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Gender Questions in Wole Soyinka's *the Lion and the Jewel* and *the Trials of Brother Jero*

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Abstract

This article questions how women are represented in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Trials of Brother Jero*, following a feminist stylistics theoretical framework. The plays were investigated keeping in view Mills (1995) three echelons of enquiry: lexis, syntax, and discourse. Soyinka's plays are masterfully carved to expose the suppression of women by men. In these plays, female characters are represented through withering words and phrases, which presages their disapproval and also their voluptuous accessibility and attractiveness. Women are represented through a sexist and hidebound lingo. They are rendered as malevolent, deleterious, and calamitous, as they are only credited with transporting hitches to the lives of men. They are presented as creatures of the scrubland, ferocious, barbarous, unschooled, and stumpy. These deleterious attributes were given to them with a direct implication of their subordination by their male counterparts. Also, they are represented as receivers of actions, since men carry out most of the demanding tasks/actions in the plays in comparison to women. Following transitivity choices, this article concludes that men carry out actions and women are acted upon. They are given prosaic jobs such as homemakers, paltry traders, hawkers, child bearers, and caregivers to their husbands and children, whereas men are given more important roles such as schoolmasters and chiefs. Women are not given these arduous roles, as the patriarchy perceives that they are not capable of carrying out those roles because of their emotions and simple mindset. Finally, the article recommends further research with the aim of advancing and improving the representation of women in Nigerian drama.

Keywords: discourse, feminist stylistics, focalization, fragmentation, lexis, patriarchy, semantic derogation, sexism, syntax, transitivity choices

Background

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Women are not only discriminated within social or political circles but also in language. Women are represented through men's ideologies. Patriarchal ideologies in different societies have inflamed women stereotyping by using a sexist language all around the world. Even though sexist language can also affect men, women are mostly affected by it because society deems them as an inferior being. It is a belief that men alone have the responsibility to account for the discursive and institutionalised language system pertaining the androcentric values.

Earlier feminist advocates such as Simpson, De Beauvoir, Kolodny, Woolf, and Mills attempted to diminish the gap between genders by presenting them as equals in all spheres of life. Nevertheless, male supremacy and sovereignty is still a reality in some of the African patriarchal societies and women still suffer at the expense of male patriarchy which still exists especially in rural areas. These androcentric values and cultural practices marginalised women by establishing interrogative and inequitable ways to confine women. (Andima & Tjiramanga, [2014](#)).

Moreover, Hennebichler ([2008](#)) argues that the notion of the female form is seen as the marked term in the stylistics sense whereas, the male is seen as the unmarked term and these can be found in different affixes used for female terms for instance; 'lady writer' as if the term 'writer' consists of the male form. The women characters in these selected plays have been examined employing the fundamental concepts of linguistics, stylistics, and feminist stylistics perspective as adopted by Mill's three-part model analysis: lexis, syntax, and discourse (Hennebichler, [2008](#)). The use of sexist language is dehumanizing for women as it reduces them to inferior objects. Men call women with sexist names and society has perceived it as a normal action whereas the use of generic nouns and pronouns are defined literally to refer men. Nigeria is one of the African countries with prominent playwrights and is rich in literature and this incorporates tradition, culture, music, and dance. Onyeka ([2013](#)) believes that Nigerian drama got a significant and permanent position on the world literary map, especially with the winning of the Nobel Prize by Wole Soyinka in 1986. Furthermore, Onyeka says that Nigerian dramatic literature draws its elements, form, and content from the oral tradition which is rich in the artistic and cultural heritage of the Nigerian people. The subject matter of Nigerian drama is

taken mainly from history, myth, legend, traditional values, belief systems, and contemporary politics.

Nigerian drama is articulated and documented by Clark (1981) by grouping it into two genres; traditional and modern drama. The dominant plays are the works of the earliest playwrights like Soyinka, Clark, Ola Rotimi, and Zulu Sofola.

