



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

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Abstract

This paper examines the perspectives of some male poets on women, specifically their portrayal of women in their works. According to the dictates of Yoruba culture, the Yoruba society exercises undue suppressive influences on the female folks for sinister reasons by men, all in the name of culture and traditions as presented in the works of some male poets who often ascribe negative stereotypes to women, presenting a biased picture of womanhood and neglecting aspects of their unique contributions to the development of the home front and society at large. Findings revealed that the Yoruba culture, as depicted in some of their proverbs, does not help matters as they portray women as voiceless and frail extensions of humanity, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, structural barriers, gender bias, and societal norms. It also reveals that women, through their written works, have proven that they are not secondary citizens to their male counterparts, but rather the backbone of society. Based on the above, it was concluded that in recent times, some male writers have altered their narratives in portraying African women in their writings. Much is still expected to project a good image of women in the face of society and national development. Cultural feminism, relevant to the topic, is adopted. The paper suggests that male poets should use their work of art to correct the negative images of women in African society, Yoruba in particular, and bring to the fore the core value of women and their uniqueness in societal development.

Keywords: African Women, cultural Feminism , poetes, Tradition, Yoruba culture

Introduction

The African literary status has long been dominated by male writers whose works have, in most cases, presented women in a negative light, leading to a charge of male chauvinism. This is obvious in the African settings where women are portrayed in a stereotyped manner, and see the kitchen as the sole territory that women are voted to govern by divine ordination. African literature tends to reflect the interests of male members of the African intelligentsia. The Yoruba societies do not help matters as they portray women as voiceless and frail extensions of humanity. This is reflected in most of their proverbs, where women are portrayed negatively. This view is echoed by Mentuye (1990), who says: In Yorùbá tradition, proverbs are largely misogynistic. Directly or otherwise, they take women as their subjects, referring to their improper and evil behaviours, as the majority of their proverbs see women as the number one problem that men have. (p.399)



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

He says that some Yorùbá men are of the view that women are the obstacle to their progress. Mentuye, through his explanation, reveals the traditional perception of women as reflected in the proverbs below.

Eni tó da aṣò obìnrin bora, wèrèpè ló dà bora
The person who covers himself with a woman's cloth
covers himself with the tormentingly itching wèrèpè fruit.
Obìnrin kò ní gògògò
Women have no Adam's apple (i.e, women cannot keep a secret)
Bòbìnrin pé nílé ọkọ, àjẹ níí yà.
If a woman stays in her husband's house for too long,
She becomes a witch.
È má finú han fòbìnrin, abẹnu mímú bí abẹ
Don't confide in women, owners of the razor-sharp tongues.
Ta níí sòòsà lójú ọfọn-ọn, ta ló fẹẹ fọjú obìnrin mawo.
Who dares initiate mice, who dares initiate women into the cults?

These proverbs support Mentuye's view that most Yorùbá proverbs are derogatorily used to ridicule women. The unfavourable depiction of women by some Yoruba male writers was ignited by the traditional African societies' depiction of women as secondary citizens to their male counterparts. In Opefeyintimi's opinion (1997), when it comes to childbearing, women have special power that they equally use to dominate men. He says:

..... the majority of the causes of the death of men are traceable
to women. Natural human desire for sex and societal
demand for childbearing for the continuity of the human race
partly constitutes the fundamental factors why men
play into the whims and caprices of women.

From his view, women are the ones who kill men, and the special power created in them was used to control men in a bad manner. The pioneer African male writers reflected the patriarchal system in their works, where males extol supremacy and authority over females in all spheres of life; male education is usually taken more seriously compared to female education, thereby subjecting the female folk to always being followers while men hold leadership positions. In a patriarchal system, Simeon (1998) has this to say:

Patriarchal traditions are practices that make the woman subordinate to the man in such a way that she may not be able to make her choices the way she wants. These traditions are as diverse as the cultures and the religions of the world. In African practices like widowhood rites, laws of inheritance, religious taboos, and career restrictions, and so forth, have constituted the main reasons for female subjugation and oppression. (p. 17)

