



Vol. 21, No. 1, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.14746/jpg.2024.21.1.3>

Azeez Akinwumi Sesan

Osun State University (Nigeria)

Rabiu Iyanda

Osun State University (Nigeria)

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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(*Rebellion*, 16–17)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(*Rebellion*, 75–76)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(*Rebellion*, 31)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Rebellion, 56–57)

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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