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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriaines/16877>
DOI: 10.4000/etudesafriaines.16877
ISSN: 1777-5353

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 23 November 2011
Number of pages: 847-871
ISBN: 978-2-7132-2299-3
ISSN: 0008-0055

Electronic reference

George Olusola Ajibade, « Violence in Dialogue », *Cahiers d'études africaines* [Online], 204 | 2011, Online since 06 January 2014, connection on 20 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriaines/16877> ; DOI : 10.4000/etudesafriaines.16877

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- 1 The presence of domestic violence cannot be denied in all cultures and societies of the world since frictions occur wherever there is more than one person; domestic violence is often literally used as metaphor for power relationships. Representations of domestic violence can be found in the earliest representations by humans across cultures; from oral to written. Domestic violence is expressed in different forms and contexts. Domestic violence can be referred to any form of act, action or reaction that can traumatize or damage the psychology of another person. In other words, it is a form of behavior within the household or compound through which the abuser seeks power over other members of the family to satisfy her or his desire or interest.
- 2 Most literary scholars who are working on domestic violence are mainly preoccupied with the representations of violence in written texts (Slotkin 1973; Takaki 1993; Perraudin 1998; Roberts 1998; White 2006; Garret 2009). Most of these works focus on the western literature, while few of them focus mainly on Francophonian African written texts. Two major works on Francophonian literature are Perraudin (1998) and Milne (2007). Perraudin (1998) explores the extent of the impact of violence in representation and the possibility of a relationship between textual violence and the post-colonial subject's desire to access self-representation in Francophone literature. Milne (2007) examines postcolonial cultures and identities by investigating the way in which violence is represented by Francophone creative artists; using literature, film and photography as paradigms. In the above two stances it is evident that there is the need to examine the genre of Africans by using African oriented theory or paradigms for its analysis as well. This is because, "the dominant intellectual ideology, based on the Eurocentric epistemological and ontological foundation, constructs a universalizing process that denigrates other foundations of knowing and being" (Stephens *et al.* 2002: 467).
- 3 Nonetheless, there are various scholarly works on domestic violence. Saror (1993) has pointed out that a new dimension has been added to domestic violence in Nigeria in the form of acid baths by men to discipline their wives or girls. Odujinrin (1993) discusses battering as a form of domestic violence that is prevalent in Nigeria. Ondicho (1993, 1997,

2000) discusses the legal experiences of battered women and their perceptions in Nairobi. He reveals that problem of battery is rampant and that most battered women do not seek legal intervention due to economic dependence on batterers. Ofie-Aboagye (1994) examines domestic violence in Ghana. Adler and Denmark's work treats the issue of violence in general but the tenth chapter deals with domestic violence and how it can be prevented. "In the family setting, incidents of violence reoccur, escalate, spread to include other family members, and have trans-generational effects" (Adler & Denmark 1995: 129). The most common works on domestic violence centre on women but Cook's work (1997) focuses on how men are the victims of domestic violence in certain instances. He also discusses the reality of abused men drawing specific case studies of men who suffer from domestic violence. The last focus of his book deals with challenges of domestic violence, how to get help when abused and suggested approaches to reduce domestic violence. Davis (1998) discusses the reality of domestic violence beyond its denial in various cultures, especially by men. He goes further to elucidate the gravity of this social abnormality on the victims and even upon the society at large and offers some suggestion on the ways it can be tackled. In addition, he proves that there are many circumstances complicating the problems associated with domestic violence. On this he says:

"The mental state of many victims of has often been psychologically altered or culturally conditioned and they cannot leave the abusive relationship without help. Victims of domestic violence often do not display rational or reasoned behavior because of myriad extraordinarily complicated circumstances"(Davis 1998: 2)

- 4 Watts *et al.* (1997) base their work on interconnection of women, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe. Okemgbo *et al.* (2002) research into prevalence, patterns and correlates of domestic violence in selected Igbo communities of Imo state, Nigeria. Engel (2002) concentrates on emotional abuse. The thrust of the work bothers on: identification, patterns and effects of emotional abuse on relationship and how to stop emotional abuse.

"Emotional abuse can be defined as any non-physical behaviour that is designed to control, intimidate, subjugate, demean, punish, or isolate another person through the use of degradation, humiliation or fear. Emotionally abusive behavior ranges from verbal abuse (belittling, berating, constant criticism) to more subtle tactics like intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to be pleased"(Engel 2002: 11-12)

- 5 Hague *et al.* (2003) deal mainly with various experiences of women survivors of domestic violence and their views and voices in domestic violence services. They maintained that in order to put an end to domestic violence against women there should be survival representation in the form of domestic violence forums or advisory groups, structured representation through women's projects and the role of national and local campaigning and lobbying organizations in representing abused women's view (*ibid.*: 131). Ameh and Abdul (2004) base their research on the prevalence of domestic violence among the pregnant women in Zaria, the northern part of Nigeria and conclude that most of their respondents had experienced domestic violence, especially in the form of beaten by their husbands, even when pregnant. Oyediran and Isiugo-Abanihe (2005) highlight the cultural factors that are responsible for and the negative effects of, domestic violence against women in Nigeria and make a case for raising public consciousness against it. Rotimi (2005) makes an overview of wife battering as a form of domestic violence in African and concludes that it is cultural and that battered women preferred to endure the

scourge of domestic violence due to stigma associated with divorce. In his foreword to Hilary's seminal work on domestic violence, Cathy Humphreys remarks thus:

"Women who leave an abusive relationship often experience feelings of fear, bewilderment, anger and confusion. The trauma caused by domestic violence leaves a legacy that stays with the survivor, and it is not uncommon for women to experience feelings of loss and grief similar to those following bereavement, but made more complex by the effect that abuse has had on their emotional health and well-being."

