KIU Journal of Social Sciences Copyright©2019
Kampala International University ISSN: *2413-9580*; 5(3): 179–189

Women in the Realization of the Ideals in Yoruba Written Protest Plays

OLUFADEKEMI ADAGBADA
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria

Abstract. Patriarchy; that slanted aspect of culture, which accords the males superiority over the females, virtually since creation, continues to rear its ugly head in literary creativity despite the on-going global socio-cultural re-orientation concerning gender imbalance. Employing the Marxist and Womanist theories, this paper attempts to critically examine how women are involved and recognized in achieving the ideals sought for in Yorùbá written protest plays.

Keywords: Oppression, Friction, Females, Self-Other, Team-Work

1. Introduction

In many societies of the world, there are two basic classes of people if their status is viewed by their economic achievements. There is the rich and wealthy, whose class include the royals, the nobles and business moguls; the Bourgeois. They are the employers of labour, who determine the means and standard of living of their employees. There is also the class of the poor masses, who are the labourers, artisans or petty traders; the Proletariat. In-between these two basic classes, is yet another class. The people in this group are neither outright paupers nor very wealthy citizens. Their lot is however better than that of the down- trodden masses in the second class aforementioned. They can (easily) dare to struggle without much rejection, to the first class. More often than not, the union leaders and spokesmen among the poor masses are from this middle-class citizenry.

The employers of labour, in attempt to maximize profit and also limit the number of people in their class, tend to under-pay their employees and often make them work under very demeaning conditions. The employees on the other hand, knowing that their employers determine their social status, usually demand for improved working conditions and remuneration. Their aspiration is to move upward on the ladder of wealth and social recognition. These desires (from both sides), usually bring about friction between the two classes. This is more pronounced in developing countries of Asia and Africa, where advanced technology, economic equilibrium and political stability are yet to be (totally) achieved.

In the pursuit of improved working conditions, workers usually form trade unions and other pressure groups, as means of solidarity, to 'fight for their right' with their employers. Earlier than now, in Africa, it was only the males who seek employment for white collar jobs because the girl-child was not initially encouraged to get Western form of education. However, as the years rolled by, with the efforts of Christian missionaries, few parents began to allow their daughters to attend schools, colleges and universities. Today, the situation has greatly improved, for there abound many female lawyers, medical doctors, astute politicians, engineers, ministerial appointees, teachers and architects, to mention a few jobs, in private, governmental and non-profit organizations, in many African and Asian countries.

Consciously or otherwise, a creative literary artist reflects his/her society in any literary piece produced at any particular time. Such a work is either a propaganda to convince the people in a society about an ideology or certain issues, or it is a protest against certain things going on in the society, to which the artist wants to call the attention of his people and put across to them, the ideals which must be strived for. In Yoruba literary ventures, written protest plays (which women are yet to venture into) are very limited. In fact, since 1973 when the first one was written, no other one was published until thirty-six years after. Basically, the major reason for this is the socio-cultural belief of the Yoruba that one's economic status is pre-destined by the creator. Other reasons are the recency in the commitment of Yoruba language to written form and the low percentage of (literate) people in government and corporate organizations, until recently.

Despite the fact that in the immediate past and recent times, many African women have excelled in various fields, their portraits in most Yoruba written literary genres are still that of the 'weaker vessels', 'weaker sex', 'beings who are of lesser intelligence', who can not meaningfully contribute to the overall progress and stability of their society, but who are only useful in bed, in the kitchen, laundry and farms. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to critically examine how women are portrayed by Yoruba (male) protest playwrights, in the light of the struggles by workers and other citizens for better working and living conditions. The theoretical framework on which this study hinges is the Karl Marx theory as viewed by Eagleton (1996) to the effect that the ideas, values and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times can be found in their literary creativity, and the theory of Womanism as viewed by Clenora-Hudson-Weems (1993), Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) and Mary Kolawole (1997). Their ideology is that the family unit, which is the central core of the Yoruba sociology be protected, but that women's self-actualization be appreciated and that women should be given the right to contribute meaningfully to their society.

2. Synopses

2.1 Réré Rún (Havoc is wrecked)

Láwúwo (Wealth is burdensome), is the semi-literate leader of the workers union in Mògún town. At the on-set of the play, he is remanded in police custody as ordered by Onímògún, the king of Mògún, for daring to lead workers to revolt against the government. The workers are demanding for better working conditions, free health services, reduction in taxes and levies and having representation in the king's cabinet. To put an end to the workers' agitation, Onímògún and his chiefs blackmail Láwúwo, so as to make his fellow workers loose confidence in him. When the ploy appears not to be fast enough, they bribe Ìdòwú, one of the workers, to find a way by which Láwúwo's attention can be destracted. Ìdòwú the traitor, sends fraudsters to dupe Moréniké (Láwúwo's wife) of the money kept in her care by Láwúwo, intended to be returned to the union members. The money was raised by members of the worker’s union to employ a seasoned lawyer who can fight their course in the courts. Moréniké, in devastation, takes an overdose of analgesic and dies. Her death dements Láwúwo and he turns mad, thus becoming incapacitated to continue to lead the workers. Ìdòwú is thus imposed as the new leader over the devastated workers by Onímògún and his men.