The plays were written after the Nigerian Civil War were written by playwrights like Femi Osofian, Bode Snownade, Kola Omotosho, Esiaba Irobi, Tess Onwueme, and Onyeka Onyekuba Onyeka. The Nigerian playwrights were not interested in art for art's sake but they use their work to mirror society as a better place for all. It is believed that some scholars when criticizing Nigerian drama complain that Soyinka is obscure, ambiguous, and difficult, J.P Clark is pessimistic, and Zulu Sofola maintains the status quo, while Femi Osofisan and his groups were quite revolutionaries. However, there is a contradiction with the above statement as Soyinka's plays analysed in this research study are represented clearly and they are just a reflection and representation of what happens in most African societies. The language used in these plays in most cases is not that difficult and it is easy to comprehend (Onyeka, 2013).

One most common feature of Nigerian plays is the concept of total theatre, the fusion and blend of music, dance, folklore, myth, and traditional rhythms add value to these plays (Onyeka, 2013). The selected plays by Wole Soyinka are written in the same manner as they have music, traditional dance, and rhythms. Additionally, it is argued that the Nigerian drama has its origins in Greek drama and it is associated with dramatic dance and masquerade associated with religious festivals (Ferguson, 1973).

Statement of the Problem

The Lion and the Jewel and *the Trials of Brother Jero* are practical examples of the depiction and representation of women as they are centered on the subjugation of women and discrimination. The use of gender-biased language portrays women as inferior to men and that's why they are treated as second-class citizens in a society. If this norm continues than women will be forever invisible in political, social, and economic dialogue. Language should have been used showing all people are equal, and no one deserves to be discriminated as such. Sexist words and jokes against women have not

yet been avoided completely. It is a problem when women are represented and seen from the male lenses. This portrays women incapable of standing on their own as independent individuals. This article questions the impacts of patriarchy on the representation of women and follows a feminist stylistics theoretical framework and shows how language still is hegemonic.

Objectives

This study examines the impacts of patriarchy on the representation of women in the chosen plays and follows a feminist stylistics theoretical framework and aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To investigate the use of lexis to represent women in these selected plays.
- To examine how syntax is employed in women representation.
- To study women representation at the selected discourse level.

Research Questions

The following three specific research questions guided the basic stream of the inquiry:

- How does the playwright employ words to represent women in the plays?
- How are phrases and sentence structures used to represent women in the plays?
- Does the author employ discourse negatively or positively to represent women in the plays?

Feminist Stylistics Theoretical Perspective

Feminist stylistics' intention is to account and justify the way in which gender concerns are linguistically encoded in texts and tries to do so by utilising some of the frameworks and models in relation to the stylistics handbook (Montoro, [2015](#)). It is advantageous to use this framework as it can be used to analyse any text of any category (Lilian, [2007](#)). This theory was applied by following the three language levels as suggested by Mills, such as analysing the plays at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse level.

It aims to provide a feminist perspective at the interface of language studies and literary criticism. One of the advocates of feminism who had

placed her talents and ideologies into writing, particularly, as a patron of equality to women is Virginia Woolf. Woolf's 20th century research was centred on her stern and harsh criticism about female gender. Therefore, most of her works are women centred and talks about the women's autonomy in her case, Woolf certain women scholars created a new sentence, which is flexible and cumulative in comparison to the male sentence. Woolf, also proclaimed that women writers had constructed a sentence and she labelled it as the "female sentence" or the sentence of the feminine gender.

Mills (1995) defines feminist stylistics as an analysis that identifies itself as feminist and which uses linguistic or language analysis to examine texts. The basic tenets and principles of feminist stylistics comprise: the relationship and connection between men and women are usually not equal and domineering; many recognised and known societies have been patriarchal; males have been characterised as dominating all major social institutions: that is economy, political system, family, and religion. This shows that gender is foregrounded and is placed at the forefront in texts which shows that women are oppressed by patriarchal systems. Many feminist stylistics scholars have identified that there is a precise difference between women's and men's writing; (p.1).