- 6 Ameh *et al.* (2007) in their research on domestic violence in Nigeria prove that infertility can lead to domestic violence and that any woman, who experiences domestic violence because of infertility, has a double jeopardy. Their study shows that 41.6% of their respondents had experienced domestic violence because of infertility out of which 51.5% were psychologically tortured; 39.2% enjoyed verbal abuse; 27.8% were ridiculed; 17.5% were physically abused, and 6.2% suffered deprivation. In this case, the main culprits were their husbands.

Theoretical Framework

- 7 Bowman (2003) proposed five theories of domestic violence and his work shall be the starting point to discuss theoretical frame for this work. Although, none of these theories is singly sufficient to explain the representation of domestic violence in Yorùbá housewives' songs, yet, exploration into these theories will expand our understanding of the theoretical framework for this study. This is because the theoretical grounding of domestic violence work has important implications for the adopted remedial strategies to address the crisis. The proposed theories by Bowman are as follows: rights theory, feminist explanations, cultural explanations, society in transition explanations and culture of violence explanations. Rights theory purports equality of all before law and protection of fundamental human right. Rights theory is inadequate because the Yorùbá women live their lives in relationship, in a complex web of connections, rather than as individual person. Even in Europe and America where jury against domestic violence has gained ground domestic violence is still a prevalent practice. Feminist explanation theory that works towards gender equality is also not adequate because it fits more into the western experience of women. Instead, Africana womanism is more appropriate as a theory for the interpretation of African experiences. Cultural explanation theory emphasizes the use of power of tradition and norms within culture to explain the widespread incidence of domestic violence. This theory could be used to interpret the studied genre but with limitations. Although, defied by practices and social realities of the lived experience of Yorùbá women, there are no traditional rules and ethical injunctions that establish beaten of women. Also, culture varies even within same ethnic group; and culture changes due to various forces. Transition explanation theory sees domestic violence as emerging from the fact that African societies are in transition from traditional to a modern, urbanized society. Transition theory is inappropriate for the analysis of Yorùbá housewives' songs because the songs have been prominent even before the advent of colonial imperialists among the people. This is not to deny the fact that modernism introduces another dimension to the issue of domestic violence among the Yorùbá people. Domestic violence is both cultural and at the same time psychological, hence, the combination of Africana womanism and psychoanalysis will suffice the interpretation of Yorùbá housewives' songs.

- 8 Language is a flow of thought, which is the major key to imagining the world, others and ourselves. It is the thought of the renders that is pressurized in singing language so that they will not end up in physical violence or combat. Culturally, among the Yorùbá people, it is the men that usually engage in physical violence; while women engage in verbal attacks. Dreadful speech can survive and flourish like a poisonous plant or strong whirlwind that can destroy and extinguish a sparkling light or fire. Not many people pay greater attention to speeches we utter in the private space and spheres; we are usually and mainly concerned with the public speech. Having forget that “the bulk of our public speech is commercially and politically driven and as such is naturally dominated by a cluster of institutions, businesses, interests, and political organizations of great power. The ‘market’ for public speech, if one is to use such a metaphor, is not individual and not a truly open one” (White 2006: 32). There is no way for us to close our ears to the sea of trivializing and demeaning speeches that surround us. Nor can our ideology of free speech excuse us, as individuals or as a community, from reflecting critically upon, and judging, the speech we create (*ibid.*). Impact of oral tradition cannot be overemphasized among the Yorùbá people, even in the face of writing culture. It has also been noted by Zumthor (1990: 40) that, “In its primary function, before the influences of writing, voice does not describe, it acts. It leaves to gestures the responsibility of designating the circumstances”. This portends that oral tradition has a great influence upon the people who use it and its effects are tremendous in the issue pertaining to domestic violence. Hence, the observation of Callaway (1992: 44) is germane to this work as he says:

“Textual analysis and self-conscious textual creation cannot be separated from research and analysis of society. Whose voices are included in the text, how are they given weight and interpreted, question of priority and juxtaposition are clearly anthropological and political concerns. They are at the same time, textual strategies.”

- 9 When a word of abuse is uttered to someone its effect is like flogging and it generates a corollary reaction. Among the Yorùbá women, either in a polygynous marriage or in an extended family whenever there is any quarrel between two housewives or among many they result into verbal dialogue, abusive in nature. This could be ordinary abusive words or abusive songs. A large number of the songs contain archaic Yorùbá words with ideas and world-view that reflect the pre-colonial epoch of Yorùbá society when the traditional jury system was the order of the day. The songs generally reveal stresses and tensions of colonial and postcolonial periods, through which the women use orature to espouse their state of mind to the socio-cultural structure of their society.
- 10 Psychoanalytic approach to orature implies that what a poet presents is the representation or a way of gratifying his or her secret fantasies, desires, obsessions or deep emotions. Just like in poetic formation psychoanalysis explores the complexities of human soul; the language being the mediator through which the unconscious is defined made evident. In other words, poetry or songs unmask the unconscious fantasies.
- 11 Although the subject of this study is the representation of violence in Yorùbá housewives’ song, I have to maintain that the violence depicted is only understandable within the African cultural matrixes. And that is why the approach to the textual exegesis in this paper draws mostly from Africana womanism that purports that:

“Africa must be at the center of all analyses concerning Africana life and thought, thereby eliminating futile efforts in appropriating outside constructs. To be sure, an authentic paradigm must be mandatory for Africana theorists so that our lives and texts could be accurately construed and interpreted”(Hudson-Weems 1997: 84)

- 12 Texts are social facts and they are used to do things: they are forms of action; and they are central to understanding what is to be a person, in every culture (Barber 2007: 3, 103). Textual exegesis is illuminating as it unfolds constitution of persons' personality, reputation, history, character and other peoples' perception of an individual and the world around him or her. Africana Womanism commands an African-centered perspective of Africana women's lives-their historical, current, and future interaction with their community, which includes their male counterparts; and these, are all embedded in the oral texts of the people. Hudson-Weems (1997: 24, 47, 50) further maintains that:

"Africana Womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women [...]. The primary goal of Africana women, then, is to create their own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action."