This observation is in line with the practices among the Yorùbá societies. For example, just like properties, women are inherited after the demise of their husbands. Some roles cannot be assigned to women, and there are positions that women should not occupy. This patriarchal system does not allow women to take leadership roles. In the past, some women have taken brave and prominent roles in society, such as Mòremí of Ilé-ifè, who faced the people fighting her community and taking them as slaves, Èfúnróyè Tinúbú, and Èfúnšetán, the women leader



of Ibadan, despite their specific roles, support, and bravery, the traditional African societies still see them as inferior to their male counterparts. Contrary to the traditional beliefs about women, in this contemporary society, there are some women who are valuable in terms of thoughts and ideas and who have succeeded in contributing tremendously to the economy and political development of our nation. For instance, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala is the Director General of the World Trade Organisation, and a host of other women who hold important positions in their fields. Despite all these, however, some male poets painted a good image of women. They view women's role as supportive to the development of the home and society. Ilesanmi (1992:88) views women as strong and indispensable in society. He says:

They possess higher psychological, metaphysical, and
even material powers. Their beauty is power; their
Comportment can unbalance the seeming fixity of man;
Their menstrual phenomena can nullify the medicinal
power of men; their feelings may be more effective than
The reasoning of men; their love can melt a rock, and their
Hatred can obliterate a nation.

From Ilesanmi's point of view, women are naturally loving and endowed with a special power that they may not be aware of. Women take an active part in the development and progress of the family. Stanley (1994:10) supports this when he says: *Within households, black women perform a significant portion of the social reproductive labour. The socialisation of children and the cleaning, cooking, and nurturing functions are disproportionately black women's work.*

The quotation above reveals that women take active roles when it comes to providing care for the children, cleaning the house, and contributing to the development of the family. Their role can not be overemphasised. Okediji (1988:116) also has this to say on women's supportive roles to society:

Without the woman, there is no Yorùbá culture...the
mere existence of the woman as an assistant at work,
providing the meals, rearing children, and satisfying
That basic human need for companionship is quite
remarkable, women contribute to the community life...

This means that women have a unique position they take when it comes to the development of the home and society. It is against this backdrop that this paper, employing the cultural feminism approach, examines both the negative and positive images of women as depicted by some Yorùba male poets, with a view to exposing how women are changing their status through their poetry.

Theoretical Framework

Feminism is derived from the Latin word 'Femina', which has to do with everything that concerns women. To Ogini (1996:11), feminism can be viewed from two perspectives: first,



from the ideological perspectives that both male and female should be treated equally in society, and second, from the perspective of Women's Liberation or Women's Rights Movement. Feminism has its origin in the struggle for women's rights when women became conscious of their oppression and marginalisation, and took steps to redress this oppression. It began in Europe and America in the late eighteenth century. Foremost African woman critic and theorist, Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:3), through the Social Transformation Including Women of Africa (STIWA), posits that Africa as a whole needs transformation, which is about creating an enabling environment in the society, where men and respected women can play collaborative roles. Sotunsa (2008:4) states that there is diversity of feminism, which arises as a result of differences in the methodologies, concepts, and practices of feminism. Cultural feminism, as one of the varieties of feminism, will be adopted in this paper because the Yorùba poetry is a reflection of the African societies, irrespective of the manner in which it portrays women. The aim of the cultural feminism theorist is that women are to be respected and accorded due respect in society. Spencer (2002:50) defines cultural feminism thus:

Cultural feminism is a variety of the theory of feminism and is a reaction to male assumptions about the rating of women according to social, religious, cultural, political, and ideological norms. Cultural feminism insists that women's responsibilities of nurturing, caring, and sensitivity to others Needs should never be downplayed but rather highlighted because of their valuable contributions to every society.

Again, one of the theorists of cultural feminism, Tong (1989), emphasises that their concern is that women should be valued and appreciated for their contributions to society. He says:

Cultural feminism comments on the positive aspects of what is seen as the female character or feminine personality. It is a theory that attempts to revalidate what cultural Feminists consider undervalued female attributes. (p.49)

From the explanation of the theory above, it is pertinent to note that the Yorùbá and African societies at large failed to respect the fundamental rights of women in socio-cultural, religious, and political settings. Moreover, the Yorùbá culture takes cognisance of language usage; most importantly, some proverbs are meant to ridicule women, though they have been in existence for a long time. Using such pejorative proverbs on women is unpalatable. We have observed the tendency of male poets to paint a negative image of women in their works.