2.2 Ayé Ye Wón Tán (Having become elevated)

Simisólá Osinyago is rigged among the other eligible princes of Ìpo town, by Basòrun, to become the king. This is in spite of the objection of the other kingmakers and the warnings of the official town-diviner. Prior to his ascension to the throne, Simisólá is known to be kind, open handed and concerned towards people. In his campaign manifesto, he promises to make living easier for the poor masses of the town. Immediately be becomes the king, Simisólá's behaviour changes. Aided and abetted by Queen Oyinade his wife, he reneges on his earlier promises to the people, especially the co-operative union and the association of market women. Simisólá joins hands with Basòrun and

some other chiefs to make the burdens of the people heavier. The king neither rejects nor attempt to put an end to Oyinadé's excesses of murder, blackmail and power usurp. To protest the various forms of oppression, the people of Ìpo revolt by recoursing to the use of traditional oath swearing and taking up arms against greedy Simisólá, Oyinadé and their cohorts, who are all subdued at the end of the play.

2.3 Iná Ràn (Ablaze)

Obodà, Ológèdè, Olóode, Olórógbó, Látúndé, Olóya, Orílé, Ojútáyé, Abà-Ode, Àkùfò, Ìkèrèkú and Gbémuyóná, are all villages in the same local government council. These villages are denied social amenities like good roads, maternity and health centre. The absence of these infrastructures and amenities is causing daily lose of lives of the people in the community. Rather than find solutions to the problems, the District Officer increases the taxes and rates usually paid by the citizens, not minding the appeal made by the people's representatives, led by Aníséré. The people form a coalition of forces to protest their oppression and denigration in the hands of the government, by the use of guns, matchets, clubs and native charms. Many lives and properties are lost in the fight that ensues. Apart from the fact that Aníséré and his men use charms to open prison doors and release the in-mates, Aníséré's charms also protect him from being caught by policemen at the war front. The criminal investigation department of the Police Force sets Mopé, a female police officer, against Aníséré. Mope becomes Aníséré's latest 'wife' and she is able to cunningly dis-arm him, thereby hands him over to the police authority. Aníséré and his men's confrontation with the government however yields positive result, because their demands are met. After mounting series of pressure on the government, Aníséré is freed.

3. Female Portraits

Drama is that branch of literature which implies the imitation of an action or persons. Its ultimate objective is to "entertain or edify" (Ola Rotimi in Adágbádá (2005). It can also be used apart from the aforementioned purposes, to protest against certain issues going on in a society, so that the governing arm of the citizenry and/or concerned persons can look in the direction of the raised issue(s), and take necessary actions.

In the history of visual drama during the earliest times, men were known to dominate the cast of characters when acting. Feminine roles in the Shakespearean and Eégún Apidán (Yoruba itinerant masked dramatists) periods for instance, were acted by males costumed and made-up as females (Adagbada 2005: 3). That of Shakespearean era being sheer (secular) male chauvinism, while it was made so among the Eégún Apidán because the masquerade cult (used to propitiate the ancestors) under the aegis of which the masked dramatist had its source (Adedeji 1969 in Adagbada 2005) and continued to pay allegiance to, is religious and women are ordinarily never initiates.

Under patriarchy; a culture so slanted in such a way that males are given more recognition in almost all spheres of life, a woman has not much self-worth. She is only recognized as a man's daughter or wife, no matter her self-actualization. Her primary assignment among Africans, include producing babies, carrying out domestic chores, farming and warming her husband's bed. These she often has to do in competition with her co-wives. She is more often than not a retroactive participant, rather than a proactive actress, in matters going on generally in her community, worse still, in matters that affect her directly. Her ordeal in the hands of the male gender has been theorized along different rationale and through various perspectives. To the religious biased, God 'Himself' (a supposed male) ordained men's superiority over women, because 'He' made Eve out of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2: 23), pretending not to be aware that Genesis 1: 27 states that "male and female He created them".