- 13 The summation of Africana Womanism is that the cultural texts and context, which is all embracing, such as language, history, dress, behavior, values and principles, is of upmost importance. There is no need to spend too much time on external nuances, like form, at the risk of sacrificing internal nuances, like content and meaning. Thus, African critical theories for analyzing their critical experiences are needed in order to create institutions of ideas, Black thought, for housing and disseminating African life experiences, historically, currently and futuristically (Hudson-Weems 1997: 82). Although, the explanations of Africana womanism and psychoanalysis given above are skeletal, yet they provide a general scaffold for investigating the texts of Yorùbá housewives' song.
- 14 Underlying the above, this study deals mainly with the songs performed by the Yorùbá housewives to show resentment against others within the family setting. A Yorùbá aphorism that, "*Orin ní sàájú jà*-singing begets fighting" indicates that singing abusive songs leads into fighting. Hence, a collection of Yorùbá songs manifesting violence in polygynous households in Yorùbá societies are analyzed within the general framework of Africana womanism, in line with Hudson-Weems' (1997) school of thought and that of Dove (1998). The study focus is motivated by the fact that cultural understanding is a pivotal tool for the analysis of texts or genre performed by Africans (either men or women), but in this study, women. As argued by Asante (1998: 18) "the scholar, rhetorician, or historian who undertakes an analysis of the black past without recognizing the significance of vocal expression as a transforming agent is treading on intellectual quicksand".

Research Methodology

- 15 This study emanates from fieldwork carried out among the Yorùbá women in southwestern Nigeria between 1997 and 2004, and January to December 2007². It was a research designed on "Unveiling Hidden Voices: Construction of Identity and Social Reality of Yorùbá Women in Oral Art". The study relies mostly on participant observation or cultural immersion, informal interviewing (asking questions in Yorùbá, my native language to get at the etic and emic), ethno-history and linguistic analysis. Hence, the primary data used in this study resulted from a variety of inter-subjective encounters, ranging from direct observation and varying degrees of participation in the performance arena, personal interviews with housewives, personal experience as someone who has

grown out of a polygyny household, even in a rural community. The translation of data was done as a linguist and a native speaker of the language, in a way to preserve the essence, meaning and understanding. Desktop investigation was done in addition to the collected primary data where relevant secondary materials were elicited from books, journals and archival materials. The data were analyzed using Africana womanism and psychoanalysis theoretical approaches to explicate the representation of violence in Yorùbá housewives songs.

Yorùbá Polygyny: Structures and Contexts

- 16 Polygyny is the marriage of one man to more than one woman at the same time. It was the prevalent form of marriage in the pre-industrial societies (Murdock 1967; Strassmann 1997). It dehumanizes women in diverse ways as it destroys women autonomy. Polygyny is the preferred type of marriage for the men of the pre-colonial Yorùbá societies. The typical traditional Yorùbá compound has a large extended family that is patrilocal and patrilineal. The head of the family (*Baálé*) is usually the most senior male with the most senior housewife as the female head (*Íyálé*) within the compound (*Àkòdì/Agboolé*). The traditional Yorùbá men are usually polygynous. Nevertheless, modernization has not eradicated polygyny as many still have the desire to go into it (Aryee 1978; Speizer 1995; Stokes 1995; Ezeh 1997), but it is declining (Timaues & Reynar 1998). Among the Yorùbá, women do not solely depend on their husbands' resources as many of them engage in economic activities with which they cater for their children. Men are permitted several wives, but women may have only one husband. With the incursion of Christianity many men officially have monogamous homes but at times have "outside wives" or concubines that may or may not be known to the wives inside the house. This is contrary to the traditional form of polygyny in which more than one wives are married by a single man and all of them live under the same roof but different rooms. Polygyny among the Yorùbá people is cultural due to patriarchy. Women in the traditional Yorùbá society are upholding patriarchy mainly because of securing inheritance space for their children (especially male). This is because, traditionally, inheritance is through male children. At the same time, Yorùbá women negotiate space for matriarchy, and this generates domestic violence. Yorùbá women are peace-loving and instead of always go into physical assault they result to verbal attacks through singing and chanting of verbal art in their negotiation for matriarchy. In other words, their expression of violence is mostly verbal. But this is not to deny the truth that women at times go into physical combat. This is because verbal assault affects more than flogging with whips.
- 17 Domestic violence ensues or occurs when a dominating spouse or cowife, through emotional or physical abuse, creates an environment of fear and intimidation that might prevents others from freely choosing how to live their lives. Among the Yorùbá people of southwest Nigeria, engaging in domestic violence is prevalent among women in polygynous marriages because polygyny is a broad way to jealousy, competition and unhealthy rivalry. This is even evidential in *Ifá* literary corpus, which is central to Yorùbá behavioral norms and matrixes (Wande 1968: 33-34)³.

Flogging through Singing

18 Whenever crisis ensues between two co-wives or housewives in a compound the quarreling women usually render the type of the song excerpted below to abuse their victim.