Negative portrayal of women by male poets

Females are portrayed as being of lesser importance and valueless in the family and society, in the poem *Ayé Obinrin*, where Omolasoye compares women to rats and dogs, as they are only responsible to men who can feed them. This is revealed below:

Èkúté ilé lè mí fi wón wé,



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

A jeni-feni lèkúté ilé,
Ajá ni wọn,
Olóúnjẹ ni wọn ní bá lọ,
Bó bá di pẹkọ ò sí mó,
Ajá á sùre padà séyìn,
Ọrò obìnrin ni nńkan
Nńkan lẹrẹ atẹyìntò,
Ọbẹ tó jinná làwọn ní fẹ,
kájọ dáná ẹran,
Kì í ẹrọ ohun tí wọn fẹ ẹ ẹ (Omolasoye, 2011, p. 40)

I compare them with the house rat,
The house rat is deceitful
They are dogs
They followed the one with food
Whenever there's no food
The dog will run backwards
That is a woman's issue
The one that urinates from behind is something else,
They are after an already-made soup
To prepare the meat,
Is not what they want to do.

From the above, the poet sees women as someone whose submission and love to men is based on the man's ability to provide her daily needs. This notion is to ridicule women, as it is a fact that women are not lazy and not all are dependent. Despite the numerous responsibilities shouldered by women in the family, Fakunle, in his poem, *Ìwẹlẹ*, says:

Abo sọra wọn dohun ẹlẹgẹ
Wọn ní gbáyé ẹ bí wọn tí fẹ
Ìwà àbùkù kún ọwọ iwẹlẹ
Bí wọn bá burú tán
Ayé á ní ẹbí abo ni!
Bí wọn bá huwà ikà tán
Ayé a ní ẹ bí iwẹlẹ ni



.....

Ogbón obìnrin ò tó ǹnkan

Ètè àlùpàidà tí ǹ bẹ̀ lówó abo ñkó?

È wá w'obìnrin lójú u pópó (Fakunle, 2011, p.62)

The female gender turned into a weaker vessel

They live life as it pleases them

Females are full of evil character

When they have done evil

People will say they're mere women!

When they behaved badly

People will say they're women.

.....

A woman's wisdom is minor.

What about a woman's cunning attitude

Come to the street and see the women.

In the African culture, the woman is sometimes portrayed as one who is cunning and has little or no wisdom. This notion is displayed by the poet when he portrays women as someone who is full of evil and has little wisdom. The above are ways some male poets reduce women in a world that seems to be dominated and controlled by men. He goes further to say that when a woman holds a position of authority in her workplace, she becomes arrogant to the men under them; as seen in the excerpt below:

Bábo bá jólórí ilé iṣé

Akọ wọ̀n á gontíọ̀ lóri akọ̀

Abo ẹ̀ ẹ̀ pèlẹ̀, gàágàá yín pò (Fakunle, 2011, p.63)

If a female is the head of an office

Their domineering is much upon the male

Female, be careful, your dominance is much

The African woman is seen as a subordinate in every aspect of life in an African setting, but when it happens that the woman is the head in an office or organisation, the men under them always complain that they are not being respected. This view is reflected in the lines above, where the poet shows that he is not in support of women being the head in a workplace because of the authority they exercise over the men under them. Alade (2000) observes that the patriarchal system is meant to trample women; he says:

Women are seen as weak vessels in Yorùbá culture. They are



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

regarded as second-class citizens and not recognised as important in political, religious, and legal matters, and is generally seen as subordinate to men... (p.2)

From the above, it is established that in the African culture, women were dominated and their role was downplayed in society.

The notion among some Yoruba male poets, that females are not reliable, cannot keep secret, are explosive and insensitive, is seen in Ayé Obinrin where the poet describes women thus:

Igi wọn ò ẹ́ é fẹ̀yìntì,
Torí pé wọn ò ní gbò-ń-gbò,
Òrò obinrin ò lẹ̀pòn-òn,
Ó tọ́ ká mú wọn bí àwọn iyàngbò ni,
Afẹ́fẹ́ bínńtí ní í gbé wọn lọ,
Èdá tó rí wọn tí ò sá,
Ó ń kọ̀ lẹ̀tà s'ábùkù,
Ata ni wọn,
Títa ní wọn ọ̀n tani lójú,
Obinrin ò sì máa fiwà ẹ̀tàn kó ni sí wàhálà.
.....
Èni ó fábo ní kọ̀kọ̀ró awo
Tó sọ kọ̀kọ̀ró sígba-n-gba
Obinrin fọ̀gbón ẹ̀wẹ́ ná ọ̀ lówó tán
Ó gbọ̀nà ẹ̀tàn, o sọ ọ̀ dì lẹ̀lẹ̀
Ìlẹ́rí asán lo kọ̀kàn lé (Omolasoye, 2011, p.41)
You can not rely on them
Because they can not keep a secret
Women's issues need not be respected
It is better to take them as the maize cobs
They're driven by a little wave
Whoever sees them and does not run
Such is an inviting insult
They're pepper,
They can harm your eyes



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

Women can put you in trouble with their deceit

.....

