

## The Configuration of Gender and Identity in Nigerian Literature

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### Abstract

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The paper argues constructively that gender and identity are integral aspects of the Nigerian literature that needs articulate attention. Tracing how literary theories influence the gender theory and the doing action, the paper uses some selected publications to delineate Judith Butler's performativity as an instrument of gender and identity performance in Nigeria. The paper relies on Butler's position that depicts the performance of gender on cultural disposition which opposes the biological articulation of gender on the Nigerian woman.

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**Keywords:** genderization, identity, literary theories, violence and language disposition

### Introduction

One could say that Saussure's work on linguistics lays the foundation for many literary theories today. He argues that 'meaning is arbitrary and differentiated' (Lane, 2013:39). This is to denote that there is no relationship between the word and what it stands for. However, there is no intrinsic value between the word and what it stands for. First, he identifies the sign which has two connotations: the signified which is a 'concept' and the signifier which is 'the sound pattern that identified the sign. Saussure's rejection of the nature of calling things through the language gives the impression that these are 'no links between names and things' (ibid). This view he perceives as 'nomenclature'.

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In other words, gender and identity are names created by the words typifying signifiers which are signs that represent something in a given society. Saussure's proposition is just to denote that ideas are only created through the language.

In furtherance to Saussure's work on the signifier and the signified, Kristeva holds a supporting idea that the 'semiotic science of signs of signs' is very important because it gives more understanding to the problems of the contemporary society and the fundamental analysis of the postcolonial literature. She identifies three semiotic approaches: one, the logical unification of all knowledge, the second is 'an attempt to find a unifying code' and three is 'an interrogation of entire history of the metaphysical concept of the sign' (Lane, 2013:60). This idea is to describe the word in a deconstructive manner in order to chart a foreground study of the postcolonial literature. For Kristeva, her semiotic interpretation will facilitate the basis for critical interpretation of contemporary issues such as gender and the question of identity. Kristeva concludes that,

It can be understood here why the theory of the sign, the matrix of the age is indispensable that may be constructed on it all logic, and thus all reasoning and hence all science (since fundamentally it is only deductive reasoning compelled by the principles of identity and non-contradiction on the terms of a sequence). The semiotic gesture is thus the founding gesture of science (Lane, 2013: 62).

One begins to understand the inter-relationships that exist in the application of semiotics to other literary theories. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is a strategy that is applied to question the philosophy's claims to reflexive self-identity because the writings which are rejected as a means of conveying the truth accounts for itself. Deconstruction also depicts 'inversion/subversion' (83) which sheds more light on binary situations of good/bad. Man /woman etc. It postulates the post structural activity which is outside the ethical responsibility- issues around gender. Our preoccupation in this paper is to visualise the motif of gender and identity in some selected Nigeria works and the gender question is rather performative than biological.

## Gender in Nigeria Society: Theories and Concepts

To fully explore the meaning of gender in our contemporary society, one needs to look at gender and identity from a more complex phenomenon. This will enable us not to limit its scope and concept in contemporary understanding.

Many definitions of gender and identity have been propounded, but these definitions are rather celebrating the importance of the bodies to the cultural beliefs which the heterosexuals hold. A meaningful definition of gender must be devoid of biological classification of concept for social and behavioural relevance. This means that gender must not be measured by the yardstick of male or female in any society but by the societal relevance and behavioural motivation. Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray's definition of gender is shallow because they place the man at the centre of attraction.

To J Simone de Beauvoir in the *Second Sex* (1976), gender is seen from the perspective of both the man and the woman. What we are saying is that the author classifies gender to mean the man and the woman in isolation, thereby leading to the allocation of roles to these indivisible features. However, woman being the second sex relies solely on the first sex being the man! The first sex, literarily being the man and the second, being the woman gets her cultural values and existence determined by the man in any society.

He goes further to uphold the Aristotle dictum which says that 'the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities' (1976: xiv). This belief runs through his portrayal of the woman in the *Second Sex*

In *Second Sex*, the explication of gender is not given a proper priority because of the sentimental and chauvinistic semantics which it expresses in the explanation of the sense of place and relevance for the woman. The book presents an inferior perception of the woman and her worldview in her interaction with the male folk. It does not project a balance view of the woman which can make it qualify as that which relates gender to a more 'performative' perspective.