19 1a

[Image non convertie]

20 Peoples' ways of talking dehumanize and belittle others. The Yorùbá people regard barking of the dog as unintelligible noise, which is habitual for dogs. A song like the above is sung to abuse a woman at the instance of a rift, the render is simply referring to her target as dog and whatever she says is regarded as unintelligible and irrelevant. This form of depersonification is abusive and if not properly controlled by the most senior housewife (*ìyá ilé*) or the male family head (*Baálé ilé*) it can even result into physical combat. To be regarded a dog carries with it certain derogatory meanings. Dog is one of the popular domestic animals among the Yorùbá people; but it serves the owner and the treatment given to it differs from the western world. Hence, the recipient of the above song is equally regarded as a servant that has no say in the affairs of the master. In most cases, a song like the above is rendered by the senior wife to her junior ones within the family. This is because, according to traditional marriage conventions, a new wife was junior not only to her husband but to all of his lineage members born before the date of her marriage (Fadipe 1970: 114). In most cases, the target of the above song (1a) usually replies the render with a song like this below (1b).

21 1b

1b. *Wón n bí ọ o*
Taa nìwọ ọ bí?
Bélẹbọtọ ọ mi sọ ọ

They are asking you
Whom will you ask?
Discuss it with my anus.

22 The implication of this reply is that the junior wife who renders such a song believes that she has no power to be forceful over her senior; still, in a subtle way she pressurizes her opinion against her senior co-wife. "Discuss it with my anus connotes that she also regards the speech of the senior co-wife as dirty words just like faeces that comes out of the anus."

23 The Yorùbá society is basically and culturally patriarchal. However, the role and space of female gender cannot be stricken out in planning and development. It is the general belief of the people that women are good planners and their support to their husband is vital in the success of the man. Hence the saying, "behind a successful man there is a woman". It is the societal expectation that the wife should give her total support for the success of her husband. Any woman that is uncooperative with her husband is thus regarded as a bad wife; and such a woman is regarded as useless. In a family setting where there is an observation notice that a wife does not render necessary assistance to her husband; whether she is maltreated by her husband or not, the senior housewives within the compound (*Àkòdì/Agboolé*) can use song like the one below to lampoon such a woman.

24 2

2. <i>Bí ó lẹ kó lẹ</i> <i>Ìgbà tí ò lẹ kún ló n' ẹ?</i>	If she wants to (leave) divorce let her divorce What has she been doing even when she is on ground?
<i>Bí ó lẹ kó lẹ</i> <i>Ìgbà tí ò lẹ kún ló n' ẹ?</i>	If she wants to (leave) divorce let her divorce What has she been doing even when she is on ground?
<i>Ìyàwó tí kò bọkọ rẹ dámòràn</i> <i>Bí ó lẹ kó lẹ</i> <i>Ìgbà tí ò lẹ kún ló n' ẹ?</i>	The wife who refuses to plan with her husband If she wants to (leave) divorce let her divorce What has she been doing even when she is on ground?

- 25 Various contexts of the above song have proven that the issue of planning with the husband has diverse applications. The song is rendered at different contexts. Firstly, it is rendered when a particular housewife is not giving support to her husband in his job and venture. Secondly, it is also rendered to a wife who is denying her husband sexual intercourse. In the second instance, it is rendered by the mother-in-law of the wife (husband's mother). In all the cases when the song is rendered to insinuate divorce to mark the end of conflict scenario. To the traditional Yorùbá, divorce is rare and there must be concrete evidences before it takes place. Hence, a typical song like the above could be rendered in order to provoke and intimidate a particular housewife to initiate divorce in order to prove the wife wrong. Since Yorùbá women are family-centered, mainly concerned with the welfare of the entire family as her number one priority, their main pre-occupation is what they can contribute to the success and stability, not only of their families but also of the entire community. At times they do not mind the consequences. This kind of song is borne out of patriarchal design of the Yorùbá society. A similar song purview similar thought, as stated below.

26 3

3. <i>Oríṣíríṣi obìnrin pọ̀ láyẹ̀ o!</i>	There are different types of women in the world!
<i>Oríṣíríṣi obìnrin pọ̀ láyẹ̀ o!</i>	There are different types of women in the world!
<i>Ọkọ wẹ̀wọ̀n</i>	The husband was imprisoned
<i>Yàwó kàtíkẹ̀ ó bóde lẹ</i>	The wife powdered her face and went out to gyrate
<i>Ọkọ wẹ̀wọ̀n</i>	The husband was imprisoned
<i>Yàwó kàtíkẹ̀ ó bóde lẹ</i>	The wife powdered her face and went out to gyrate
<i>Oríṣíríṣi obìnrin pọ̀ láyẹ̀ o!</i>	There are different types of women in the world!

- 27 The above two songs (nos 2&3) show the importance of women to men in Yorùbá cosmology. Although, Yorùbá society is patriarchal but in reality the males derive spiritual powers and prowess from the females, who, prefer anonymity in almost every case (Denzler 1994). Behind every powerful Yorùbá man there is a woman; and for that man to fall or fail he must have lost the support of the woman (Alaba 2004: 7). A pertinent question that needs be asked is why does Yorùbá patriarchy overshadow males? There is the possibility that the man in question is overshadowed out of his misdemeanor and no one should have the wife blamed for what she has not caused. In a similar sense, morose appearance of the imprisoned man cannot solve the problem, it will only add to her sorrow that she might be internalizing. Seeking of "positive male companionship" (Hudson-Weems 1997: 66) is not tantamount to scruffy and morose appearance; she must also works "in concert with male struggle" as she measures her "standards", "acts", and "ideals" as a reflection of her "culture" (Hudson-Weems 1997: 69).
- 28 Rivalry among co-wives arising from polygyny and suspicion of one's husband going into extramarital affairs usually result into formation of a song like this:

29 4

[Image non convertie]

30 The woman who usually renders this kind of song (no. 4) might have suspected her husband going into extramarital affairs with another woman. In this case, the housewife sees the suspect around, instead of waging physical combat; she results in fighting with words. In this context, the woman who wants to snatch her husband is regarded as a foolish person. The render of the song sings to castigate the suspect telling her that her husband is dead, which she euphemised as been in heaven. The song is used to tell the intruder/adulteress to go and look for her husband elsewhere. To the woman, heaven symbolizes free world where there are men that are free. Below are similar songs (nos 5 & 6a) that portray resentment against extramarital affairs and polygyny.