Whoever keeps the initiate key with the woman,

She throws the key outside

A woman trickily spends your money

With a trick, she ruins you

You rely on fake promises.

The nauseating manner in which the poet portrays women from above is part of the feminist theorists' campaign to put a stop to the negative and derogatory portrayal of women. This prompted Hooks (1984) to say that: 'Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression'. (p.24)

In *Òyèkú méjì*, Abimbola portrays women as those who are not truthful and trustworthy. This is shown in the lines below:

Obìnrin lèké

Obìnrin lòdàlè

Kéyàn mọ́ finú han obìnrin (Abimbola, 1975, p.33)

The woman is a liar

A woman is treacherous

Let no one keep a secret from a woman.

Despite all these, however, the negative portrayal of women by the poets above is that of a timid and subservient feminine gender whose sole role should be cooking. It is a known fact that African women are the pillar of support to their families and society. Despite all the negative images painted of women in the works of the above-mentioned poets, some male poets presented women positively in their works.

Positive portrayal of women by male poets

It is interesting to note that some noble male poets portray women positively and pleasingly in their works. Raji (2004) posits that: Women are indispensable; it is when you have an outing that you know the importance of clothes, when it comes to celebration, merriments, cooking, count on women. If the vulture refused the sacrifice, it would have stayed longer outside. (p.4)

Rotimi (2000) also supports Raji's view when he says that women's role cannot be underestimated in Yorùbá society:

From time immemorial, Yorùbá has placed women in high esteem. They respect them, they pamper them, and they place them in the Rightful position. At home, in the religious circle, in politics, no man can underrate a woman, except for the man who wants to eat his pounded yam as mere yam without pounding it. It is women who make society



delightful; they are the ones who add to society. Whoever wants to know how a town without a woman used to be should visit the non-existent women's community. (p.33)

From the above, it is noteworthy that some elements of Yorùbá culture depict some kind of regard for women despite how they are being portrayed in some of their proverbs. From the foregoing, we shall look at the positive images of some male poets. In *Òkan-òókù Obinri*, Raji describes the beauty and loving nature that God bestowed on women thus:

Ká má puró;

Èran ifẹràn n bẹ fòbinrin;

Ara ọkùnrin a sù gàn-in

Èrù a sì máa yọ wọn bà láìjẹ gbèsè

Torí ẹwà t'Ọlórún fún wọn ni

Adára-máa-dán tí gbogbo ayé n wò bi dínjí

Lékélèké lobinrin;

Èyẹ tí ò fọşẹ wẹrí tó fi n funfun

Ọkín ni wọn

Àwọn ní í şólójà lówùjọ ẹyẹ (Raji, 2004, p.1)

To be truthful;

Women are endowed with a loving nature;

Men are emotionally turned on

They sometimes feel jittery without owing anyone.

Because of the beauty God bestowed on women

The beautiful one who's admired by everyone

They're the egret bird

The bird that is ever white without bathing

They're like peacocks

They're the special breed among the birds.

The poet eulogizes the beauty that God gave to the woman by comparing them to the egret bird that is ever white without bathing, and their special feature is compared to that of the peacock. Another male poet who portrays women in a positive image is Olurankinşẹ. In *Ayé n dayé Obinrin*, he says that women are capable of holding any sensitive position and that they always excel in whatever they put their mind to. This is said in the following lines:

Obinrin ti jọba ilú rí,

Wọn wí i fún mi gbó;



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

Obinrin ti gbé odidi Orílẹ̀-èdè ka àyà rí,
Ojú àwa ìşín yìí nàà ló kúkú şe. (Olurankişe 2004, p.33)
A woman has ruled a town before,
I was told;
A woman has ruled a country as well,
It was during our youthful period.