Consequently, critics like Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Kristeva and Cixous have tried to emancipate the feminist criticism from the grip of masculine critical tradition by explaining various functional approaches which could remove the restrictions male dominated society placed as convention. Millet's 'Sexual Politics' and Butler's *The Politics of the Performative* (1997) underscore the need to see gender from political and cultural exclusive in order to make life more meaningful and significant.

This will fully explore the meaning of gender to our contemporary society because if gender is seen from the culturally exclusive, and if gender is allowed to be 'reformulated to encompass the powers that produce the effects of sex' (Butler, 1997: 7), there is going to be a meaningful relevance in the construction of the performative in order to bring out the real being of an individual in a society that is not polarised by gender.

The redefinition of gender is what Seldan et al attempt to uphold in *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, when they capture a redefinition of the existence and the projection of the woman in literature. A more relevant interest and attention is given to feminism, gender and the issue of identity. The book captures 'new ethnics' and the new cultural identities for the African, Caribbean and coloured women all over the world and their quest to survive as a result of colonialism, patriarchy and the violation of human rights, the writing summarily demonstrates that,

In each of these cases, it might appear that the cultural or national identity of particular writers and critics is being asserted as a pre-established position or a primary identity to the exclusion of other constitutive features.

But questions of identity and position are consistently problematized in international feminism, as in the other areas considered above, and rarely is there an unselfconscious or uncompromised appeal to essentialist identities (Seldan et al, 2005: 233).

This illusive display of gender limits its performative application and makes it fictional. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler castigates the existing feminist theory and probes into the concept that 'woman' and 'women' are complicated phenomena when analysed in literary parlance.

In the analysis of the place of woman in her current vision, she examines the 'unproblematic unity' of women that evokes a 'solidarity of identity' that leads to a distinction between the sex and gender. To her, gender is a creation of the 'sexed bodies'. 'Gender mirrors sex' but there is a restriction to it and this restriction is being created by the individual in a society polarised by cultural feelings. Her conceptions of gender and identity have generated a lot of controversies which will be examined in the course of our study. Butler disowns the notion of oppression in favour of new ideas which best explain gender and identity.

In her exploration of the categories of sex and gender, there is need to emphasise the 'performative' aspect rather than 'the illusion' aspect which constitutes the analysis of Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray's phallogocentric conception of the woman in contemporary literature. Butler's *Bodies That Matter* explains more when she opines that,

If gender is a construction, must be an 'I' or a 'We' who enacts or performs that construction? How can there be an activity, a constructing without presupposing an agent who precedes and performs that activity? How would we account for the motivation and direction of construction without such a subject?. As a rejoinder, I would suggest that it take a certain suspicion towards grammar to reconceive the matter in a different light. For, if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an 'I' or 'We' who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense (Butler, 1993:7).

The construction of 'gendered' matrix and the relation by classification is what we attempt to exemplify in the postcolonial Nigerian literature. This situation is an 'attribute or interpellation which contribute to that field of discourse and power that orchestrates, delineates and sustains that which qualifies human activities'(8). In Africa most inheritances are handed down from generation to generation to the male survivor. *Gendered Trouble* emphasises the exigency of the pre-patriarchal state without recourse to the *performative* aspect of gender which makes 'cultural melancholy' (70) a 'gender identification' (63) in contemporary society that is polarised by 'internalised prohibition' (ibid). The gender identification and classification into different forms constitute the cardinal onus in *genderization* in many Nigerian narratives which can lead to a displacement of the logos.

In recent times, philosophical works have concern their interests on gender issues; Jacques Derrida explains the term 'phallogocentrism' from the premise of the western culture where his ideas are predicated on cultural and intellectual notion of 'logocentrism' and 'phallogocentrism'. Logos which depicts word at the centre of attraction is referred to the 'philosophy of determiness'. Since 'determiness' is based on contradiction, Derrida's Deconstruction further describes 'phallogocentrism' as the word which is used by men for their own elevation, this, however, explains how the 'phallic' genderized the word for selfish purposes.