31 5

[Image non convertie]

32 6a

[Image non convertie]

33 The above two songs (5&6a) reveal Yorùbá women, just like their other counterparts as adaptable and ingenious; who because of their familycenteredness and values desire male companionship. The implication is that her identity is constructed by her roles and forces she confronts. She is negotiating her space and identity as a domineering figure in her matrimonial home. This at times results into a serious conflict and violence in case there is any challenge. She respects and recognizes herself as distinct in order to achieve uncompromised self-esteem, self-worth and self-love. At the same time she believes that there should be justice, truth, righteousness, order, and equity, among others, in order to have a well-balanced society and homes. This view agrees to that of Dove (1998: 535) in *Africana Womanism* that African woman “brings to the forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth”. The contention of the render of song number six above is that womenfolk should not compete and struggle over a man; instead, there should be a reordering of the norm that kills and disorganizes homes-polygyny. In this context, Yorùbá women know and use their cultural foundations to construct acceptable adjustments to living in a dominant “culture that denigrates African women’s role and place in the society” (Stephens *et al.* 2002: 470). To this end, in their bid to reorganize the cultural norms that pervade their society, the Yorùbá women demonstrate their strength, adaptability, and flexible role playing as they encounter the difficulties of living in polygynous households. It is clear from the song (no. 6a) that the woman who renders the song does not want to opt for divorce at the instance of her husband’s unruliness, instead she negotiates with the other woman (regarded as her sister) to embark on her motherhood project. Motherhood is a worthwhile project, which Yorùbá women do not dare to compromise. Hence, at any instigation of asunder in motherhood, women in polygynous households result to altercation by songs to dislodge the intruder. If the intruder is desperate, she too replies with explosive song as seen below (6b), thus precipitating violence.

34 6b

[Image non convertie]

35 Hence, if the addressee could not therefore heed the warning and verbal attack to call her to order, she is regarded as a loser as seen in the song below (no. 7) further rendered by the legal or first wife.

36 7

<i>7. Orí mi má mà jẹ n béléja yan án</i>	My head, prevent me from laboring for someone else
<i>Èdà mi má mà jẹ n béléja yan án</i>	My head, prevent me from laboring for someone else
<i>Eni tó béléja yan án àdánù ló ẹ</i>	The one who labors for another person suffers a loss
<i>Èdà mi má mà jẹ n béléja yan án</i>	My head, prevent me from laboring for someone else.

37 The render opines that her pursuit is to maintain the stability of her home; and therefore regards all infiltrators as losers. Not only this, she maintains that whatever pleasure that any other woman derives from her husband is a waste and to her (bonafide wife) advantages.

38 Although, partly due to economic condition of many Africans and largely due to civilization and incursion of domesticated religions (Islam and Christianity) among them; there is a gross reduction of polygynous marriage. That is not to deny the fact that there are still people going into it. Also, many men who are legally married to a single woman of their choices either in the church or mosque might still have concubine(s) outside the wedlock. In a situation when this is known to the legally married woman she flares up both against the concubine (if known to her) and against her husband. Instead of castigating the man who has broken the cord of marriage covenant he made with the wife, the wife at times is regarded abnormal. In many instances, this can even result into physical and mental torture; and at times the wife can be beaten by her husband.

39 Marriage is usually seen and described as melding or welding of two people together; but this might carry with it certain flaws when considering a polygynous marriage among the Yorùbá. Of course, the question to ask is how many people have been melded together? When two fractious persons assert their conflicting wills and desires, it results into arguments and verbal assaults in the minimal. Rivalry between two or more wives of the same husband causes women to sing this kind of song below.

40 8

[Image non convertie]

41 The song above (no. 8) is usually a reactionary song to number seven in case of desperate and individual negotiating for a space in the matrimonial home. Violence is a contest of endurance arising from freeing self from enslavement, oppression and repression, resulting into varieties of existential disorders. An attempt at realization of one's selfhood and personhood within the society, especially within a matrimonial setting that is culturally constructed on polygyny frequently leads to domestic violence. The rendering of the above song by a co-wife signifies that she rejects marriage structure that serves as a threat to her existence and vitality. In other words, it is a subtle way of challenging the (old) idea of polygyny that is culturally regarded as crucial to womanhood and motherhood as patricentrically constructed. Hence, "A reordering of the relationship between women and men in the institution of marriage is being advocated" (Agovi 1994: 221). Besides, she reveals a consciousness of her own agency in the image she constructs "Give me the chance to do my own" in the first line of song number eight

above; and at the same time she recognizes the image of others (a business does not obstruct another business) to be constructed. This suggests that self-love and regard for cultural norms must be employed in other to allay the tension within the domestic domain.

- 42 In the song below (no. 9), the right and freedom of decision by an individual woman is seen. There is an outpouring of her mind with a high sense of assertiveness in her bid to achieve a distinct and complete identity of her own. This is clearly evident as she challenges her co-wife in the song.

43 9

<i>9. A-ránmọ láṣọ Ìsẹ̀yìn a ò hunṣọ</i>	We sent child to buy Ìsẹ̀yìn cloth we didn't weave
<i>A-ránmọ láṣọ Ìsẹ̀yìn a ò hunṣọ</i>	We sent child to buy Ìsẹ̀yìn cloth we didn't weave
<i>Aṣọ tí a ró, Olówó fara mólówó</i>	Our wrappers show that the rich people move together
<i>Èwù tí a wò, Olówó jogún idèra</i>	Our dresses show that the rich inherit comfort
<i>Gèlè tí a wé sukuṣuku banba</i>	Our head ties are bogus and heavy
<i>Eni tó bá wú kó bẹ</i>	Anyone who is pregnant should burst
<i>Aránmọ láṣọ Ìsẹ̀yìn a ò hunṣọ</i>	We sent child to buy Ìsẹ̀yìn cloth we didn't weave.

