

African Literary Writers on Women: An Examination of Selected Yorùbá Poets

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Abstract

There is no doubt about the fact that African women are at disadvantage to their male counterparts in society. This is obvious in the works of some male writers 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. The traditional African societies do not help matters as they portray women as voiceless and frail extensions of humanity. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine both the negative and positive images of women as they are depicted in literary works and the contribution women are making through their written work to the development of society. It also reveals that African women through their written works have proved that they are not secondary citizens to their male counterparts but the backbone of the society. Feminist theory which is germane to the topic of discussion is adopted. In the findings, the paper is able to reveal underrepresentation of women in leadership position, structural barriers, gender bias and societal norms. Although, in the recent times, some male writers have changed their narratives on how they portray African women in their writings, much is still expected to project the good image of African women in the face of society and national development. The paper suggests that literary artists should use their work of arts to correct the negative images of women in African society and bring to the fore the core value of women and their uniqueness in societal development.

Keyword: African Women, Traditional African Society, Male, Literary, Feminism theory.

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 portrayal of women in a stereotyped manner, that the kitchen is the sole territory which women are voted to govern by divine ordination. African literature tends to reflect the interest of male members of the African intelligentsia, The traditional African 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 in a negative manner. This view is echoed by Mentuye (1990:399) who says:

*In Yorùbá tradition, proverbs are largely misogynist.
Directly or otherwise, they take women as their subjects
Referring to their improper and evil behaviours as majority
Of their proverbs see women as number one problem that men have.*

He says that some Yorùba men is 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.

Èni tó da aṣọ obinrin bora, wèrèpè ló dà bora
*The person who covers himself with a woman's cloth
covers himself with the tormentingly itching wèrèpè fruit.*
Obinrin kò ní gògògò
Women have no Adam's apple (i.e women cannot keep secret)
Bòbinrin pẹ nílẹ̀ ọkọ, àjẹ níí yà.
*If a woman stays in her husband's house for too long,
She becomes a witch.*
È má finú han fòbinrin, abenu mímú bí abẹ
Don't confide in women, owners of the razor-sharp tongues.
Ta ní ṣòṣà lójú ọfón-ón, ta ló fẹẹ fójú obinrin mawo.
Who dares initiates mice, who dares initiate women into the

cults

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

*..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 constitute the fundamental factors why men
play into the whims and caprices of women.*

From his view, women are the death killing men and that the special power created in them were used to control men in a bad manner. The pioneer African male writers mirrored patriarchy system in their works, where male extols supremacy and authority over the female in all spheres of life, male education is usually taken serious compare to the female education thereby subjecting the female folk to always be a follower while the men take leadership positions. On 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.

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 husband. There are roles that cannot be assign to women and positions which 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 the societies, such as Móremí of Ilé-ifè who faced the people fighting her community and taking them as slaves, Èfúnróyè Tinúbú and Èfúnsetán the women leader of Ibadan, despite their support and bravery the traditional African societies did not recognise women's roles in the society. Contrary to the traditional beliefs about women, in this contemporary society, we have seen some women that are much valuable in thoughts and ideas, who with their abilities have succeeded in contributing tremendously to the economy and political development of our nation. For instance, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, a woman, is the Director General, World Trade Organization and Professor Iyabode Nwabueze also a woman who is the immediate past Dean of Faculty of Arts in National Open University of Nigeria and a host of other women who hold important positions in their fields. In spite of all these, however, some male writers presented women in a positive images. They view the women's role as supportive to the development of the home and society. Ilesanmi (1992:88) view women as strong and indispensable in the society. He says:

They posses higher psychological, metaphysical and even material powers. Their beauty is power; their comporment can unbalance the seeming fixidity of man; their menstural 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 view, women are endowed with a special power which they may not be aware of and they are loving in nature. Women take 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 all disproportionately black

Women's work.

The quotation above reveals that women take active roles when it comes to taking caring of the children, cleaning the house and contributing to the development of the family. Their role can not be over emphasised. Okediji (1988:116) also has this to say on women's supportive roles to the 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, woman 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 examines both the negative and positive images of the women as depicted by some Yorùba male poets and how women are changing the status through their poetry. The paper adopts the feminist theory.

