

Paper 14

Gender War and Emerging Trends in Intimate Partner Violence

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This is the fifth volume of AJOFARD. It is indeed a thing of joy to announce the arrival of this volume which is made up of contributions from seasoned scholar. It covers academic areas of French Teaching, Language and Linguistics, Literature, Civilization, Translation and General Interests.

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EMERGING TRENDS IN GENDER WAR AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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Abstract

African feminist literary texts most often document that patterns of intimate partner violence are as a result of socio-culturally imposed structuration in the hierarchy of the sexes, due to cultural determinisms. Hence, it is in most cases assumed that only women are victims of intimate male partner violence. There are growing concerns that men may just be as well victims of intimate female perpetrated violence. This research investigates roles of female body and sexuality in perpetrating violence against men for the purpose of subverting masculine power in two selected plays from Isaie Biton Koulibaly's anthology, *Encore les femmes ... toujours les femmes!* The concept of bodiliness is used to investigate the amount of power the female body is able to deploy in quest for female emancipation. The research finds that radical females in the selected short stories deploy powers resident in the body and non-normative sexuality practices to script a new trend of shift in the occurrence and performance of gender violence in intimate relationships. The subversion of hegemony and relegation of male characters is contingent upon the resoluteness of the female characters to use their bodies and sexuality as weapons to undo prescribed gender norms.

Keywords: *Female Body, Sexuality, Bodiliness, Female Violence against male, Gender power relations.*

Introduction

1.1 The concept of bodiliness in emerging trends in female perpetrated violence

This paper attempts to identify emerging trends in female perpetrated violence against male in intimate relationships in two selected short stories in Isaie Biton Koulibaly's anthology titled *Encore les femmes ... toujours les femmes!* The anthology contains seventeen short plays. For share practicality, two short stories titled "Quand la femme aide son mari" and "Le club des femmes" have been selected for analysis in this paper. Isaie Biton Koulibaly hails from Côte d'Ivoire. He is a renowned writer of short plays that are specifically targeted at the dynamics of gender power relations. He is also a reporter for a women's magazine published in Côte d'Ivoire, *Amina*. He has produced a number of other anthologies in which he portrays gender power relations.

Bodiliness is deployed to explore how other concepts apart from feminist and gender theories can be used in understanding the techniques female characters use in perpetrating violence against men in intimate relationships in a hegemonic context. In Foucault's theory of bio power, the body is conceived as a site of subjugation where he highlights how individuals are architects of their own oppression because of

their participation in habitual daily bodily practices ranging from self-regulation of hygiene, health and sexuality (Pylypa, 1998). Based on this, I argue that because the female characters in the plays do not subject themselves to hegemonic injunctions, they are able to reconstruct their own destinies. They refuse to self-regulate according to prescribed cultural norms but devise aggressive means of setting themselves free from cultural strictures to subvert patriarchy by laying more emphasis on and taking advantage of their sexuality.

Furthermore, this paper draws attention to the paradigm shift in women's strategy of subversion of male hegemony in the former's quest for liberation and transcendence. Women's lived experiences under androcentric conditions have caused a number of violent revolts as we see in feminist corpuses authored by both women and men. Mokwenye (2009) clearly expresses the view that African cultural practices are the springboard for women's oppression in Africa. As a consequence, some feminist writers, seeing African men as the enemy, have risen to condemn the former holding them responsible for African women's oppression (Olayinka, 2018). Other critics like Oyewumi (1997) claim that there is no gender distinction among the Yoruba of Nigeria. By implication, hierarchical organisation of the

Yoruba people is not based on gender. Therefore, men and women complement each other. The oppression and subjugation of African women came with the advent of colonialist intervention, intrusion and lack of consideration and understanding of African cultural practices, especially the cultural ideologies that underpin gender relations specific to African communities.

Perhaps, what one needs to further explore also as concerns intimate partner violence is the fact that emerging trends in literature on masculinist studies about men's identities and practices reveal that there are shifting cultural processes that construct men's lives (Segal, 2007). With respect to this, Segal (2007) puts an argument across based on psychoanalytic framings that demonstrate that men are becoming prone to fractured and precarious sense of their masculinity.