'Phallogocentrism' emphasises the way the word (logos) has been genderised by the 'phallic', the 'masculinist' and the 'patriarchal'. It also expresses their confessions about the fundamental structure of society. The dual oppositions of male/female dichotomy are the major preoccupations of literature and, indeed, the postcolonial Nigerian literature that places word at the centre of attraction in the course of genderizing themes and various perspectives in African literature.

The 'displacement of the logos' underpins the displacement of women which is the pre-occupation in some Nigerian narratives. '*Genderization in Male Autobiographical Narratives in Nigeria*' (2011) visualises the displacement of women in a society by their Nigerian counterpart and the promotion of psychological and economical poverty. Most Nigerian women in literature and in practice suffer poverty on a more widespread basis than their male counterpart'(34). Similarly, 'Studies now have shown that both male and female now want a gender sensitive writing that propels good economy (38).

### **The Woman and the Nigeria Society**

Language is another area where the woman suffers alienation in society. This is perpetuated by the choice of language in various interactions with the man. This situation further explains the 'unproblematic unity which Butler says evokes solidarity of identity' in the areas of sex and identity. She observes that Wittig's observation of men's handling of language places the woman as a subordinate entity. She further argues that woman are projected as 'materialist' when placed as a subordinate but rather, there is need for 'another order of materiality' (2005:26). What she means is that language is sometimes used in gender and identity to tailor the satisfaction of the heterosexual beings.

This further explains Baffler's performativity and identity as the source of more secondary actions and behaviours. In J.L Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), 'a performative utterances' cannot be really said to be true or false because it is the state of mind of an individual during that period when the mood is decided. Similarly, Butler opines that a man can put up a masculine behaviour and at the other time behave feminine. This explores the level of performance which can be reversed. She sees gender as behaviour which cannot only be reversed but rehearsed. Being heterosexual or homosexual according to Butler is just a state of condition one finds himself or herself.

Therefore, she underscores gender constructed nature so as to fight for the right of the oppressed in society. She wants to fight those identities that do not conform to a transformative society. Those artificial creations of the heterosexual makings that do not conform to the enforced rules or those artificial identities that are devoid of the necessary claims they claim- these prone to historical enactment, that is, they have been handed over from generation to generation. There is now a need to change them in order to have a situation that is performative and all encompassing.

While some autobiographical writers in Nigeria assigned some inferior use of language to the woman, they assign the superior one to the man by making him a super-person. 'An example of this situation is seen in Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command* (1981) where his female characters are loosely connected. In that narration, Obasanjo projects the woman as supporters or opposers to the male's masculinity rather than giving them their own voices' (*Genderization*, 2011). Butler opines that 'language of usurpation suggests a participation in the very categories which s/he feels inevitably distanced, suggesting also the denaturalized and fluid possibilities of such categories once they are no longer linked causally or expressively fixity of sex' (*Gender Trouble*, p.100). In 'A Study of Gender Consciousness in Nigerian Autobiographical Narratives and the Power of the Interview'(2011), male authors in Nigerian postcolonial literature create artificial metaphors 'to displace the embodiment of 'self-glorifications' (93). The prevailing nature of metaphors used by male writers centre on words like 'head' 'bread winner', 'leader', 'the family eye' etc. These words are used as metaphors to depict male superiority over their female counterpart. However,

This study vividly explores the self-created metaphors in male autobiographical writings in Nigeria and the negation of female gender in art.

This paper also investigates the dichotomy of language, the use of irony and situational metaphors to displace conventional ones (2011:92).

Artificial metaphor could be said to be a preoccupation of 'illusion' that is not 'performative' because of the role which the male gender sets out to play-the role of limitation which inhibits the socio-economic motif of the female gender. In *Exciting Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997), Butler shifts attention to the language disparity and allocation of specific values which are devoid of performative elements such as the 'injurious speech' which is a product of fixation.

One is not simply fixed by the name that one is called. In being called an injurious name, one is derogated and demeaned. But the name holds out another possibility as well: by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call.

Thus, the injurious address may appear to fix or paralyze the one it hails, but it may also produce an unexpected and enabling response. J. L. Austin proposed that to know what makes the force of an utterance effective what establishes its performative character; one must first locate the utterance within a "total speech situation". There is, however, no easy way to decide on how best to delimit that totality (Butler, 1997: 4).