Citing Simeon de Beavoir, Ruthven (1989:41) opines "alterity" as the fundamental reason for men seeing women as lesser beings and as such the subordinates, to themselves (the males), who are the superiors. The subordinate is viewed as, or made to feel apart from the whole, rather than part of it and as such oppressed and subjugated.

Referring to Engels, Adagbada (2005: 19) opines that the physiology of the woman is the primary cause of her oppression. To Engels, the inability of the woman to 'work' is the cause of her inferior status and that only public productivity, can liberate her. Today, the African woman has 'arrived'. She is an engineer, an academic, a lawyer, a medical practitioner, an architect, an industrialist, an astitute politician, a commissioner and a minister of state, yet there abound evidences of her marginalization, oppression and subjugation in many spheres of life. Some of these are politics, economy, religions, creative artistry and sociology (Adagbada, 2006).

Women, all over the world and especially in Africa, have never been totally passive creatures in their societies. In Yorubaland, despite male dominance and oppression, there had been some women who dared to be extra-ordinary where the traditional socio-acculturation of being contended with being in the shadows of the males had held sway. Some of such according to Awé (2001) were Efúnsetán Aníwúrà, the women leader of Ìbàdàn, Madam Tinubu of Lagos, Olúfunmíláyò Ransome-Kútì of Abéòkúta and Olániwún Àdùnní Olúwolé of Lagos. It is worthy to note however that those women who had not been publicly acclaimed as being daring and outspoken, had not all together kept mute about their situation, for the Yoruba believe that 'Àìlesòrò' ni ìpilèsè orí burúkú' (Taciturnity is the precursor of abject wretchedness). Ogundipe-Leslie (1994: 10) is of the opinion that African women had never been silent about their ordeals, if one cares to search for their voices "in women's spaces and modes such as in ceremonies and work songs..."

The last thirty-four years have witnessed all over the world, great interest in the contributory roles of women to their societies. According to Awe (2001: x), the United Nations World Conferences on Women (1975 - 1985), as well as other international women's movements generally, have provided a great stimulus towards the recognition of women, including women from Africa and Asia. Many conferences, seminars and workshops on the role of women in Nigeria were organized. Apart from this, many women have published female-centred write-ups. Among such women are Bólánlé Awé (2001) Nina Mba (1983) Laray Denzer (1998) and Tómi Adékanyè (in Awé 2001). Adagbada (2009) has also pointed out that the interest of various military administrations in Nigeria, for the promotion of female participation in governance, is significant. The military started the appointment of women to various policy-making bodies from 1976. In 1987, it started the Better Life Programme for Rural Women. This later developed to the present Ministry of Women Affairs.

Despite these developments, many Yoruba authors, auteurs[2], poets and playwrights continue to portray women in subordinate pictures. It is obvious that recognition of the female's self-actualization, which has being on the increase in Nigeria since the Beijing Conference, is yet to have substantial reflection in the creativity of Yorùbá literary artists. They continue to give women cliché roles in their works. In the plays under study, the percentage of female characters is very low if compared with that of the men, in texts written both before and after the remarkable universal awakened interest in issues that concern women. In Réré Rún, only 22.2% of the characters are females. It is 22.9% in Ayé Ye Wón Tán and a mere 8.3% in Iná Ràn. In reality, this is a great mis-representation of what obtains in real life. Women bear the greater burden of societal ills. They are the ones who bear the brunt of the ill-treatment meted out to their husband-workers by the employers of labour, wicked rulers and administrators. In Réré Rún, Láwúwo's wife Moréniké, is yet to be blessed with the fruit of the womb. She needs her husband's presence in bed, but she can not have it as regularly as it is necessary, because Láwúwo's paramount interest is the welfare of his fellow workers. The protest against the oppression of the workers which must be seen to a conclusive end, has taken the lead in Láwúwo's order of priority. He forgets that after menopause, a barren woman's hope is dashed. Wuraola, Lawuwo's aunt, is right therefore to have told him that:

...ohun tí àparò rí tó fi nrérin, ni olóko rí tó fi káwo lérí, tó nhu. Bí ìwo bá lè faramó ipò àgàn

tí e wà, ó dá o lójú pé inúu Moréniké yó sii... Bí kò bá bínú ojú re ló ńtì; èrín tó bá ń rín kì í se tokàn tokàn.

...that which the bush fowl finds amusing, is exactly what makes the farmer weep in desolation. If you are contented with your childlessness, are you sure Moréniké is happy about it... If she is not complaining, she is trying not to embarrass you, her laughter is surely a mirthless one.

Apart from this, it is Moréniké that Láwúwo's enemies eliminate, to spite Láwúwo and thereby distract his attention from pursuing his protest against the government in power. Moréniké's death is an irreparable loss, but Láwúwo's mental illness can be healed and thereafter he may re-marry and have children.