The concept of bodiliness is discussed in this paper to emphasise the view that human body is the site for the construction and performance of gender. Attempt is made to outline how female and male express their sexualities focusing on how the female body is made to bypass biological, cultural and sociological determinisms without shame or guilt. In "Le club des femmes" another dimension of subverting male power and dominance is demonstrated in how women combine violence with sexuality to bring men to their knees. The dimension the use of female bodiliness and body take to subvert male power takes a different turn. Female and male bodies appear and constitute meaning making in contemporary gender relations making the body the main site for the formation of social identities. Although African female bodies might have been defined as that made for domestic work, procreation, sex, physical labour (like the case of Adah in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, male bodies in Koulibaly's selected short stories smack of same because in the process of Koulibaly's female protagonists' quest to subjectivise themselves, they engage in negating and excluding men from the realms of power and finally repudiating them.

In the selected stories, female bodies constitute an embodiment that oscillates between pleasure, violence and oppression. The female bodies for the women are a tool for all nameable types of pleasure, akin to prostitution, as long as for them, the body is a means employed for attaining liberation. Prostitution in this regard may be seen as a conduct disorder in a society where having more than one sexual partner and

using one's body for monetary reward is frowned at. Ascribed with a multitude of conflicting cultural meanings, the prostitute's body is a carrier of good and evil, desire and repugnance, threat and pleasure (Trumble, 2004) but which might be metaphorically positively interpreted as the ultimate bearer of female emancipation. In the process of seeking liberation through the body, acts of violence, oppression and suppression are unleashed unto men. On the other hand, Koulibaly's men fail to live in the present, that is, they fail to recognize female attainment and appropriation of power against men, the latter still dwelling in the realm of supposed exaggerated power over women. Thus, women's bodies to them are assumed to be objects of possession for pleasure and subjugation.

The two short stories selected for analysis give me room to have two perspectives about gender sexuality and power relations. One of the perspectives is to ask for what Koulibaly is trying to achieve in terms of female emancipation. Is he trying to portray women in the traditional paradigm of female inferiority and condemnation for which Dobbie (2009) clearly identifies the different and negative nomenclatures and constructions with which Western philosophers and theologians have described women as "lesser beings", (Aristotle, Plato and Charles Darwin), ... "a foe to friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary evil" (John Chrysostom ca. AD 347-407), ... "All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman." (*Ecclesiasticus*, a book of the Biblical apocrypha), "the judgment of God upon your sex endures even today; and with it inevitably endures your position of criminal at the bar of justice. You are the gateway ... to the devil" (Tertullian ca. AD 160-320), ... "Most women have no character ... all" (Alexander Pope, 1688-1744), "The opinion I have of the generality of women - who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar plum than my time - forms a barrier against matrimony which I rejoice in" (John Keats, 1795-1821). Some women, in the likes of Madame de Staël (1766-1817) have also been found as accomplices in the position assumed by these 'world public figures' (Dobbie, 2009). The basis for my position here is that a symbolical interpretation of the title is capable of making one to see women as troublemakers and not to see women as subjects who are fighting for their emancipation from phallogocentric social, political, economic and cultural systems. In contrast to the notion that women are the troublemakers, I think it is apt here to cite Segal

(2007) in her attempt to parody Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan:

What is it that men want? If only they could tell us. If only they could communicate at all about their feelings. Throughout history we, who are women, have knocked our heads against the riddle, have been begging men on our knees, and still we cannot learn from them why they present to us such sinister contrasts—the baby and the bully, the rapist and the romantic, the hard and the soft, the terrifying and the ridiculous. Those of you who are men have escaped worrying about this problem—you are yourselves the problem (p. 50).

This parody by Segal (2007) hits the nail on the head to illustrate that women see men as the problem. An exploration of emerging trends of female violence against male in literary works equally proves that women see men as the problem and hence, seek to eliminate men in order to accede to emancipation. Sadly, the “othering of the African female is a typology of stereotyping such that in the early days, she downplays her own subjectification. This calls to mind a popular song that girls sang in my high school. This song completely obliterates female sexuality and the right for female to enjoy her sexuality. Below are the lyrics:

Vagina is a type of sore
Smelling like a rotten potato
Covered with a bush of hair
It's an everlasting sorrow.

An analysis of this song reveals that at a point in time, African girls who of course grow into women, themselves have imbibed cultural constraints to female sexuality. The song automatically obliterates whatever is related to female *jouissance de corps*. The song also lends credence to the fact that lives of African women have been influenced by imported cultures and denigrating mythical age-old beliefs that promote patriarchy and inequality between the two genders (Mbah, 2013). Olayinka (2018) submits that a number of traditional practices and processes in Africa: taboos, marriage, maternity, servitude, excision, infibulations, and virginity tests are major oppressive cultural mediation tools through which women are recreated and reformulated. The result of these prerequisite practices is that the African girl child is prepared to see herself as an object of male possession. Not only that, as a doomed creature whose sexuality is

proscribed. Through these practices, the female body is thus often branded as male property.