Findings

It is a common practice that African societies are structured according to patriarchal systems where women are powerless and have no say or their input is not valued as that of men. This includes Nigerian women as they are born and raised in a patriarchal country where they are stereotyped just because they are women and these kinds of stereotypes are evident in the history and literary works of many prominent authors and playwrights. One of the playwrights is Wole Soyinka whose plays stereotype women as they were written when patriarchy was common in Nigerian societies. Hence, sexism is evident in his plays as some of the words used in his plays are discriminatory and represented women as inferior objects.

The Lion and the Jewel and The Trials of Brother Jero

In the play, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, the playwright is sexist as he presented Brother Jero, the protagonist and utters the following sentences:

- “I had one *weakness* – *women*. Not my fault, mind you. You must admit that I am rather good-looking” (p. 8).
- “The call of prophecy is in my blood and I would not risk my calling with the *fickleness* of women” (p. 8).
- “It is a good job I got away from that wretched woman as soon as I did” (p. 16).

When one critically analyses the first sentence, one can see that the word *weakness* connotes the use of sexist language. It is sexist as Brother Jero blamed women for his problems. He has a ‘wandering eye’ where women are concerned. He brags about his good looks. Jero has a weakness towards women because he thinks he is good looking and he cannot resist them; hence he has many women. This also implies that when a man is good-looking, he should have many women and he should not control himself but rather, women must deal with it because he is not at any fault. However, if tables were turned and women have many men as men they are termed as *loose* and they will be looked down upon and called names like a *tramp*, *whore*, *tart*, *slag*, *slut*, and *floozy* which is not the case with men doing the exact same thing as women.

The second sentence is sexist because of the word *fickleness*. Brother Jero says that he does not want to lose his prophecy calling with the fickleness of women, hence he kept away from them (p. 8). The word fickleness means unfaithfulness by virtue of being unreliable and treacherous (Advance English Dictionary, [2019](#)). The use of that word implies that women in general are unfaithful, unreliable, and treacherous. It also implies that women are a bad influence on men as they are dangerous and can destroy one’s career or calling. He continued to convey that to kept away from them. He is still single and since that day when he came into my own, no scandal has ever touched my name” (Soyinka, [1969](#)). This sentence means that, when Brother Jero had women in his life, his life was full of problems and disgraceful events because of women as he said that, since he left them, his life was trouble-free. Women are perceived by society as gossip mongers who spread lies and malice in the society. However, men can also cause scandal and they can be fickle. This is because of patriarchy as the society makes people to believe that only women can do or behave in a certain way or conform to certain societal traits whilst men do not do the same.

In the third sentence, Jero calls women *wretched*. Women have no value as they are physically characterised by misery, hence he wanted to get away from her. It also means that women are very unhappy and full of misery. Whilst the fourth sentence states that to have a woman in one's life would make life difficult as they petrify men's soul. Women make men's lives hard like stones; they prevent men from progressing further. The fifth and sixth sentences imply that, from men's perspective women are sent from heaven to test men. The true sense of heaven-sent is an opportunity that is unexpected, which is very welcome, and just happened at the right time. However, it is not the case here because the word *trial* connotes those heaven-sent women who test men and if something is testing you it would give you problems and restlessness.

Metaphor in The Trials of Brother Jero

Mills (2005) claims that when a metaphor is used, one is drawing on a body of thought or background knowledge which might in fact skew your analysis or thinking for a particular object. The examples taken from the play might not be necessarily metaphors but they can be analysed for further analysis. These are:

- The first thing to meet my eyes was *a daughter of Eve* (p. 9).
- You may compare that feeling with waking up and finding *a vulture crouched* on your bed post (p. 9).