Theoretical framework

Feminism is derived from Latin word 'Femina' it has to do with everything that concerns women. To Ogini (1996:11) feminism can be viewed from two perspectives; first from ideological perspectives that both male and female should be equal in the society, and second, is to look at it as Women Liberation or Women's right Movement. Feminism has its origin in the struggle for women's right when women became conscious of their oppression and marginalization 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) in her 'STIWA' meaning Social Transformation Including Women of Africa posits that Africa as a whole needs transformation which is about creating an enabling environment in the society, where men and women can play individual but collaborative role. Sotunsa (2008:4) states that there are diversities of feminism, which arise as a result of differences in the methodologies, concept and practices of feminism. Cultural feminism is one of the varieties of feminism, and will be adopted in this paper because in Yorùba poetry, whether women are portrayed negatively or positively they are reflections of the African societies. The aim of the cultural feminism theorist is that women are to be respected and accorded with due respect in the society. Spencer (2002:50) defines cultural feminism thus:

Cultural feminisim 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. Basically, cultural feminism insists that woman's responsibilities of nurturing, caring and sensitivity to others'

needs should never be downplayed but rather be highlighted because of their valuable contributions to every society.

Again, one of the theorist of cultural feminist, Tong (1989:49) emphasizes that their concern is that women should be valued and appreciated for their contributions in the society. He says:

Cultural feminism comments the positive aspects of what is seen as the female character or feminine personality. It is basically a theory that attempts to revalidate what cultural feminist consider undervalued female attributes.

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. Moreso, the Yorùbá culture take cognizance of language usage, most importantly some of its cultural proverbs, are meant to ridicule women. Though it has been in existence for long. Using such pejorative proverbs on women is unpalatable. Apart from proverbs, it is also established but unpleasant literary tradition among male writers to portray the image of women negatively in literary works as will be seen later in this paper.

Negative portrayal of women by male poets

Female are portrayed as being of lesser importance and valueless in the family and society, in the poem Ayé Obìnrin, Omolasoye compares women to rat and dog that they are only responsible to men who can feed them. This is revealed below:

Èkúté ilé lè mí fí wón wé,
A jèni-fèni lèkúté ilé,
Ajá ni wón,
Olóúnjẹ ni wón ní bá lọ,
Bó bá di pẹkọ ò sí mọ,
Ajá á sùre padà sèyìn,
Ọrọ obìnrin ni nńkan
Nńkan lẹrẹ atẹyìntò,
Ọbẹ tó jinná làwọn ní fẹ,
kájọ dáná ẹran,
Kì í sọrọ ohun tí wón fẹ ẹ se (Omolasoye:2011:40)
*I compare them with the house rat,
The house rat are deceitful
They are dog
They folowed the one with food
Whenever there's no food
The dog will run backward
That is women's issue
The one that urinates from behind is something else,*

*They are after 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 an established fact that women are not lazy and not all are dependant. Despite the onerous responsibilities shouldered by the woman in the family, Fakunle in his poem, Ìwẹ̀lẹ̀ says:

Abo sora wọn dohun eḷeḷe
Wón n gbáyé se bí wón ti fẹ́
Ìwà àbùkù kún ọwọ́ iwẹ̀lẹ̀
Bí wón bá burú tán
Ayé á ní sẹ̀bí abo ni!
Bí wón bá huwà ikà tán
Ayé a ní se bí iwẹ̀lẹ̀ ni

.....
Ogbón obinrin ò tó nńkan
Ètẹ̀ àlùpàídà tí n bẹ̀ lówó abo ńkọ́?
E wá w'obinrin lójú u pópó (Fakunle 2011:62)
*Female gender turned themselves to 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*

.....
*Woman's wisdom is minor
What about woman's cunning attitude
Come to the street and see women.*

The African culture portrays woman as one who is cunning and has little or no wisdom, this notion is displayed by the poet when he portrays woman as someone who is full of evil and has little wisdom, these are how some male literary artist have reduced women to in the world that seems to be dominated and controlled by men. He goes further to say that when a woman holds a top position in her workplace, she becomes arrogant and pompous to the men under them; as seen in the excerpt below:

Bábo bá jólórí ilé iṣẹ́
Akọ wón á gontíọ́ lóri akọ
Abo e se pelẹ́, gàágàá yín pọ́ (Fakunle: 2011:63)
*If female is the head in an office
Their domineering is much upon the male
Female be careful, your dominance is much*

The African woman is seen as the subordinate in every aspect of life in African setting, but when it happens that woman is the head in an office or organization, the men under them always complain that they are not being respected. This view is reflected in the 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 male under them. Alade (2000:2) observe that the patriarchal system is meant to truckle the women, he says:

Women are seen as weak vessels in Yorùbá culture. They are regarded as second class citizens and not recognized as important in political, religious and legal matters and generally seen as subordinate to men...