The second position that I want to assume is that of Koulibaly (n.d.) seeking to portray what the centuries long power imbalance between the sexes has made of women. That is the fact that women have taken their destinies in their own hands to resist all forms of social, cultural, political and economic exploitation by men. He, Koulibaly, has thus decided to overturn this imbalance of power in gender relations in favour of women. His women purely challenge traditional perceptions and stereotypes about woman and actively debunk the binary oppositions formulated by Levi Strauss and his counterparts. And in so doing he has created feminist protagonists who deploy their sexuality and body to resist all forms of subjugation and gender stereotyping that work against female personhood. He has therefore assumed the position of feminist writers' use of literature as a means of revealing and resisting patriarchal social order (Dobbie, 2009).

While some critics may adopt the first position of seeing women as fatalistic, I take an exception to this and assume the second position. To me, “female sexuality ... is becoming more and more an object to be interrogated, in a variety of domains – film, sociological, psychological and 'sexological studies’”. (Coward, 1980, p. 60).

1. **Bodiliness: the female power arena**

Bodiliness will be discussed here based on the trajectory of the lived embodied experience of the characters in the selected plays. The history of the body, according to Wolputte, (2004) is that of the notion of self, person and subject. To a great extent then, the body, the way it is used and for what it is used is a major determinant of who a person becomes and how the person is viewed. Body symbolism bears meaningful connotations of human social processes, cultural practices and power relations. In this sense, bodiliness must be considered as a medium of individual and social experience. According to Turner (2009) the physical body, is an entity that undergoes series of transformations entailing transformation of perspectives that are not all culturally inclined. The human is as a result not an abstract object with a fixed cultural human perspective. Part of these series of transformations that the human body undergoes is the experience of the liberation of the body in the present age from cultural determinism which is favoured and celebrated. This

phenomenon is observed across cultures from the North to the South and is mostly attributable to cultural intermingling from one society to the other.

Bodiliness as defined by Turner (1995) is a fundamental unifying category of human existence in all its senses and at all levels of operations ranging from cultural, social, psychological and biological. The human body becomes a social identity and cultural subject through the process of social appropriation (Turner, 1995). Turner (1995) already presupposes Turner's (2009) position that the human body is not a fixed entity that is wholly tied to cultural determinism. In recent times, precisely in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, research has focused on the human body. The body has thus evolved from mere marginal social fact into a notion of social fact with a meteoric rise in debates about it. The human body in itself is defined by Fuchs (2003) in terms of its polarity as conceptualized by phenomenological tradition, with specific reference to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2014), that is, its two sidedness: the lived-body and the corporeal body.

He identifies lived body as felt body, the subjective space of bodily sensations, but comprises (...) pre-reflective experience as a whole, insofar as it is conveyed by the medium of the body, by its senses and limbs. I act through my body, perceive and exist through it, without explicitly reflecting on it. Hence lived bodiliness means my relation to the world as mediated and lived by the body, or my embodied being-in-the-world (Fuchs, 2003, p. 224).

The corporeal body, he defines as "the anatomical object of physiology and medicine which can be observed, grasped and even manipulated – an object, however, which by its properties of being a living organism and, moreover, the field of expression of a person enters a complex relation to the subjective "lived-body"" (Fuchs, 2003, p. 224). *Close to Merleau-Ponty's notion of lived-body, is Marcel Mauss' definition of the human body to which Bánovčanová and Masaryková (2014) made reference. The body is defined as "man's first and most natural instrument. ... man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body" (Bánovčanová and Masaryková, 2014, p. 253). The body as a*

culturally encoded tool has embedded in it how men use their bodies to ultimately mimic culture, i.e. to reflect how the human body is treated culturally as well as validate the traditions and techniques for using the body (Bánovčanová and Masaryková, 2014). The body can then be identified, in accordance with Mbembe's (1992) critical opinion on the post colony and its subjects, as the playground of both oppression and resistance for it, the body is "itself the principal locale of the idioms and fantasies used in depicting power (Mbembe, 1992, p. 7).