In another instance, the result of the deprivation of social amenities experienced by the coalition villages in Iná Ràn, is felt directly by the women in the villages than the men. Àyòká for example has to bear the brunt of Bánkólé's (her husband) death. Bánkólé falls from a kolanut tree in his farm and eventually dies, as there is no hospital in the village. The roads to hospitals in far away towns are so bad that only few lorries dare to ply them on rotational market days. Àyòká thus becomes a widow and single parent. She laments:
... Gbogbo ìmòràn àjogbà wa?...
Erù èèyàn méjì, ó di tèmi nìkan soso.

...All our plans?... I now have to bear the burden meant for two people.

Despite the fact that women too go through sufferings as a result government's neglect of its responsibilities, no single woman is among the representatives sent to the District Officer in the Local Council Office, not even Àyòká the widow. Aníséré and Àjàlá Onígàmbàrí are the two people who go to see the officer. They tell him:
A kò fìgbà kan jáfárá ojúse wa. Àtowó orí, àtowó-ilé pèlú owó ìso ojà pátá; gbogbo e la ń san àti àwon ìyàwó wa pèlú.

We have not for once shirk our responsibilities. Both taxes and levies, including stalls rentage; we pay all, and our wives do too.

This initial visit is embarked upon by the two men, just to register their displeasure with the governmental agencies, they have no weapon upon them. As such, there is no feat they have gone to perform there, that a woman may not be 'physically' capable of accomplishing. Again, there is no female member in Bínúkonú (Unity) Society in the play. The men do not even bother to invite women to be at least bye members of the ad-hoc committee, during the emergency meeting held in Òbodà village.
The same thing obtains in Ayé Ye Wón Tán. In Act V: Scene 1, the members of the co-operative society are having a secret meeting. In the introduction of the scene, the playwright says:
Ní ìpàdé kòrò, àwon egbé Àjùmòse. Yàrá kékeré kan. Fásakin, Òbí, Béélò Sítù, asojú obìnrin méjì àti okùnrin méta mìíràn...

During a secret meeting of the co-operative society. One small room. Fásakin, Òbí, Béélò Sítù, two female representatives and three other men...

In the dialogue that ensues among them, the names of the men are mentioned, but not that of their female counterparts. If a woman is daring enough to join fellow comrades in a secret meeting, (during which there could be attacks from the opposing party), the only reason why her identity is (intentionally) concealed is likely to be that praise and honour may not be given (equally) to all who are due for them, after their ideal has been realized.

Ojú-ojà (the market square)[3] is basically a place set aside for commercial transactions (mainly buying and selling) among the Yoruba. It is the nerve-centre of any Yoruba town. This is where different kinds of goods and wares like food stuff, clothings, farm implements and house-hold utensils are sold. Some markets operate daily in daylight, while some others do so late into the evenings (ojà-alé). There are also periodic markets, usually of five (orún), nine (isán) or seventeen (ìtàdógún) days cycle (see Ogundeji 2006). While the market is an open

place for anyone to buy or sell, (Yorùbá) women are known to be in larger number in a market than men. The basic reason being that while both men and women farm in the Yorùbá agrarian society, it is the wives, sisters, daughters and other female relations of a man, who usually take what is left after subsistence consumption, and those that are intentionally planted as cash crops, to markets far and near for sales (Adagbada 2005: 35 - 36). It is young men who are yet to marry, recent widowers and few men whose primary source of income is trading, that form the bulk of males in a market square, ordinarily.[4] Apart from these, it is usually the women who shop for the home.

The above being as it is, in Act 3; Scene 2 of Iná Ràn, a man, Fóyánmu, rushes into the middle of Ojútáyé market, to alert people that policemen are attacking and arresting innocent citizens in the town. In this scene, no single woman is involved in the dialogues between Fóyánmu, Ògúndélé and Aníséré. The market-women are made mere by-standers, who are not by any means worthy of being mentioned. After Fóyánmu's narration of how the District Officer tricked the representatives from the various villages to a meeting and afterwards called on waiting policemen to descend on them with clubs and guns, Ògúndélé and Aníséré tell the women:

Ogundele: Èyin obìnrin, e palè ojà a yín mó.
Women, gather all your wares together.

Aníséré: E palèmó. E korí sílé. E so fún oko yín
gbogbo kí won múra kíá. . .

Pack your wares. Go home. Tell your husbands that they must all quickly get ready…

The position and chieftaincy title of Ìyálójà (the leader of market women) is that which undebatably belongs to a woman. There is usually one of such in every market in Yorubaland. This playwright decided not to include such character in his play, believing that the theme is on warfare, wherein women may not be useful.