From the above, it is established that dominating the woman comes from the African culture where women are portrayed as one who have no say in the society. The notion among some African male writers that females are not reliable, cannot keep secret, explosive and insensitive is seen in Ayé Obinrin where the poet described women thus:

Igi wọn ò ẹ̀ ẹ́ fẹ̀yìntì,
Torí pé wọn ò ní gbò-ń-gbò,
Ọ̀rò obinrin ò lẹ̀pọ̀n-ọ̀n,
Ó tọ́ ká mú wọn bí àwọn iyàngbò ni,
Afẹ̀fẹ̀ 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 fiwá ẹ̀tàn kó ni sí wàhálà.

.....
Èni ó fábo ní kọ̀kọ̀rọ̀ awo
Tó sọ kọ̀kọ̀rọ̀ sígbà-n-gba
Obinrin fọgbọ̀n ẹ̀wẹ̀ ná ọ̀ lówó tán
Ó gbọ̀nà ẹ̀tàn, o sọ ọ̀ dì lẹ̀lẹ̀
Ìlérí asán lo kọ̀kàn lé (Omolasoye 2011:41)

*You can not rely on them
Because they can not keep secret
Women's issue need not to be respected
It is better to take them as the maize chaff
They're driven by little wave
Whoever sees them and do not run
Such is inviting insult
They're pepper,
They can harm your eyes
Women can put you in trouble with their deceit*

.....
*Whoever keeps the initiate key with woman,
She throws the key outside
Woman trickly spends your money
With trick she ruins you
You rely on fake promises.*

The nauseating manner in which the poet presented woman from the above, is part of the feminist theorists campaign to put a stop to the negative and derogatory portrayal of African women. This was what prompted Hooks (1984:24) to say:

Feminist is a struggle to end sexist oppression.

In *Ọyèkú méji*, Abimbola portrayed women as someone who is not truthful and trustworthy. It reads thus:

Obinrin lèké
Obinrin lòdàlè
Kéèyàn mó finú han obinrin (Abimbola, 1975:33)
*Woman is a liar
Woman is treacheous
Let no one keep secreet with a woman.*

Inspite of 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 follow the stereotyped style. It is a known fact that African women are pillar of support to their families and the society, this we have read in history. In spite of all the negative images painted women in the works of the above poets, there are some male poets who presented women positively in their works. This would be discussed next.

Positive portrayal of women by male poets

It is interesting to note that some noble male poets portray women in a positive and pleasing manner in their works. Raji (2004:4) posits that:

Women are indispensable, it is when you have an
outing that you know the importance of cloth,
when it comes to celebration, merriments, cooking,
count on women. If the vulture refused the sacrifice,
it would have stayed longer outside.

Rotimi (2000:33) also supports Raji's view when he says that women's role cannot be under estimated in Yorùbá society, his words:

From time immemorial, Yorùbá has placed women in high esteem
they respect them, they pamper them, they placed them in the
rightful position. At home, in the religious circle, in politics there
is no man who can underrate woman, except for the man that wants to

eats his pounded yam as mere yam without pounding it. It is women that make the society delightful, they are the one that added to the society. Whoever wants to know how a town without a woman use to be, should visit the non existing women community.

From the above, it is noteworthy that some Yorùbá culture have regards 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 Ọkan-òókù Obìnrì, Raji described the beauty and loving nature that God bestowed on women thus:

Ká má purọ́;
Eran ifẹràn n bẹ fóbìnrin;
Ara ọkùnrin a sù gàn-ìn
Èrù a sì máa yọ wọn bà láìjẹ gbèsè
Torì ẹwà tỌlọrun fún wọn ni
Adára-máa-dán tí gbogbo ayé n wò bi dínjí
Lékélèké lobìnrin;
Eyẹ tí ò fọṣẹ wẹrí tó fí n funfun
Ọkín ni wọn
Àwọn ní í ọlọjà láwùjọ eyẹ (Raji 2004:1)
To be truthful;
Women are endowed with 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 peacock
They're the special breed among the birds.