Having identified the body as site of oppression and resistance, female oppression can be linked to the networked web that Pylypa (1998) associated with institutional disciplining, surveillance, and punishment of the body which creates bodies that are "habituated to external regulation, working "to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic controls ... and thus produce the types of bodies that society requires"" (p. 22). Pylypa's (1998) position correlates how cultural injunctions are enacted to reformulate oppressed African women and their bodies into what society desires them to be. Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that one is not born a woman but becomes one is apt in emphasising this claim by Pylypa (1998). Not only is the female body disciplined and made docile to become what society wants of it, it becomes the site of oppression, of resistance and ultimately, the site of liberation once oppressed women become aware and have garnered the strength and strategy(ies) to set themselves free.

The theme of female sexuality and violence in Koulibaly's (n.d.) short stories offers a new option to the explanation of expression of female sexuality. Koulibaly's women violate both legal and social norms to use their sexuality as machinery of resistance to male dominance. Incidents of serial killing of men, a phenomenon for which I have coined the term 'malocide' or androicide, is a deviant behaviour categorized under serious deviant behaviours (Meier, 2014). A factor that seems responsible for the hyperactive sexual behaviour of Koulibaly's women is the trend of western form of individualism that has crept into the African society to overshadow the collectivistic culture of African continent. This trend, while not emerging from the blues, is closely linked to the fact that oppressed women have seen killing of men as a way out of stifling androcentric tendencies in the

society. It is a stage radical feminist protagonists have arrived at through metamorphosis and stages of mental development formulated through self-consciousness and consciousness of their being overly constricted to stifling patriarchal environments.

This development and metamorphosis one can link to the discovery of continental phenomenology of selfhood as comprising of two forms: the minimal and the narrative self (Bortolan, 2020). Bortolan (2020) contends that the two forms of selfhood are "phenomenologically inextricable" (67) in that "certain forms of affective experience are complex phenomena in which minimal and narrative forms of selfhood are deeply entwined" (p. 67). Deductible from Bortolan's (2020) argument is that experiences of the minimal or core self bear strongly on the narrative self to give the latter actual construction of personhood. I find in Bortolan's (2020) analysis a basis for foregrounding female experience into two broad categories and will in the next couple of paragraphs endeavour to draw an analogy to further systematise my analysis of the transition of women from the status of objectification to that of subjectification.

The first category is the earlier stage of feminist consciousness whereby feminist activists demanded for the right of vote and equality on all fronts with men, this stage, I classify as the stage of minimal self where experience is "essentially connected to conscious experience and self-consciousness" (Bortolan, 2020, p. 69). On this basis, the minimal self, Bortolan (2020) argues, is "'consciousness of oneself as an immediate subject of experience'" (p. 70) where the basic form of selfhood is identified. The self is in essence a subject of experience lived through the environment where the subject is embodied and embedded (Bortolan, 2020). The embodiment of the subject is a summation of individual experiences that manifests as reflection of contextual social divisions of class, gender and race "integral to the maintenance of social inequalities" (Hargreaves and Vertinsky, 2007, p. 6). Such experiences constitute bodily experiences that are according to Bortolan (2020), non-objectifying and non-observational and is constitutive of the pre-reflective self-consciousness. This translates, according to what Gallagher and Zahavi (2012), cited by Bortolan (2020), term sense of ownership and sense of agency. Having then

developed the sense of ownership and agency, the second form of selfhood, the narrative self, emerges through developmental experiential processes and metamorphosis.

The narrative self is established through the "acknowledgement of the historical structure of selfhood, namely the idea that the self is not a static entity, but rather something that is constituted and evolves over time" (p. 72). What stems from this argument therefore is that the self evolves into a person who by implication is the narrative construction that has evolved over time in history. Whatever wo/man becomes is in essence as a result of "personal character or personality, a personality that evolves through time and is shaped by the values I endorse, my moral and intellectual convictions and decisions, and my actions" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2012, in Bortolan, 2020, p. 71).

The becoming of radical feminist characters in literary corpuses with the attendant preponderance toward violence emanates from the notion advanced by Rosfort and Stanghellini (2009 in Bortolan, 2020), "that personhood is dependent on the ability to take an "evaluative stance" with regard to one's own experiences and to make decisions about what kind of person one wants to be. "Being a person,... requires the capacity to exercise one's will in order to give a particular orientation to one's existence" (p. 71). Having extensively cited Bortolan (2020), what I argue heretofore, is that the process that leads to the violence offeminist protagonists or otherwise is located within the experiential limits set by any given socio-cultural environment, in this instance, a patriarchal African context. These cultural experiences are not in any way similar but are determined by factors of practice, tradition, technological exposure of individuals as well as contacts with other cultures that engender modifications to cultural *status quos*.