- 44 The render of the ninth song above was determined and used the totality of her emotion and poses a non-lackadaisical attitude towards the recipient in the song. The song reveals capitalist ideology (*Olówó ló lówò*) among Yorùbá. This song provokes and at the same time sensitizes the victim in this context to work hard and become economically viable and independent; since they are already enslaved by patriarchy. Among the co-wives, domestic violence, or better put violence in marriage generally starts with small conflicts due to ego problems. This in many instances results into verbal attacks in which one abuses the other or both abuses each other to the extent that they are both psychologically depressed and tortured. In a situation whereby a wife is not happy with her co-wife in regards to ego, especially when one of the housewives cannot meet up with the standard of living like her others (*orogún*) as depicted in the song above (no. 9); the song cited below is one of those songs used by such co-wife as a reaction.

45 10

<i>10. È má rojọ mi f'Èṣù lónà oko</i>	Don't relay my case to Èṣù on your way to the farm
<i>È má rojọ mi f'Èṣù lónà oko</i>	Don't relay my case to Èṣù your way to the farm
<i>Èmi rẹ kó la jà</i>	I did not fight with you
<i>Aṣọ ló yọ ọ légbẹ</i>	Inability to buy uniform dissociates you from us
<i>È má rojọ mi f'Èṣù lónà oko</i>	Don't relay my case to Èṣù on your way to the farm.

- 46 Relaying case to the Èṣù, the Trickster deity is an indication that the render is well rooted in the traditions and customs of the African society⁴. The above woman also uses the medium not only to assert a definite identity of a wealthy and comfortable woman she also uses it to inculcate spirit of discipline and contentment into the other co-wife (as a sister) in the spirit of sisterhood. Tale bearing is unprofitable; as it hinders one from fruitfulness, it also engenders strife. Hence the addressee is being told to diagnose her problem correctly in order to seek redress.

- 47 When a particular senior wife to another wife within a household is discovered to be a talebearer, the junior wife to her is not permitted by the culture to call her and abuse her

for what she is doing because respect for the elders and community is part of the heritage of Africa, especially women. But such a senior co-wife who is a talebearer could be satirized or lampooned by the junior wife or other senior wife within the compound with a song like the one below.

48 11

[Image non convertie]

49 The render of the above song uses hyperbole as a literary device to throw abuse to the addressee in an indirect way. The ultimate aim of this is not really to cause trouble but it aims at modeling a cultured Yorùbá woman. She recognizes her need for a genuine connection between women, one that support her in her search for solace in time of need, and offers insight in time of confusion (Hudson-Weems 1998).

50 In most cases, depending on the level of quarrel and misunderstanding between co-wives, they can go to the extent of using body defects (*èébú ara*) to abuse each other as seen in the following songs (nos 12, 13 & 15). This contradicts the observation of Fadipe (1970: 307-308) that anger is given very little overt expression or is expressed diplomatically in noncommittal sarcastic words whose literal meaning is the opposite of the true meaning of the speaker. Our observation coincides with that of Aronson (1980: 115-116) that when conflict is overt, Yorùbá externalize it by direct and indirect insult and resolve the issue by involving outsiders. Direct abuse by co-wives is seen in the songs below (no. 12), which is a reactionary song to number eleven above.

51 12

12. <i>Elénu bí òkò Hausa</i>	The one whose mouth is like Hausa spear
<i>Ta lẹ rí bá wí?</i>	Who are you abusing?
<i>Elénu bí òkò Hausa</i>	The one whose mouth is like Hausa spear
<i>Ta lẹ rí bá wí?</i>	Who are you abusing?
<i>Pandòrò láyà</i>	The one with Kigelia Africana on the chest
<i>Pandòrò láyà</i>	The one with Kigelia Africana on the chest
<i>Ó tún ẹ kókóşẹ nípàkọ</i>	She also have ankle cap at the cranium.
<i>Pandòrò láyà</i>	The one with Kigelia Africana on the chest.

52 When the junior wife is abused with the above song (no. 12) she also sings songs like the one below (no. 13) to attack the senior wife.

53 13

[Image non convertie]

54 It is true that certain words such as Hausa spear, kigelia Africana, locust beans, salt, sieve, cold, lips have various meanings on their own that are not derogatory. But it happens that "Beyond the generic associations of words with particular kinds of discourse, some words carry a particular social connotation which adds an emotional and moral dimension to their use" (Cruse 2002: 802). A word might be stigmatized and serve as a negative social marker in any context (Labov 1978).

55 Song number twelve is terribly demeaning and if not properly managed by the household heads such usually leads into serious fighting. This is one of the ills associated with polygyny among the Yorùbá. This tally with the observation of Aronson (1980) that polygyny has been linked to a number of problems and calamities. He proves further that if any misfortune befalls a child within the family, the jealousy of a co-wife may be suspected as the cause. At times, the co-wives can go to the extent of blackmailing

themselves of being witches, pointing accusing fingers on one another, hence leading to distortion of identity.

- 56 It is expected that the family heads, male (*Baálé*) and female (*Íyálé*) resolve conflicts among the housewives or between co-wives. It is true that the Africana Womanist respects and appreciates elders but if any of the co-wives perceives that either the male family head or the female family head is partial such woman reacts in verbal dialogue to show her resentment against the judgment made by the elders. Two of such songs are excerpted below. The first one (no. 14) is sung against the male household head (*Baálé*) while song number 15 is sung against female household head (*Íyálé*).