In the war that ensues in 'Iná Ràn, many lives and properties are lost on both sides. This could have been prevented, or at least minimized, if women were allowed to lend their voices while the revolt was being planned. Traditionally, Yorùbá women will only wield gun as a last resort. They have more civil ways of demonstrating their grievances and demanding for justice. These, however, usually have spiritual undertones. For instance, it is a taboo among the Yorùbá for a king to see women who are past childbearing age, go bare-chested (worse still if they tie black wrappers or the wrong side of their wrappers to their waist) and file pass the palace. It spells doom for the monarch. Recently, in Nigeria pregnant women are reported in the news to have demonstrated at the front of the office of Osun State Governor, in protest of unavailability of drugs in the hospital and the lack of good antenatal care. The Governor took an immediate action by ordering the State Health Board to supply the necessary drugs instantly.[7] The spiritual undertone of the female's sex and sexuality is not peculiar to the Yoruba female, but to all African females. For instance, when old women from Erei, in Biase local government area of Cross Rivers went bare-chested, bearing placards to the government house to protest the "disenfranchisement and illegal arrest of their sons", the Governor immediately made amendaments".[8]

In the plays under study, the lead actors are all males; Láwúwo in Réré Rún, Aníséérè in Iná Ràn and Simisólá the monarch in Aye Ye Won Tan. These men are all subdued at the end of the plays. Láwúwo becomes insane. Aníséérè is handed over to the police for trial and he is eventually sent to jail and Simisólá, caught in his own web, is led to the market square, to be judged like a commoner. As wont of a failed ruler or noble person, he will be banished from the throne/town and/or asked to commit suicide.

The three playwrights portray these men as macho men, who are not only strong, but intelligent, forthright and unassailable. They are only unnerved by the weakness and vices of women, who directly or otherwise are to be blamed for the men's actions and experiences. The theme of Ayé Ye Wón Tán for instance is specifically based on the 'negativity of women'

as viewed by most men in patriarchal societies. The playwright says in Àlàyé Díè (The Preface) of the text:

Esè Ifá kan nínú Odù Ògbéwèyìn ni ó gbin èso eré-onítàn yií sí mi lókàn. . .

I got the inspiration for this play from an Ifa Corpus[9] Ògbéwèyìn...

No wonder then that when the diviner is called upon in the play, to preview how the reign of Simisólá the king-elect is likely to be, the Ògbéwèyìn corpus is what is revealed thus:
Odù Ògbéwèyìn!
Báyé bá ye wón tán
Ìwà ìbàjé ni won hù
A díá fún Olúfimò Àkókó
Tí yóò faya rè morò. . .

The Ògbéwèyìn corpus !
When they become elevated
They usually behave badly
A divination was carried out for Olufimo of Akoko town
He that divulged the bull roarers' secret to his wife…

This particular corpus, like the whole two hundred and fifty-six that exist, out of which sixteen are the basic ones, has a story behind it. The story is that king Olufimo of Àkókó town, eons of years ago, who had a wife whom he loved greatly and was always willing to please. The Queen once asked Olufimo to initiate her with what goes on in the masquerade cult,[10] of which no woman must be privy. Initially the king refuses, but later, despite his diviners' warnings, he divulged the secret to the Queen when she continued to pester him. Having become privy to the masquerade cult, the Queen again asked to know what operates in the Orò[11] (bull roarer) cult, which again, no woman must ever know. Olufimo refused bluntly, but when the Queen would not let him be, he ordered that a perforated wooden box be made. He put the curious Queen inside it, and had it carried underneath his throne, to the groove of the cult. There, the cult members had difficulty with the expected response from the Orò. When inquiries were made, the secret came to be known. The king and his queen were killed instantly.

The playwright simply manifest/re-enact the story in the Ifá corpus in his text, blaming Simisólá's greed, unloyality and frivolities on his wife, Queen Adédùn. The home is the central-core of the sociology of the Yorùbá people, like other Africans. The husband is the head of the home, while his wife is his lieutenant; advising, assisting and informing him about family and general matters. She also, help to carry out his plans and wishes. Above all, she is the mother of his children; a role by which his manliness is proved. The following Yoruba maxims are attestations to the husband - wife relationship:
Oko lolórí aya
(The husband is the controller of the wife)
Obè tí baálé ilé kì í je, ìyàálé ilé kò gbodò sè é
(The wife must not prepare a soup which the husband
does not like)

Ohun tí okùnrin bá ní, ni í fi soko ìyàwó re
(No matter how much or little a man's possession is,
he is the head over his wife).