In an anthropological research conducted by Ubillos et al. (2000), on cultural differences in sexual behaviours in 25 countries across the globe, they identified 4 cultural dimensions: Power distance, Individualism-collectivism, Masculinity-femininity and Uncertainty avoidance types of cultures. They suggest that Africa, including Asia, are found amongst high power distance cultures where masculine dominance is very strong and prevalent. They also report that these cultures support autocratic and authoritarian attitudes where women are expected to be obedient to their spouses and

children obedient to their parents; self-control prevails over extreme exhibition of emotions. Therefore, male and female in these cultures feel and express less emotions, be it positive or negative, because the social expression of excessive positive affect is attributed to lack of deference (Ubillos et al., 2000). As a result, erotic activation and sexual contact are expected to be lower in these cultures. The androcentric disposition of these societies implies that a man has more power than a woman. This in effect could also be associated with a higher frequency of sexual intercourse at men's instance (Ubillos et al., 2000).

2.1 The new specie of African women and the act of undoing gender

Having located most of African societies as a high power distance culture, albeit at varying degrees, based on Ubillos et al's. (2000) research, the sexual permissiveness of Koulibaly's female protagonists can be described as a form of undoing gender. With the free expression of their sexuality, they offer an interpretation for an emerging trend of gender power relations that creates room for violence through the use of their bodies and sexuality as agency in the process of seeking liberation from hegemonic domination. Diminishing respect for conventional gender codes of conduct in a typical patriarchal African setting is thus interrogated and thereby the norms of sexuality and prescribed notions of masculinity and femininity are redefined either within the private space or the public space in Koulibaly's world. Therefore, these behaviours are indices of emergence of new bodily awareness for female and male as well as the emergence of new categories and specie of African women.

In "*Le club des femmes*", one feels a pure venom of vindictiveness directed at men for the evil they do to women. This is in fact why I take the stand that Koulibaly's women are not just to be seen as fatalistic without a deep understanding of why they objectify men. There is in fact a sin that men have committed against women and the latter are out on a mission of vengeance like Calixthe Beyala, Ken Bugul, Angele Rawiri, and Were were Likings's vengeful female characters. Part of the ways by which women strategically succeed in objectifying men is through engaging in illicit sexual relationships with men. Pills-worth and Haselton's (2006) argument that there is also an emerging literature revealing a hidden

side of women's desires suggesting that women have also evolved to pursue short-term or illicit affairs, underscores this aspect of Koulibaly's women.

The storyline in "*Le club des femmes*" text begins by informing us that there are many women clubs in the capital city of Abidjan of which the most famous is the club of "les treizeapôtres" (p. 18) (the thirteen apostles). It takes off from a vituperation rendered in complete anger and outright declaration of war against the men folk. To become a member of this club, certain conditions are required:

- That of exceptional beauty
- That of swearing to an oath to never love a man.

The oath taken specifically enunciates the bestial nature of men and for that reason he must be treated like an animal and be ruined to the bones without pity.

"L'hommeest un chien de la pirespèce. Il considère la femme comme un objet. Nous devons le traiter commeune soupière. Notre but est de le ruinerjusqu'àl'os. Et sans aucunepitié. L'homme a déclaré la guerre à la femme. C'estlui qui doit laisser sa peau dans ce combat» (p. 10)

Man is a dog of the worst specie. He considers woman as an object. We must treat him like a tureen (a dish with a cover for serving food such as soup). Our goal is to ruin him to the bones without pity. Man has declared war against woman. He is the one who must perish in this combat (my translation).

The nature of the wordings indicate that men launched the offensive and women are prepared to launch a counter offensive in defence of their human dignity. Of course, the major arsenal of war to be used by members of the club is their bodies and sexuality. Their strategy is to exploitatively get married, of course without love, but with the sole aim of destroying and reducing man to the state of powerlessness. Their goal is to enrich themselves on the backs of men by poisoning the latter to death or taking advantage of men's unrestrained primordial sexual drive in order to inherit their wealth. The strategy of Koulibaly's women to access wealth through the

use of their bodies, in violent acts, corroborates Pills worth and Haselton's (2006) suggestion that women have more propensity to desire material investments from their male partners. Additionally, the use of poison to eliminate men is a recurrent theme in feminist writings. Of particular reference here is Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's female character, Beatrice Achiike's use of poison to kill her rather tyrannical husband in *Purple Hibiscus*. *The use of poison to symbolically kill patriarchy is also visibly given a space in "Le Club des femmes" by members of Les treizeapôtres. Poisoning their husbands or lovers is a major machinery they employ without being detected. According to the commentator's voice, to become very rich, "L'arme la plus efficace demeurait le poison. Ces femmes empoisonnent le mariou l'amant sans aucun remords. Aucune autopsie ne pouvait déceler le poison" (p. 18). (The most efficacious weapon was poison. These women poison the husband or lover without any remorse. No autopsy could detect the poison).*