The above sentences are metaphors in the sense that women are referred to as daughters of Eve. Eve is the woman in the Bible who made Adam eat the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. In the biblical world and Christianity, it is believed that Eve brought abomination to the whole of humankind. Hence, Jerobeam was disgusted when the first thing he saw was a woman. Brother Jero, seeing a woman believed that his day would not go well. That is why he was comparing that feeling to a vulture in one's bed. A vulture is one of the largest birds which prey on other animals. In this case, the woman is compared to the vulture because in men's eyes she preys upon and exploits men. Preying and exploitation can be in any form but when it involves women, it would be their sexuality. They exploit men sexually and prey on them.

Transitivity Choices in The Trials of Brother Jero

Transitivity choices have to do with who acts (who is the agent/who is carrying out the action) and who is acted upon (who is receiving the action and affected by the actions of others) (Mills, [2005](#)). Here are examples of transitivity choices from the play:

- You must *take her home* tonight...And *beat her* (p. 23).
- *Pack up your things* because we're going home (p. 23).

In the above sentences, all the actions are carried out by men; the woman is acted upon as she is the one receiving the action. Also, all the above examples fall under the material process intention as they affected the female body. In the first sentence, Brother Jero is advising his friend Chume to take his wife home and beat her. Beating in patriarchal societies and families is considered normal and it was a method for men to straighten their wives. Brother Jero, who called himself a prophet advised such a barbaric act to be done to Amope, Chume's wife.

Sexism in The Lion and the Jewel

Sexism is evident in this play as the men see women as objects, uneducated, stupid, and as weaker sex. The following sentences substantiate this claim:

- Sidi, it is so unwomanly. Only spiders carry loads the way you do (p. 2).
- You said, Sidi if you were crooked or fat and your skin was scaly like a... (p. 2).
- For that, what is a jewel to pigs? If now I am misunderstood by you and your race of savages, I rise above taunts and remain unruffled (p. 3).
- For, as a woman, you have a smaller brain than mine. Scientists have proved it. It is in my books. Women have a smaller brain than men. That's why they are called the weaker sex (p. 4).

The first sentence connotes sexism as it uses the word *unwomanly*. In a patriarchal set-up, the society places all the expectations on women. Lakunle thinks that it is not woman like for Sidi to put and carry the pail of wood on her head. He even compares her to a spider. Are these expectations from the society applicable to men? The second sentence is showing that a woman can only be loved by a man if she is perfect with a slim body and

with a beautiful skin. Lakunle is making demeaning comments to women when he says that “what is a jewel to pigs” (Soyinka, [1969](#)). This means that even if Sidi is beautiful, her beauty can be compared to a jewel to a pig which is known to be filthy and dirty. In their conversations, Lakunle referred women to as savages and he will rise above taunts and remain unruffled because he is educated and the women in the plays are not educated.

Lakunle is looking down on women by saying that women have smaller brains than men. This implies that women's thinking capabilities are lower and limited. He says he got it from his books and scientists proved it. The statement is biased as all people's brains are equal regardless of the person's sex. He continues by saying that, because he believed that women have smaller brains and this made them to be called the weaker sex. That notion has been embedded in society for the longest time and it affects women negatively, especially in holding high and leading positions and decision-making even in their households. It is believed that only men can hold high positions and make great decisions in their families.

Semantic Derogation of Women in The Lion and the Jewel

There are some definite female words that are utilised and used to refer to someone of lower status and frequently have overlaid sexual connotations, for instance, master and mistress (Mills, [2005](#)). The semantic derogation of women in the above-mentioned play is shown in these sentences:

- The *lion* and the *jewel*. (p. 1.)
- High-heeled shoes for the *lady*. (p. 9.)
- Beauty beyond the dreams of a *goddess*. (p. 10.)

Sidi is referred to as the jewel in this play. Literally, a jewel is a precious stone which can be cut into a beautiful ornament like a watch.