It is therefore not common for a Yorùbá woman to ordinarily take the total control of her husband the way Adédùn controls king Simisólá. Apart from the common husband- wife relationship, a king among the Yoruba is a sacred entity, hence he is referred to as 'Aláseèkejì òrìsà' (The commandant who is next to the gods). He is the source of authority in his domain. On installation, special magical powers are imparted on him as a means of reinforcing the attitude of awe towards him, by all his subjects. On his own part, a king must ensure peace, good health, prosperity and general welfare of his people. Apart from these, he conducts the foreign affairs, with the advice/counsel of his chiefs. He is also the head of council in judicial administration. As a result of all these, he commands the allegiance of his territorial and principal chiefs.

King Simisólá's inability to curb the excesses of his wife shows that he is not capable of his position. Charity, they say, begins from home.

No wonder he can not control Basòrun and Asípa his chiefs, who control him like a robot and play him around like a yoyo. This is a very big shame which brings readily to mind the Yoruba maxim that 'Àìjoyè ràrà, ó sàn ju enu mi kò kálùú' (Not being a king at all, is better-than being one who has no control over his domain). Adédùn is not a civil servant, yet she demands that Simisólá give orders so that she may be paid salary. Rather than order her not to ever make such ridiculous demands again, he jokes about it. No wonder then that Adédùn asks him to order the return of market stalls already allocated to traders in the town, so that she can sub-let them at higher prices. She also advices the king thus:
Gbogbo eni tó bá wa ní ipò olá kan, won a máa tètè yára kó nnkan díè jo. Nítorí pé, bí àyípadà kan bá lo dé... kín ni kí ó wá á máa je?... Olórun má jé kí á kábàámò o.

(Every person in noble positions, always strive to amass wealth. This is because if things turn around and they are no longer in the positions... What will they live on?... May God forbid our regretting (this position...)

The king immediately agrees to her suggestion, saying:

Hun.. .òótó lòrò re... Lóòótó ló ye ká jeun sínú dekú, ó ye ká pàjùbà sílè dòjò.

(Yeah... What you have said is right. It is true that one must feed well before death comes knocking, one must clear the farm before the onset of the raining season.)

This implies that Simisólá already has his own intentions; his wife's advice simply spurs him into actions. Moreover, his wife surely knows the evil genius he is, otherwise she will not suggest to him, things he is not likely to be in support of. The Yoruba people's belief that 'Ìtélè ìdí eni kìí ri ni í tì' (One is not a stranger to one's buttocks) drives home this point. This is evident in his reaction shortly after this dialogue with his wife.

Basòrun, Òní, Ajé and Oyinadé visit the palace to introduce Engineer Ìdòwú Ajé to the king, for the construction of the hotel for the Local Government Council. There, they also try to convince the king that it is more profitable for him to wave aside his earlier promise to the members of the co-operative society, of allocating to them the plot, for agricultural purpose. The king accepts the plan there and then, saying:
Mèkúnnù, mèkúnnù, èmi ni mo so eni kan di olòsì, ni? Àbí mo ní kí eni tó bá fé é là kó má là?

(Poor masses, poor masses, am I the one who has turned them to paupers? Or have I said whoever wants to become prosperous must not do so?)

Another instance in the text is when Adédùn sends hired killers to assassinate Prince Oláwépò. All the king says after what must be a pretentious surprise is:
Bó o bá fé se irú nnkan báyìí lójó mìíràn, máa gbàse lówó mi ná o ...

(Always seek my permission before you do this type of thing...)

When one of the assailants is said to have been apprehended, Adédùn becomes jittery, but king Simisólá; the devil incarnate, tells her:
...Má se bá eni kankan sòrò o. Fi gbogbo è sílè fún mi. N ó yanjú e. Sé o gbó o?

(... Do not discuss anything about this with anyone. Just leave everything for me. I will handle the situation. Do you hear?)

Òbí, a staunch member of the co-operative society opines that Simisólá is being influenced by his associates, but one female member and Fásakin the school principal who is also a member, are right in their own opinions that king Simisólá must have been pretending when soliciting for the people's support prior to his ascension to the throne; he is naturally wicked. Below is the conversation that highlights the opinions:
Obi: Agùtàn tó bá bájá rìn ni...
(A sheep that befriends a dog. . .)
Obinrin II: . . .yóò jègbé. Àmó eni tí a kó níkà tó gbà nkó. . . ?
(... will eat excreta. But whoever is taught wickedness and he behaves as such...?)

Obinrin I and Fasakin: . . .O ti níkà nínú télè ni.
(. . .he already had the intention of being wicked.)