57 14

[Image non convertie]

58 15

[Image non convertie]

- 59 The two songs above clearly show that long time ago the Yorùbá women, regardless of finding themselves in a society that is patricentrically constructed, pressurize their ill feelings about various institutions and designs by their men in the society. Whenever there is outburst of hostility from any of the co-wives in a polygynous marriage it might involve outsiders together with the family heads to make a meaningful resolution. Resolving issues like this is usually made possible due to verbal dialogue of vituperative songs. At the same time, other housewives who consider a particular housewife as going too far in handling a matter can be satirized, especially when such housewife abused the family head; which is usually regarded as a taboo by the culture. An example of songs that could be used by the rest housewives to abuse a woman considered to be “notorious” is seen thus.

60 16

16. <i>Ẹ kú ewu ọmọ forí sọ pepẹ</i>	The person greeting baby's mother hit the lintel with her head
<i>Èdùmárè dọmọ náà sí fapá jóná</i>	The hand of the person saying “God will protect the child” get burnt
<i>Ìyá jẹ n gbọmọ wò ló bá retan ọmọ</i>	The person that said “mother, let me carry the baby” broke the thigh of the baby
<i>Ògẹgèlè tí wọn n pè ọ lo fẹ jẹ</i>	You are a proof of ostentatious woman that you are called
<i>Ìyàwó ọjọ kẹfà tí n bú baba ọkọ</i>	A six days' old wife who is abusing her father-in-law.

- 61 The Yorùbá people regard the issue of conflict beyond ordinary; it is at times attached to spiritual. Personal problems of different kinds are believed to be caused by the jealousy of enemies within the clan or household. In most cases, their identity might not be known except through divination, and solving such problems might involve preparation of certain traditional charms and or sacrifice. But, rivalry and jealousy among the co-wives are usually believed as the origin of such problems. To this end, everything is done beginning from the time of marriage to ward off all futuristic and anticipated problems that might arise from polygyny. For example, a particular song was recorded at the time of traditional engagement ceremony that is like an incantation against all perceived anticipated enemies of a new bride. The song goes thus:

62 17

[Image non convertie]

- 63 The above song is an outburst of emotional struggle arising from various experiences of Yorùbá women; that is the way some of them are treated either by their men or by the evil associated with polygyny. For example, in a research carried out by Aronson it was evidential that husbands disciplined their wives without the intervention of neighbors, unless the neighbors judged that the punishment exceeded the crime (Aronson 1980: 52). Hence, in order to negotiate their space in their marital home Yorùbá women result into verbal rendition of their wishes, and this sounds like a curse. And this can trigger physical violence because whatever one says matters to oneself and his or her listeners.
- 64 White (2006: 32) has succinctly puts it that:
- “Each of us is partly made by the world we inhabit, this means that our most private and personal and apparently independent choices, the roots of our imagination, may be corrupted by something wrong, or evil or demeaning, or trivializing in our world, which we have internalized [...] What we say, and what others say, matters enormously to all of us. It is a form of action.”
- 65 This portends that what we have regarded as verbal dialogue among the Yorùbá co-wives is nothing other than the way for them to negotiate their space in a culturally patriarchal society where polygyny pervades either in reality or in abstract. As earlier pointed out in this paper, the Yorùbá have high regard for the spoken word. The importance of spoken word in language use has even been noted by Adegbite (1993: 1) that, “The spoken word is believed to be enshrined with some hidden symbolic and inexplicable implications or importations the utterance of which can in itself produce the desired effect without the use of magical or medicinal preparations, objects or apparatuses”. Hence, the housewives that render the kind of song above (no. 17) speak the word of *àṣẹ* that is believed to infuse all things including the verbal art. This is nothing other than what Rowland (1994: 313) refers to when he says that, “there is also a category of *àṣẹ* known as *ohùn àfòṣẹ* whose literal translation is voicing *àṣẹ* and making it come to pass”. He concludes that such could be regarded as “invocations designed to operate at both the physical and spiritual levels of existence”. The Africana Womanist demonstrates a sense of spirituality, a belief in higher powers that transcend rational ideals, which is an ever-present part of African culture. And through this belief negotiation is made by verbal rendition of potent speech, otherwise called incantation.
- 66 Various experiences in the contemporary Yorùbá society shows that the issue of domestic violence as explicated in the housewives’ songs in the long 18th century is still present but taking a new dimension. It is obvious that polygyny is not so much common as it used to be among the Yorùbá but domestic violence is still visible. Even, in the highly remote villages and settlements the types of songs analyzed in this paper are still in operation due to the maintenance of the traditional kinship system. But in this case, those that involve in using verbal dialogue to vituperate are usually wives of husbands from the same descent or clan who live together in a single house or building, usually called family house. In her work, Hudson-Weems (2001) also remarked that she is aware of professional, competitive, and emotional violence among the black women. She then suggests that black women should pay much attention to nurturing sensibilities as to their ambition and that the consequences of fulfillment should be to discover that every woman is important.

Influence of Violence Songs on Yorùbá Households

67 It allows women to express their challenges of polygyny freely through songs as society does not encourage public resentment against polygyny in the pre-colonial, colonial and even during postcolonial era. However, in modern marriage, bigamy and adultery are *prima facie* for dissolution of marriage. In the past and at times up to the moment (in some rural areas), the housewives' violence songs reduce tendency to escalation of open violence and dangerous acts of jealousy such as kidnapping, murder, deforming through acid, use of poison, and etc; and this is very common today. Also, singing of violence songs by Yorùbá housewives exerts their (women) power of domination through covert cultural behaviors and attitudes. In polygyny among Yorùbá, a man is expected to treat his wives equally, but this is distant from reality in practice. Hence, wives compete to gain favors for their own children. The children of co-wives are raised together but they usually grow apart due to quarrels over possessions and inheritance. Although the Yorùbá housewives in the eighteenth century were not used to physical combat, yet, their verbal war is a legacy to the succeeding generations, which is yet to be abolished by modernism.