Throughout the play, the jewel refers to Sidi because she is young and very beautiful and becomes famous after her pictures are taken by the man (photographer) and published in the magazine. Her representation to be the jewel throughout the play is because of her beauty and prestige. Due to her youthfulness, she is seen as the most beautiful woman in the village of Ilujinle. She is a jewel in the play and depicted as an object to please men's eyes when they stare at her such as Baroka and Lakunle whom are all in

need of Sidi. The word *lady* is used to refer to women whilst men referred to as *lord*. Sadiku refers to Baroka as *my lord* or *the lord* as shown in the above examples.

Endearments and Diminutives in The Lion and the Jewel

The following sentences contain examples of endearments and diminutives:

- Sidi, my heart bursts into flowers with *my love*. (p. 6)
- Sidi, *my love* will you open your mind. (p. 6.)
- Swear you will be *my wife* and I will stand against earth, heaven, and nine Hells... (p. 6.)
- You'd be *my chattel, my mere property*. (p. 8.)

Men have a tendency of calling their wives and girlfriends with affectionate names to show their love, affection, and appreciation for instance 'my love' or 'my wife.' However, some words men use to refer to women are quite demeaning as they connote sexism and force. Even though calling the woman 'my love' is not wrong but the way it is used in the text is more important to be the focal point of this analysis. The way Lakunle used the phrase 'my love' is trying to lure Sidi to agree to marry him without paying the bride price.

Metaphor in The Lion and the Jewel

Metaphor is the essence of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff, 1980, p.5). The sentences below illustrate examples of metaphor:

- The *lion* and the *jewel*. (p.1).
- A true village belle (p. 1).

The title of this play is metaphoric as it compares Sidi to a jewel as she is precious and valuable to these men in the play, Baroka and Lakunle as they all want to marry her because of her beauty. Whereas, Baroka is the lion because of his strength, hunting abilities, and the position he holds in the village. Baroka is the king of Ilujinle. Sidi is referred to as the true village belle. A belle is a very beautiful and attractive woman. Sidi is a belle because every man in Ilujinle village wants her. Men call her a belle because her looks are sexually appealing. Whilst the old woman Sadiku is called an

old hag which is implying an old woman who is a witch when she was young, she was attractive for men.

Transitivity Choices in The Lion and the Jewel

Darweesh and Ghayadh (2016) argue that transitivity is concerned with the representation of who acts (who is the doer) and who is acted upon (who is affected by the actions of the doer). The following examples of transitivity choices and passivity show that women receive the actions or are acted upon by their male characters.

- Not till you swear to marry me (p. 6).
- Be a modern wife, look me in the eye and give me a little kiss - like this (kisses her) (p. 9).

The females in this play are represented as the receivers of the actions or are acted upon by their male counterparts. They are represented as dormant and passive beings. Lakunle tells Sidi to marry him when he says, "marry me". Sidi is the one receiving the action from Lakunle. Lakunle kisses Sidi. In all these examples, the men are the actors and the women are the objects acted upon. All these processes are falling under the material process intention by the male body. The women in this play are recipients of men's actions. Even though fiction tries to universalize transitivity, males, and females, they are usually stereotyped because male characters can control their own fate and circumstances whilst, whereas the female characters are usually passive and helpless and ordained by fate and cannot be resisted (Darweesh & Ghayadh, 2016).

Characters and Roles in the Two Plays

Mills (2005) states that characters are made of words as they are simply words which the reader has learned to construct into a set of ideologies. In the play, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, men and women are described differently as shown in the following sentences taken from the play.

- Neatly bearded man, his hair is thick and high (p. 7).
- I am a prophet (p. 7).
- Women are petty traders who sell wool, silk, and cloth (p. 22.)

He is described as a man with power as he is a prophet even though deceiving his followers. Males are also given the most important roles and

jobs in the play. They are described as prophets, chief messengers, and prime ministers. Additionally, they are the ones owning bicycles and motorcycles as a form of transport.

On the other hand, females are described with typical roles such as housewives, and petty traders by selling things like wool, cloth, and silk. This representation of females and males is sexist since it makes women to rely on men financially as men are described as having well-paying jobs at the time, unlike women.