The poet elouglises the beauty that God gave to the woman by comparing them with the egret bird that is ever whitish without bathing and their special feature he compares with the peacock. Another male poet who portrays woman in a positive image is Olurankiṣẹ, in *Ayé n dayé Obìnrin* he says that women are capable of holding any sensitive position and that they are always excel in whatever they put their mind on. He says:

Obìnrín ti jọba ilú rí,
Wọn wí i fún mi gbọ;
Obìnrin ti gbé odidi Orílẹ̀-èdè ka àyà rí,
Ojú àwa iṣín yí nàà ló kúkú ẹ. (Olurankiṣẹ 2004:33)
Woman has ruled a town before,
I was told;
Woman has ruled a country as well,

It was during our youthful period.

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

N kò jẹ sẹ ẹ rárá
N kò jẹ bényàn jiyàn-an rẹ
Pé bí ọkùnrin
Tó ju ọkùnrin lọ ti n bẹ,
Bẹẹ gẹgẹ lobinrin míràn wà
Obìnrin bí ọkùnrin,
Obìnrin tó ju obìnrin ẹgbẹ rẹ lọ
Àwọn ní í ẹ adájọ,
Tí wọn kì í gba àbẹ-ṣaájú
Tí wọn n mú ọbàyéjẹ èniyàn
Tí wọn kì í bá wọn wo ẹyin
Irú wọn ní íṣe 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

That are stronger than others

Same way is applicable to women

Woman like man

A woman that is stronger than her mates

They were the judges,

They do not agreed to secret pleading before judgement

They arrest the evil ones

They do not join in evil dealings

Their types are good mothers

They put their homes in order

Even though women were underrepresented in leadership and political position, the male poets above appreciated the efforts and contribution of women in the society. Women hold supportive roles in the Yorùbá society, over the years, female literary artist have tried to brake the perception that the kitchen is the sole territory which women are voted 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 that would be discussed next. Arinpe Adejumo a female academic poet in a poem *Alábohòdó*, in the book *Rò òò re*, the poet, says that women are protection to the family even though the 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 husband in seeing that the man appears presentable outside. She commends women for their role in raising their children to be responsible adults. It reads:

Bọmọdẹ bá máa wí
Wọn a lóbinrin wẹ̀
Bágbà mí a fọ̀
Wọn a lóbinrin ò tó pọ̀n

.....
È bá rẹyin wò woşẹ́ iyá
È bá woşẹ́ iyá lóri ọmọ
Ìyá ló rẹrù oyún fún oşù mėsàn-án
Bó dojọ̀ ikúnlẹ̀ ọpọ̀ ọkọ a mórí légbó
Ní títa, ní ríro iyá a kúnlẹ̀
Ó kúnlẹ̀, ó bímọ sáyé tán
Işẹ́ tún wá peléke sí i
Níbi baba tí n hanrun
Ìyá a máa şàisùn (Adejumo 2007:30)

*When the younger ones talked
He sasy who is a woman
When the elderly talks too
They say women's issue is trivial*

.....
*You should look back to see mother's efforts
And see mother's support to their children
It's mother that carried pregnancy for nine months
On the day of delivery some men will run for fear
In pain, in surffering she gave birth
She goes 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 the society. she goes further in revealing some of the risk and sacrifices mothers rendered to their children at the expense of their own safety:

Mo ti riyá tó torí ọmọ tó ríkú he
Ìyá kan iyá kàn níjọsí
Lológun jù látorí pẹtẹ̀sì
Ìyá ọhún ò kúkú jalè
Ikú ọmọ niyá n kú lọ
Níjọ ilé gbiná lQjọ̀ọ̀ọ̀ níjọsí
Mo rí baba tó ta kété

Tó ta kété tó n wọmọ ẹ tí n jóná
Ibẹ niyá ti kiri ọná
Tó fẹ ọlùgbàlà ọmọ
Ìyá ọhún kúkú ti gbàgbé ọwe
Pé bíná bá n jóni tó n jómọ ẹni
Tára ẹni làà kọ gbọn dànù (Adejumọ 2007:31)
*I have seen mothers who died because of children
One mother sometimes ago
Was threw 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 Ọjọ́ó sometimes ago
I saw a father watching from a distance
He was at a distance watching his child burning
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.*