68 *

69 The main thrust of the paper is the control of matrimonial space and dominionship of Yorùbá polygynous households. This is of course a conflict, thus Yorùbá women do not want to engage in physical violence, rather they result to verbal violence, expressing and manifesting violence through genres and memories, which this work refers to as matrimonial or housewives' songs. Conflicts arise in polygyny in two directions. Firstly, the senior wife legitimatizing her space in contest with subsequent wives. Secondly, the junior wife wants to displace the senior wives. The two actresses confront three problems: society's ideology of matrimonial peace, the women's pride in motherhood; and the society ideology of compelling women to live within polygyny. To resolve these crises and create balance, polygynous women engage in verbal war relying in their media oratory and genre perfection, which Yorùbá regard as mostly women's attribute. Thus, in the class of these genres are matrimonial violence songs establishing action and reactions as recourse to violence in polygynous households.

70 There are physical, emotional and mental aspects to domestic violence. The most prevalent among the traditional Yorùbá housewives is emotional abuse; using various words to assault, demean and repudiate the person they attack. At times, this results into physical abuse and battery within the household. The mental form of domestic violence used to be limited in the traditional Yorùbá cultural milieu. The major cause or factor warranting domestic violence among the Yorùbá is polygyny; while other factors such as ego problem, infidelity and unfaithfulness also add to it. This is because their marriage contracts are well consolidated unlike the contemporary society where fundamental human rights have disintegrated the kinship ties, values and heritages. Hence, the co-wives songs are used to pursue, among others, the reordering of social perspectives, interpersonal relationships and gender power-relations in their society. Through verbalization of these songs each of them externalizes what should be the ideal for her. Women fight their daughter-in-law in order to support her son in a bid to fully secure her space (matriarchy) in her matrimonial home. It must be mentioned however that there are certain instances of performance of housewives songs when they concertedly

heightened sense of solidarity against all forms of oppressions and intimidation against their womanhood within a patriarchal constructed society.

- 71 In contemporary Yorùbá society, there are less women engaging in verbal assault because not many men engage in polygyny; basically due to urbanism, formal education and adherence to Christianity with monogamy as its precept. And these have given Yorùbá women some measure of freedom from the control of the extended family. This does not remove domestic violence from among Yorùbá, instead; it takes a new dimension. It has been noted in the course of our data collection that in many rural Yorùbá communities, women still engage in using verbal artistry to provoke strife. This indicates that there is need for more microscopic research on domestic violence in order to proffer solution to this socio-cultural monster.

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NOTES

2. The data collection was sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Bonn, Germany.

3. The Ifá text referred to, *Ôbàrà Méjì*, advocates monogamy-one man, one wife, as the ideal marriage structure. Inability to adhere to this marriage principle laid down by Ifá sequels to domestic violence among the co-wives of the same husband.

4. In Yorùbá society Èṣù is a deity believed to bring to pass the wishes of the people especially when uttered. Thus, he is regarded as an intermediary between God and other deities and human beings. To this end, Yorùbá people are cautious of their speeches so that they will not speak negative words about themselves and about others.

ABSTRACTS

Abstract

Violence is not limited to physical attack and battery. The power of words is so strong that its effect is limitless as it can penetrate both the physical and spiritual objects and spheres. Songs are used to show emotions or feelings about something, somebody or group of people. Marital affairs such as rivalry or jealousy among the co-wives (*Orogún*) and troubles of polygynous households are among the reasons for the production of some songs by the housewives among the Yorùbá people. Hence, the goal of this paper is to critically analyze the songs usually rendered by co-wives in polygynous households among the Yorùbá; using psychoanalysis and African womanism as theoretical framework. Such songs are used proverbially to pressurize wrong feelings about a particular incidence within the matrimonial home by the co-wives.

The analysis and interpretation of data benefit from a conceptual understanding gotten in the fieldwork through experiential participation and through in-depth interviews with purposively selected housewives. The existing works on Yorùbá oral literature serve as secondary data to supplement the primary data. The paper elucidates the representation of violence in co-wives verbal artistry and shows how verbal art is used as an instrument to cope with the scourge of polygyny within a patriarchal setting.

Abstract

La violence dans le dialogue. Les femmes yoruba en action. — La violence ne se limite pas aux attaques physiques et domestiques. Le pouvoir des mots est si fort que son effet est sans limite car il peut

pénétrer des objets à la fois physiques et spirituels. Les chansons sont utilisées pour montrer des émotions ou des sentiments à propos de quelque chose, de quelqu'un ou d'un groupe de personnes. Des affaires de famille, telles que la rivalité ou la jalousie entre les coépouses (*Orogún*) et des troubles de ménages polygames sont à l'origine de la création de certaines chansons par les ménagères au sein du peuple yoruba. Ainsi, l'objectif de cet article est d'analyser de façon critique les chansons rendues par les coépouses dans les ménages polygames chez les Yoruba, utilisant la psychanalyse et le féminisme africain comme structure théorique. Ces chansons sont utilisées notoirement pour faire pression sur les faux sentiments d'une incidence particulière au sein du domicile conjugal par les coépouses.

L'analyse et l'interprétation des données favorisent une compréhension conceptuelle obtenue dans le travail de terrain grâce à l'expérience et à travers des entretiens en profondeur avec des femmes au foyer bien choisies. Les travaux existants sur la littérature orale yoruba servent de données secondaires pour compléter les autres éléments. Ce texte met en lumière la représentation de la violence verbale chez les coépouses et montre comment l'art verbal est utilisé comme un instrument pour faire face au fléau de la polygamie dans un cadre patriarcal.

INDEX

Keywords: Yorùbá Women, Dialogue, Marriage, Polygyny, Songs, Violence

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