Fragmentation

Fragmentation has to do with objectifying, depersonalising, and reducing of its parts as the female protagonist is not represented as a unified conscious physical being and the scene is not focalized from her perspective (Mills, 2005). Women bodies are represented in parts like eyes, cheeks, and legs. They are represented as the examples below show:

- A young girl passes, sleepily, clothed only in her wrapper (p. 14).
- Clean, wet, shiny face, and hair (p. 15).

The women are also objectified into parts like, ‘bosoms’, ‘only in her wrapper’, ‘shiny face, and hair’, ‘her waist’, ‘half of her length of her thigh is exposed’ and ‘swings her hips.’ All of those are women’s body parts not represented as a whole entity. Women in this play were used by the prophets to dance for them so that they gain their places of worship.

By so doing, women are exploited sexually as they are using their bodies to attract people to join these prophets on the beach. It is sexual exploitation as men are not doing the same thing as women. On the other hand, these men are calling themselves prophets, but they lack morals, values, and it involves spiritual ecstasy. This kind of behaviour proves that women are used by men for their self-gratification.

Women are displayed as people who dress inappropriately as it is substantiated by the examples above. It is only women that are presented in this way.

Their body parts are exposed for men to see. This is demeaning and depersonalizing the woman body. The writer might claim that it is done to show the beauty of the woman body, but for who? This alludes to the fact that women are represented for male gratification. They are represented in

that way to show the attractiveness of their bodies and how beautiful they look for example, the description of the young girl who passes by Jero's house to the river to have a bath. She is described with a shiny face and hair. They are also represented as a form of advertisement to attract more people to come to the prophets' churches. This is because the woman body is seen and used by men as an object.

Characters and Roles in The Lion and Jewel

In *the Lion and the Jewel*, men are associated with the most important jobs compared to their female counterparts who are described and associated with stereotypical jobs. The men in *The Lion and the Jewel* are represented in the same way as in the previous play which is discussed above focusing on their overall appearance. Lakunle one of the protagonists in the play is described as a nearly twenty-three dressed in an old-style English suit and his tie is done in a very small knot. The males are discussed in terms of their strength and trustworthiness.

- The teacher Lakunle (schoolmaster) (p. 1).
- He is dressed in an old-style English suit. His tie is done in a very small knot (p. 1).
- Sidi, I do not seek a wife to fetch and carry, to cook and scrub, to bring forth children by the gross (p. 8).
- The Lion of Ilujinle. The Fox of the undergrowth, the living god among men (p. 11).
- Men wrestle while women and young girls get involved in petty and foolish games and singing which men find boring and ridiculous as Lakunle confirmed on page 14 by saying that, "This foolery bores me. It is a game of idiots. I have work of more importance" (p. 14).

Baroka is referred to as a 'lion,' 'a panther', and a 'fox.' All these animals are regarded as the most powerful animals in the jungle; hence, their strength is associated with male characters in the play. The fact that Baroka is called a panther is evoking his toughness regardless of his age while his eldest wife Sadiku is called a 'hag' because she is old. This depicts the already exhibited inequality in how both characters are represented in the play. Baroka is the chief of Ilujinle village whereas; Lakunle is the teacher (schoolmaster) of the village school.

Clothes for males are described to evoke certain types of character. For instance, the way Lakunle's dressing code is described on page 1, "He is dressed in an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. His tie is done in a very small knot, disappearing beneath a shiny black waistcoat. He wears twenty-three-inch-bottom trousers, and Blanco-white tennis shoes." Whilst Sidi is described: "She is a slim girl with plaited hair. Around her has wrapped the familiar broad cloth, which is folded just above her breasts, leaving the shoulders bare." Lakunle's way of dressing connotes the character of a person who is educated and has money as he is affording to buy and wear those types of clothes which were very expensive at that time.