She also berated women that are dependant on their husband for survival to get a job to do and stop being economically dependant in *Alábòòdó* It reads:

Ọpọ obinrin n bẹ nílẹ̀ yìí
Tíṣṣẹ̀ ọ̀un ìyà ti wọ̀ lẹ̀wú
Irú wọ̀n ní jọ̀bẹ̀ tí ò lépọ̀
Irú wọ̀n a sì jọ̀bẹ̀ tí ò níyọ̀
Bọ̀mọ̀ bá béèrè kọ̀bọ̀
Wọ̀n a ni dúrọ̀ de dádì
Bírú wọ̀n rí pátá tó wuyì
Wọ̀n a ní ẹ̀ kiri wá tí baba bá dé (Adejumọ 2007:31)
*There are some women in this land
That poverty matched like cloth
Their types eat soup without oil
Their types eats soup without salt
Should their child cry for anything
They will say wait till daddy returns
If they see beautiful paints to buy
They will say come back when our husband is around*

Also in *Ààrẹ*, the poet castigated the men that do not want women to occupy leadership position because of gender bias and societal norms. Apart from the quoted poems above, there are several others in her book *RÒ Ọ́Ó RE* where the poet talked about the contribution of women to the society, she also thanked God in *Orí Ló Dámi Lábo* for making her a woman. Adebawale Yemisi is

another female academic poet who has contributed in making the voice of women heard through her literary works. In her book, *Ìgbàlonìgbàákà*, in *Èkó Alé-Tì-Lé*, the poets praises women who attend adult education despite their busy schedule in the home but still strive to be educated so that they can contribute their quota to the development of their families and society and encouraged them to persevere to the end . It reads thus:

Èkó alé-tì-lé ò lórúkọ méjì
Èkó ká fọkọ sílé jómọ sílé

.....

Mo kí yín ẹ kú ipakítímọra
Ká pẹ láya ò pé ká má bímọ kankan;

.....

È múra, wàhálà ẹkọ àgbà fẹrẹẹ dítàn (Adebọwale 2003:51)
Adult education has no other name
Its an education where husband and children are left at home

.....

I greet you for your edurance
Late marriage does not mean you wont have children

Also in *Ohun Eḷẹgẹ Ni Àṣẹ*, the poet faulted some male who use their authority to oppress their wives and any female that work 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 n fèèkù idà tìẹ ṣẹ?

Èèkù idà t'Ólú fún ọ àìgbọdọmálò

Àmọ àṣẹ a bá fifẹ pa ní mórí ẹni yá

Ori Adé, orí ewu

Ìṣẹ apàṣẹ, ìṣẹ ẹlẹgẹ. (Adebọwale 2003:18)

Boss, how do you exercise your authority?

The leadership role given to you by God must be use

Exercising your authority with love makes the subject happy

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 a conscious efforts to build positive image for the women but also notable male literary artist in Africa. Women are also working tirelessly to change the voiceless and frailty images the society portrayed them. 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.

Therefore, male writers need to appreciate their female counterparts, support them and should not see them as rival but colleagues in the development of the nation, as quoted by Chukwuma (1990:7)

(African) Feminism is not a question of superiority or inferiority. It is a question of complementary and recognition.

Conclusion

The paper attempts the African literary perspectives on women by looking at the positive and negative portrayal of women by some male writers and how the women are making concrete efforts in their contributions to the family and the society. We have seen that some male writers are fond of painting the image of the female gender negatively and even some Yorùbá proverbs portrayed women in an unpleasant and nauseating manner such as betrayer, backbiters, ingrate, murderer etc. It is interesting to note that such description are changing as African women have shown that they are not only home managers but also they are into professions that have once been regarded as exclusively for men. The role of female gender in any society cannot be under estimated, therefore, the paper suggest that more male literary artist should use their work of arts to promote the female gender in African society and ignore the old tradition 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 given the opportunity to aspire to any leadership position with the support of men so that women can equally contribute their quota to the development of the society. Society should reference the past efforts women have put in the development and growth of the family and society as well.

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