In agreement with Locke (2019) bodiliness is not fixed. Rather, it is in constant fluid based on varying experiences "The qualities of human bodiliness are always in flux, shaped by the specificities of how we attend to what is in our midst; bodiliness shows itself in myriad instantiations as always integral to any experience but nonetheless never quite the same across varying experiences" (p. 135). The female body in this circumstance takes a different form of significance from being mere conventionally constructed object of consumption and gaze for male pleasure. It articulates several possible functionalities including the role it holds as locus of agency. Through textualisation, the female body becomes central and acquires the status of a weapon that is used for the destruction of man in quest for the liberation of women (Olayinka, 2018). It thus attains the status of agency used in militating against all forms of socio-cultural, economic and political control. Koulibaly's female characters surpass the boundaries of prescribed acceptable female behavioural norm of meekness, angelic, unassuming through deviance. In this regard, Jaccard (1998), opines that the female body is rarely represented by female writers as a means of amassing material possessions and wealth. It serves as a leeway to acceding liberation, gaining superiority over men and taking vengeance for humiliations suffered by women. This they achieve by caricaturing conventional sex roles and

grotesque images of men who are debased for their wanton sexual desires.

In Emile Durkheim's theory of social order and deviance, he proposes that deviant behaviours function to effect social change. The use of female bodies as a tool for perpetration of violence against male is a metaphor for the setting in motion of the process of social and cultural change that is meant to bring an end to female oppression. It is also a process that must be seen as reorientation of fundamental beliefs that men are more prone to perform violence against women. Either of the sexes are capable of violent acts. For instance, Madiena Diop's intention for cohabiting with his several female partners is not borne out of love and his felt need to live with them on negotiated terms of equality in "Quand la femme aide son mari". His first wife who bears him five children is booted out of the house in very traumatic circumstances with all her children including the eldest who is preparing for an examination. In Durkheim's view, deviance is not a pathological aberration but rather an integral part of a society that may be deemed healthy. Despite the negative impacts of deviance on the society, it is a behaviour that is capable of yielding positive benefits for society (Ziyanak and Williams, 2014). It is then important to see the functionality of the violence of Koulibaly's women against men as an act that ultimately has the potential to bring about social equilibrium and a change in the lopsided gender dichotomies of society that place women and men on two parallel poles.

3. Conclusion

The concept of bodiliness adopted in the study of Koulibaly's short plays is in two forms: the first pole is the power constituted by female protagonists in keeping man's body and his libidinal desires under control. The second pole is man seeking to keep women under control by going against cultural constrictions as the basis and source of power. The two forms of power exhibited are often at loggerheads. Both poles exhibited in the short plays can be traced to Darwinian framework that reduces human beings to organisms motivated to act by the innate instincts of self-preservation and preservation of the species. These are internal sources of energy driven by human biological needs of sex and hunger, although, all hysterias and neuroses should not and cannot be reduced to sexual traumas. Observations from the two plays make clear that the hysteric conditions of the female

characters, their narcissistic tendencies resulting from their quest for liberation are all borne out of the desire to seek radical means of reversing androcentric systems embedded in gender power relations in patriarchal societies in Africa. As sociopaths and therefore prime sources of social unease, Koulibaly's women are a set of interesting focus for investigation in the emerging trends in research on female violence.

The use of female body and sexuality to reduce male characters to nothingness by violent means is a ploy to seek eradication of all forms of female oppression. In the process, the paradigm of oppression shifts to male oppression and does not add up to healthy gender power relations that

foster sanity in the society. The concept of bodiliness as reviewed in this article presents the male body as scarred and vulnerable as against the presupposed notion of scarred and vulnerable female body. The vengeful approach adopted by the female characters reduces gender power relations to a sickening state. Their techniques are largely criminal and are therefore not what should be portrayed as possible panacea to challenges of inequality in African societies. What will matter most in improving gender power relations is to find ways of encouraging and establishing gender power relations on equal terms by promoting and observing gender equality on all grounds.

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