Fragmentation in The Lion and the Jewel

The following are examples of fragmentation from *The Lion and the Jewel*:

- She is a slim girl with plaited her (p. 1).
- Around her is wrapped the familiar broad cloth, which is folded just above her breasts, leaving the shoulders bare (p. 1).
- Look, look at that! (Makes a general sweep in the direction of her breasts (p. 2).
- Red paint on her lips and her hair is stretched like a magazine photo (p. 9).

As it was alluded to earlier in this study that fragmentation refers to breaking a whole body into small parts and it is used in study of Biology, literature and pornography (Al-Nakeeb, [2018](#)). In this case, fragmentation will be used to analyse how females were used to exploit their bodies. In the play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, women bodies are not referenced in the same way as the male in the sense that the bodies of males are not fragmented.

For instance, Sidi's body is referred to its anatomical elements, such as 'slim girl with plaited hair', 'leaving the shoulders bare', 'her breasts', 'red paint on her lips', 'hair stretched', 'head to her stomach', 'stretch your arms', 'girls' bottoms', 'a piece of cloth partially covering her', 'my velvet skin', 'the fullness of my breasts', 'in my eyes', 'the teeth that flash the shine of happiness', 'pictures of seductive girls', and 'youthful cheeks'.

The way Sidi is represented in this play implies that she is a very attractive woman who is desired by all men and available for sex due to the way her body is referenced in anatomical parts and not as a whole. Sidi is also referred to by her youthfulness, her beauty, and her tenderness. When a female character's body is represented into anatomical parts, it provides sexuality to the male reflecting the representation as a wholeness and singleness of the body. The anatomical fragmentation of the woman's body in this play appeared more frequently than in the men's representation as in the examples given above. In the magazine with Sidi's pictures and Baroka's, Sidi's pictures cover three pages while Baroka's pictures cover a little portion of the magazine and he is sharing the pages with others. Great details are taken into consideration when Sidi's pictures were taken as she poses in sexually provocative poses, for instance, "he made you stretch your arms towards the sun" (Soyinka & Burford, [1963](#)).

Discussions

This study found out that women are represented in these plays by the playwright through sexist language. This is because male use demeaning and unfair sexist language for women to objectify them. Similarly, studies carried out by Frank ([1989](#)) and Lledo ([1992](#)) established that languages are indeed sexist because they depict and name women from a masculine viewpoint of stereotyped and prejudiced beliefs of women.

Women are negatively portrayed as they are associated with words like: 'petrifier of the soul', 'heaven-sent trial', 'sinful woman', 'unwomanly', and 'weaker sex'. The negative portrayal of women connotes sexism in language as it relates to what Jones and Reid ([2010](#)) discovered in their study that sexism in language portrayed women negatively as they are used in cosmetic items like 'Boyfriend Cheater' that depicted women as unfaithful.

This study found that women were portrayed negatively through metaphors. There are words that represent women through metaphors in these plays like, 'belle', 'twinkle of a jewel', and 'daughter of Eve'. These examples represent women being to be very beautiful and charming and this makes them to be sexually attractive to men. However, the playwright also represented women to be evil and betrayers as he compared them to Eve from the bible who fell in the trap of the devil (serpent) and betrayed Adam

by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. The use of metaphors is discriminating against women as it is not more often used for the benefit of male characters. This concurs with Montashery's (2013) argument that women are discriminated against using metaphors as they influence people to think about certain scenarios in stereotyped ways. When a woman is called a 'belle', it connotes beauty beyond measure and makes a woman to think that she is better than others thus depicting her in vain like Sidi.

These plays represented women to be passive, dormant, and natural. They are represented as the receiver of male actions and the vehicle or carriers of men's problems. Women are portrayed as the vehicles or carriers of men's problems. Like in the instance when Baroka wanted a new wife, he sent Sadiku, his senior wife to tell Sidi that Bale wants her as a wife and that problem was solved when Sidi agrees to marry Baroka after she fell into his bait.