The poet did not follow the stereotyped manner in which other male poets portrayed women, but he acknowledged the successes and achievements made by women in society, as seen above. He goes further to say:

N kò jé sẹ ẹ rará
N kò jé bènìyàn jiyàn-an rẹ
Pé bí ọkùnrin
Tó ju ọkùnrin lọ ti í bẹ,
Bẹẹ gégé lobìnrin míràn wà
Obìnrin bí ọkùnrin,
Obìnrin tó ju obìnrin ẹgbé rẹ lọ
Àwọn ní í şe adájó,
Tí wọn kì í gba àbẹ-şájú
Tí wọn ní mú ọbàyéjé ènìyàn
Tí wọn kì í bá wọn wo ẹyìn
Irú wọn ní íşe iyálé,
Tí í to ilé ara wọn dáadáda
I can never disprove it
I can never argue it with anyone
That, as there are men
Those are stronger than others
The same applies to women
Women like men
A woman who is stronger than her mates
They were the judges,
They do not agree to secret pleading before judgment
They arrest the evil ones



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

They do not join in evil dealings

Their types are good mothers

They put their homes in order (p. 38-39)

Even though women were underrepresented in leadership and political positions, the male poets above appreciate the efforts and contributions of women in society. Women hold supportive roles in the Yorùbá society. Over the years, women have tried to break the perception that the kitchen is the sole territory that they are assigned to govern by divine ordination and not to remain as political pawns. African women, through their written works, have proved that they are not secondary citizens to their male counterparts, as will be revealed in the works of two female poets.

Arinpe Adejumo, a female poet and the author of the compilation of poems titled *Rò òo re*. In one of her poems titled *Alábòódó*, she posits that women are the protectors of the family, even though society did not see it that way. She pointed out the efforts of women on their children, right from pregnancy to delivery, and their support to their husbands in seeing that the man appears presentable outside. She commends women for their role in raising their children to be responsible adults, as shown in the following lines:

Bòmòdé bá máa wí
Wòn a lóbìnrin wẹ̀
Bágbà mí a fọ̀
Wòn a lóbìnrin ò tó pọ̀n
.....
È bá réyìn wò woşé iyá
È bá woşé iyá lóri ọmọ
Ìyá ló rẹ̀rù oyún fún oşù mèsàn-án
Bó DOJÓ ikúnlẹ̀ ọ̀pọ̀ ọ̀kọ a mórí légbó
Ní tita, ní ríro iyá a kúnlẹ̀
Ó kúnlẹ̀, ó bímọ sáyé tán
Işẹ̀ tún wá peléke sí i
Níbi baba tí n hanrun
Ìyá a máa şàisùn (Adejumo 2007, p.30)

When the younger ones talks,
He says Who is a woman
When the older talks too
They say women's issue is trivial

.....



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

You should look back to see your mother's efforts
And see the mother's support for their children
It's the mother who carried the pregnancy for nine months
On the day of delivery, some men will run for fear
In pain, in suffering, she gave birth
She went to labour, gave birth
Her work increases
When the father is snoring
The mother keeps vigil

From the above, the poet reveals some of the women's roles in the home and society. She goes further to reveal some of the risks and sacrifices mothers render to their children at the expense of their safety:

Mo ti riyá tó torí ọmọ tó ríkú he
Ìyá kan ìyà kàn níjósí
Lológun jù látorí pètẹ̀ẹ̀sì
Ìyá ọ̀hún ò kúkú jalè
Ikú ọmọ nìyá n kú lọ
Nijó ilé gbiná l'Ọ̀jòòò níjósí
Mo rí baba tó ta kété
Tó ta kété tó n wọmọ ẹ tí n jóná
Ibẹ nìyá ti kirí ọ́nà
Tó fẹ̀ ọ̀lùgbàlà ọmọ
Ìyá ọ̀hún kúkú ti gbàgbé ọ̀we
Pé bíná bá n jóni tó n jómọ ẹni
Tára ẹni làá kó gbọ̀n dànù (Adejumọ 2007, p.31)
I have seen mothers who died because of their children
One mother some time ago
Was thrown from the story building by military men
This mother was never a thief
She was suffering because of her child
When a house caught fire in Ọ̀jọ́ some time ago
I saw a father watching from a distance



He was at a distance, watching his child burn

There, the mother ran into the inferno

She wanted to save her child from burning

She has forgotten the adage

That says your safety is first before your child.

In “Alábòdòdò”, through the following lines of the poem, she also berates women who are dependent on their husbands for survival to be gainfully engaged and stop being economically dependent.