In Réré Rún, all the attempts made by king Onímògún, Olúgbón and Arèsà his chiefs, to suppress the workers' protest led by Láwúwo prove abortive, prior to Morenike's death. Láwúwo is shown to be 'wise', strong and determined to pursue the fight to a conclusive end. Again here, only the "other"; the opposite gender, is used to surmount the 'macho' man. Onímògún and his cohort have earlier blackmailed Láwúwo by taking his photographs when they tricked him into their gathering. In a ruse, they give him wine to drink, point to a council flat for him to occupy and asked him to point to a car of his choice. The workers have already lost confidence in Láwúwo when they saw the pictures of his 'betrayal' pasted all over the town. Adéníyì, one of the workers accuses him thus:
.. .eni a ni k'o kínni léhìn ì bá má f'ègún sówó; eni a ní kó f'énilójú kò seun bó fata sénu. Irú ìgbékèlé wo là bá tún ní nínú nyín tí a ó fi fokàn tán nyín, léhìn tí e ngbéhin wa dálè lódò àwon ìjoba!

(... he whom we asked to scrub our backs has his palms filled with thorns; he whom we asked to blow specks from our eyes, fills his mouth with pepper. What type of confidence can we still have in you, after you have dashed our hopes before the government?)

But for socio-acculturation of most males in patriarchal (Yorùbá) society, this betrayal strand of the storyline is enough to pursue the fall of Láwúwo to a conclusive end. (if the playwright chooses to do so). Rather, he foregrounds Morenike□'s stupidity and naivety ("otherness" traits heaved on females to prove males' superiority) earlier in the play, by highlighting her low intelligence in taking an overdose of analgesic elixir, of which her 'wiser' husband warns her that is poisonous, if taken in excess of the required dosage. Later, her feeble mindedness leads her into committing suicide by taking an overdose of the same drug, when she is duped, 'as a result of her stupidity,' by swindlers set against Láwúwo by his enemies. Her resultant death is shown to be the only dastardly act by which Láwúwo's enemies are able to incapacitate him. He becomes insane and as such can not continue to lead the revolt against government.
In Iná Ràn, Aníséére, the leader of the coalition forces is also the brave warrior who has a lot of charms. As a result of this, policemen can not arrest him at the battlefield, in order to convict him for treason and felony. Again here, it is the 'treachery' of a woman that is used to surmount 'brave' Aníséére. Mopé, the female police detective becomes an addition to Aníséére's harem of wives. She tactically disarms her 'husband' in order to hand him over to her waiting colleagues. Aníséére is caught unawares and when he attempts to escape from the grips of the .officers, having known his gimmicks, Mope foils his plans by telling the police officers:
E mú-un dáadáa, e má jè kí ó fi èyìn ti ògiri. Ìhòhò ni e bó o jù sí. E bo òrùka owó rè. E ye gbogbo àpò è wò.

Hold him tight, do not let him rest his back against the wall. Remove all his clothes. Remove his (charmed) ring from his fingers. Check all his pockets.

Thus, Aníséére is tried and sentenced to imprisonment

4. Conclusion

The socio-acculturation, to which both sexes in patriarchal societies have been exposed from time immemorial, is the reason for the male gender muffling, denigrating and suppressing the female. Though there had been/continues to be resistance in many quarters, a large percentage of females, especially in times past, have been acculturate to believing that their ordeal is natural and ordained by God. As a result, the slanted aspect of male - female relationship in Yorùbá, nay, Africa culture, appears to have been untrammeled for many years. Males on the other hand too, have had it culturally embedded in their psyche, that the female is more or less a 'property' to be owned, trained/nursed, protected and shielded from

lending voices in almost all social matters and moreover, used for self-gratification and identity.

Despite the socio-cultural re-orientation concerning gender issues going on globally, most male Yoruba literary artists are yet to do away with their old “self-other" notion about the opposite gender, when in the spirit of advancement and development, they should see the female as an extension of themselves. We have attempted to critically analyse the portrayal of the female in how the ideals are pursed and realized in Yorùbá written plays themed on protest. Admitting that some issues or tasks are gender-specific, both sexes are usually at the receiving ends directly or otherwise, in the friction that more often than not ensues in the ruler-ruled and employee - employer relationships. Both should team up, using both their general and gender - related means, to realise the ideals. When this is achieved, the playwright, who has no other source of materials for his 'creative' works than the society, is bound to be 'naturally' disposed towards portraying the female gender in her real picture - a sex that inevitably contributes purposefully to the progress and development of the society as a whole, not only to her home.