These findings echo the same sentiments of Doaga (2009) who carried out a study on "Linguistic choices and Gender Roles in New Nigerian Literature on *A Love Like a Woman*" and found out that the author used transitivity patterns to represent women as a receiver(receiving actions from men). Obi the male character in the novel carried out the liberating and protection and the women received it.

Males are represented as all-knowing and seeing it all in the plays. Brother Jero in, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, is portrayed as a person who knows everything as he manipulates his followers including his good apprentice, Chume. He knows what and how much to say to his congregants. Lakunle in the play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, thinks of himself as the best because he was educated in Western countries. He looks down on women characters, especially Sidi and Sadiku.

He thinks they are backward as they are not educated and still believe in traditional practices like bride-prices which to him is barbaric and a practice for savages. He wants to change the way Sidi dresses and wants Sadiku to go to school at seventy years of age. As Mills (2005) posits that focalization can be external or internal, the study found out that focalization is external as it is felt to be close to the narrating agent which is also termed as narrator focalizer. Similar findings, were also found by Mulvey

(Gauntett, [2002](#)) who said that women actors and characters are represented differently from the male as men constantly led stories as active participants and women are represented to be passive objects.

Additionally, Al-Nakeeb ([2018](#)) also found out that females are introduced in terms of their physical attractiveness and sexual availability which is not the case with the male characters. Dhanyshree ([2015](#)) who conducted research on women's representation in advertisements, found out that women are negatively represented and objectified in comparison to men as they are portrayed as sex objects as only some parts of their bodies are represented like hands, legs, or lips and not their bodies as one unity if it happens to be their full bodies, the picture will be taken in a sexual provocative way. Sidi's beauty is compared to nature like sunlight and morning dew. Similarly, Woldemariam ([2018](#)) also found out that fragmentation of women happens when comparing female body parts with nature like roses, sunlight, and stars. This also describes women as passive, natural, and consumable.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the women are represented through sexist and discriminatory language which treated them unfairly in comparison to men. Women are also portrayed as evil, negative, and unhappy as they only bring problems in the lives of men. In addition, these negative traits were also attributed to women because they were considered barbaric, uneducated, and looser beings having a very low status in society. Hence, a conclusion can be made that those attributes given to women imply subordination of women by their male counterparts as the playwright displayed how women were treated by men in a patriarchal society.

Women are portrayed as receivers of actions from men as it is observed that males carried out most of the actions in comparison to women. Hence, a conclusion was made that males are the doers whilst female is the receivers of actions. Under transitivity choices, this paper concludes that the male carries out actions and females act upon accordingly. This paper also concludes that females in these plays are given stereotypical jobs such as *housewives*, *petty traders*, *hawkers*, and *child bearers*, and to look after their husbands and take care of the households' affairs, whereas the male was given important roles such as *schoolmaster* and *chief*. Women are not given

those roles as it is perceived in patriarchal understanding; they are not capable of carrying out those roles because of their emotions and simple minds.

Recommendations

A lexical analysis has various meta-functions which are not part of this study; hence a recommendation is made to other researchers to explore them in terms of generic nouns and pronouns, women as a marked form as well as naming and androcentrism to complement this study on how women are represented using such meta-functions. Further research is necessary to effectively improve the representation of women not only in plays but in schools and universities as well so that educators (teachers and lecturers) are cognisant of their language use and utilise and instil use of gender-free language in the mind of their students, to create an equal society where human beings are not judged by their biological make-up but by their characters.

Fragmentation of women bodies leads to the focalization of the story to be narrated from the male perspective as a case in these plays. From the findings of this study, it can be recommended that proper care should be taken in discourse so that societal roles are equally distributed to males and females and not only in literature but also in occupational positions in real-life situations. Caution should be taken that women should not just be confined to stereotypical jobs. There should be a variety of roles for all characters. Writers who write story books should accord important roles to women too, not just to the roles like secretaries, and assistants as these are generally assumed to be female roles.

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