Òpò obìnrin n bẹ nílẹ̀ yìí

Tíṣẹ̀ẹ̀ òun iyà ti wò léwú

Irú wọn ní jòbẹ̀ tí ò lépo

Irú wọn a sì jòbẹ̀ tí ò níyò

Bòmọ̀ bá bèèrè kòbó

Wọn a ni dúnro de dádì

Bírú wọn rí pátá tó wuyì

Wọn a ní ẹ̀ kiri wá tí baba bá dé (Adejumo 2007, p.31)

There are some women in this land

That poverty matched like a cloth

Their types eat soup without oil

Their type eats soup without salt

Should their child cry for anything

They will say Wait till daddy returns

If they see beautiful pants to buy

They will say Come back when our husband is around

Also in “Ààrẹ̀”, the poet castigates men who do not want women to occupy leadership positions because of gender bias and societal norms. Apart from the quoted poems above, there are several others in her book *RÒ ÒÓ RE* where the poet talks about the contributions of women to society, and she also thanks God in *Orí Ló Dámi Lábo* for making her a woman. Adebowale Yemisi is another female poet who has contributed to making the voice of women heard through her literary works. In her book, the compilation of poems titled *Ìgbàlonígbàákà*, in one of the poems titled *Èkọ̀ Alẹ̀-Tì-Lẹ̀*, the poet praises women who, despite their busy schedule at home, attend adult education and strive to be educated so that they can contribute their quota to the development of their families and society. The lines below prove to be an encouragement to them to persevere to the end:

Èkọ̀ alẹ̀-tì-lẹ̀ ò lórúkọ̀ méjì



A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

Èkó ká fọkọ sílé jọmọ sílẹ

.....

Mo kí yín ẹ kú ipakítímọra

Ká pẹ láya ò pé ká má bímọ kankan;

.....

È múra, wàhálà èkọ àgbà fẹrẹẹ ditàn (Adebọwale 2003, p.51)

Adult education has no other name

It's an education where the husband and children are left at home

.....

I greet you for your endurance.

Late marriage does not mean you won't have children

Also in *Ohun Eḷẹgẹ Ni Àṣẹ*, the poet faults some males who use their authority to oppress their wives and any female who works under them. She goes further to say that whatever position anyone holds is for a period of time; hence, one should be cautious of how they treat those under them. This is revealed in the excerpt below:

Ògá, emi lo ń fèèkù idà tìẹ ẹ?

Èèkù idà t'Ólú fún ọ àìgbọdòmálò

Àmọ àṣẹ a bá fifẹ pa níí mórí ẹni yá

Ori Adé, orí ewu

Iṣẹ apàṣẹ, iṣẹ ẹlẹgẹ. (Adebọwale 2003, p.18)

Boss, how do you exercise your authority?

The leadership role given to you by God must be used

Exercising your authority with love makes the subject happy

A leadership position can be hazardous

To lead is risky

From the foregoing, it is interesting to note that it is not only women who are making conscious efforts to build a positive image for women, but also notable Yoruba male poets in Africa at large. Women are also working tirelessly to change the voiceless and frail images through which they are being portrayed in society. Abubakar (1997) supports this notion when he says: *The concentration of women in service jobs is noticeable. They are also represented in high-ranking Urban white collar jobs, such as court judges, Lawyers, Doctors, Ambassadors, Senators, and University teachers.* (p. 48)

Therefore, male poets need to appreciate their female counterparts, support them and should not see them as rivals but colleagues in the development of the nation, as quoted by Chukwuma



(1990) African Feminism is not a question of superiority or inferiority. It is a question of complementarity and recognition. (p.7)

Conclusion

The paper has examined the selected works of some Yoruba male poets on women by looking at the ways women are being portrayed, positively and negatively and how women are making concrete efforts in their contributions to the family and society. We have seen that some male poets are fond of painting the images of the female gender negatively, and even some Yorùbá proverbs portray women in an unpleasant and derogatory manner, such as betrayers, backbiters, ingrate, murderer, etc. It is interesting to note that such descriptions are changing as African women have shown that they are not only home managers but that they also excel in professions that have once been regarded as exclusively for men. The role of the female gender in any society cannot be underestimated; therefore, the paper suggests that more Yoruba male poets should use their work of art to promote the female gender in African society and ignore the old tradition that stipulates that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Also, women should be respected and accorded their fundamental Rights in socio-cultural, religious and political settings. Women should be allowed to aspire to any leadership position with the support of men so that they can equally contribute their quota to the development of their society. Women should be appreciated for their contribution to the development and growth of the family and society as well.

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A Feminist Analysis of some Selected Yoruba Proverbs and Poems

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