Notes:

1. Yorùbá language did not appear in print until the nineteenth century.
2. 'Auteurs' are re-creative artists who adapt existing texts, especially for their popularity; for filmic purposes. (See Adagbada 2008)
3. Can also be referred to ordinarily as 'ojà' (market), but we have chosen ojú-ojà because ojà is also used to refer to wares meant for sale. The prefix 'ojù' here means 'open'. In essence, ojú-ojà means open space where buying and selling are done.
4. Except on festival days, war periods or when general rituals or sacrifices are to be performed by / for all the people.
5. The Dahomey (now Republic of Benin) Amazons of the colonial period are a good example to prove that if need be, women had carried guns and they can still do so.
6. See Fálétí (1970) Ogunniran (1977) and Isola (1970)
7. As reported in the Sunday Tribune Newspaper of 12th September, 2010 p. 41.
8. Aired on 2nd of September 2010 during the 7 o'clock news on Channels
Television, Nigeria.
9. Ifá corpus (odù) are coded spiritual signs, picked (spiritually) at random for divinatory purposes by the Yoruba diviner, when a client needs to take a major decision, or when the reason(s) for certain occurrence(s) are sought. It is the most consulted form of divination (among the Yorùbá) as a result of its reliability, (see Abimbola 1975; 1976) See Abimbola (1975).
10. Masquerade cult (Awo Egúngún) is the cult devoted to the worship of ancestral spirits.
11. The Orò cult; a taboo for female and un-initiated males to be privy of, is a mystical structure put in place several years ago by the Ògbóni society - a political which assists and directs the king on judicial matters. It used to serve as the instrument of execution of the decisions of the Ògbóni, as such, its use was more political than religious; that for which it is generally known today.

References

Abimbola, Wande (1975) Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa. UNESCO.

Abimbola, Wande (1976) Ifa Exposition of Ifa Literary Corpus. Glasgow: Collins Publishers.

Adagbada, Olufadekemi (2005) "Womenfolk in Yoruba Video Film Industry". PhD Thesis in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, University of Ibadan.

Adagbada, Olufadekemi (2006) "A Retrospect Towards Change: Proverbs in Gynocentric Yoruba Written Plays" in Journal of Philosophy and Culture. Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cape Coast, pp. 96 -120.

Adagbada, Olufadekemi (2008) "Yoruba Texts On The Screen" in Africa Through The Eye of the Video Camera. Academic Publishers. Swaziland: Matsapha pp. 183 - 197.

Adagbada, Olufadekemi (2009) "Ìsàtúnse Ìwà Efúnsetán Aníwúrà Nínú Fíìmù Akínwùmí Ìsòlá" in Àsà, Èrò àti Èdè

Nínú Is Onà Aláwòmo-Lítírésò Akínwùmí Ìsòlá (ed) Adélékè Dúró. Ibadan: DB Martoy Books, pp. 329 - 342.

Adedeji, J.A. (1969) "The Alarinjo Theatre: Study of a Yoruba Theatrical Art Form its Earliest Beginnings to the Present Times", Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Awe, Bolanle (2001) Nigerian Women: A Historical Perspective (ed) Awe Bolanle. Ibadan: Bookcraft Ltd.

Denzer, La Ray (1998) The Iyalode Ibadan Politics and Society (1850 - 1977). A Publication of the Humanities Research.

Eagleton, Terry (1996) Literary Theory: An Introduction (2nd Edition) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Faleti, Adebayo (1970) Basorun Gáà. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Publisher.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora (1993) Africana Womanism. Troy: Mich Bedford Publishers.

Isola, Akinwumi (2009) Ayé Ye Wón Tán. Ibadan: DB Martoy.

Isola, Akinwumi (1970) Efúnsetán Aníwúrà Ìyálóde Ìbàdàn. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Publishers.

Kolawole, Mary M. (1997) Womanism and African Consciousness. New York: Africa World Press.

Mba, Nina (1982) Nigerian Women Mobilized. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ogundeji, P.A. (2006) "Ojú ojà: A Socio-commercial Portrait of the Traditional Market-

Place in Yoruba Plays" in Yoruba: Journal of the Yoruba Studies Association of Nigeria. University of Ibadan. pp. 1 - 14.

Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (1994) Re-Creating Ourselves: Africana Women and Critical Transformation. Trenton: N.J. Africa World Press.

Ogunniran Lawuyi (1977) Àáre Àgò Aríkúyerí. Ibadan: Macmillan Publishers.

Okediji, Ọladejo (1973) Réré Rún. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press and Publishers.

Ọlateju, Sola (2009) Iná Ràn. Ibadan: DB Martoy Publishers.

Ruthven, K.K. (1989) Feminist Literary Theory. London: Cambridge University Press.

Sunday Tribune, September 12th, 2010. Ibadan: African Newspaper of Nigeria Plc. p. 41.