textile trade, as the Chinese could afford to provide cheap textiles for new generation of entrepreneurs in the commercial system. Invariably, spaces of batik design in Latrikunda remain a local factor in the

fabric art value chain system. It creates a perspective to understand Kebba's work and legacies as a heritage despite global influence that affects consumption and lack of modern production technologies that could enhance Latrikunda to transform to a modern textile production hub within Africa.

As it were, Latrikunda still maintains as the production and marketing hub for batik in the Gambia. In a youtube video of Latrikunda after Kebba's demise, the Gambian Tourism Board, covered a life session of production and marketing of Batik at Kebba's factory (Musu Kebba Drammeh tie and dye factory | By Gambia Tourism Board | Facebook). Across African universities knowledge of production and marketing of art in historical perspective is gaining attention through essays, filming, excursions and fieldwork enquiries (Olatunji, 2021).

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