The notion of speech breakdown in *genderized* literature can also be seen in African literature because some writers in postcolonial Nigerian literature assign superior language to their male friends and inferior language to the female characters which are always at their mercies. The configuration of this scenario is what Butler tags 'rituals' because 'if the temporality of linguistic convention, considered as ritual, exceeds the instances of its utterance, and that excess is not fully capturable or identifiable (the past and future of the utterance cannot be narrated with any certainty' (5). Similarly in 'Interrogating Power Relations in Contemporary Nigeria: Protest and Social Relevance in Festus Iyayi's *Violence*' (2011), violence is the ritualistic instrument employed by Iyayi in the novel, he celebrates a fixated grip over the female gladiators with his choice of language which is rather mechanical and boastful. In the novel, there is a portrayal of what Butler sees as 'criminal side of self-determination' (*Excitable Speech*, 5).

This portrayal is being echoed when societies tend to discriminate by invoking 'the silence conspiracy' to reduce the societal 'form of identities' (ibid). In the *Violence*, the reductionist concept of subjecting the woman based on *genderization* is illuminated when crude words like 'prostitute' 'harlot' are freely used by male chauvinists to denote the image of the women folks in polarized African societies. Reacting to the poor presentation and projection in some of this postcolonial Nigerian literature, protest and violence become the order of the day. The situation lends axiomatic credence to social relevance in the postcolonial Nigeria literature. What can we then say is the relationship between protest and social relevance?

The relationship between protest and social relevance is an ostensibly obvious one, and would therefore seem not to require much attention, but the precise dimensions of their connections to each other are sometimes obscured by this very obviousness. At face value, the relationship between protest and social relevance seems to stem from their apparent conceptual complementarity: protest refers to the expression of dissent or (less often) of support for specific ideas, situations, actions, groups or individuals. Social relevance is the adoption of positions that display a belief in the imperatives of equity, social justice and fair play in all their ramifications in society. Both concepts are thus concerned with social issues, and by extension, with the promotion of those elements that would ensure that no member of a given society is unfairly treated or discriminated against. Protest therefore is one of the main ways in which social relevance is expressed, while social relevance is often the motivation for protest. (Akingbe et al, 2011: 305).

Motivation for protest and the attempt to compel the society are among the crises Butler tries to explain when she observes that 'every society is subject to crises' (*Excitable Speech*, 5) and crises underscore the fundamental relationship that exists among people of divergent language and landscape. 'To be addressed injuriously is not only to be open for an unknown future, but not to know the time and place of injury, and to suffer the disorientation of one's situation as the effect of such speech' (40). In *Prekarious Life* (2004), Butler journeys into the effects of violence on the society that suffers the effect of violence. She observes that there is always a course for retaliation when pushed to the wall.

The opinion here is that human beings fail to accept their own fault in most occasions, rather they see outside aggression as “terrorists” The observation here is that ‘we do not, however, take the signs of destroyed life and decimated peoples as something, for which we are responsible, or indeed understand that decimation works to confirm the United States as performing atrocities’ (6). The United States in this context is denoted as a macrocosm of a larger society performing violence without minding its effects on the common folks in the streets.

*Violence* identifies the major participants, catalogues the moral imperatives that drive them, charts the consequences and effects of their actions upon themselves and upon others, and examines its long-term prospects. In undertaking these functions, Iyayi avoids the temptation of lapsing into a conventional analysis of the relationship between divergent social classes.

In particular, he does not seek to bestow innocence or guilt on the basis of social class. What he does is to carefully construct prevailing social conditions and show how it is designed to perpetuate inequity and injustice. Ultimately, he argues, no single individual is really at fault; it is the system that makes extremes of wealth and poverty possible that is to blame. More specifically, the prevailing system of social relations is so distorted that the only way in which the rich and the poor can co-exist is through a state of perpetual aggression, or violence (Akingbe et al, 2011:305-306).

Violence and protest, therefore becomes the function of society. The portrayal of various social instincts, however, expresses the instruments of culture and society. *Precarious Life*, is therefore, a metaphor of life which presents the irony of man's existence. In Butler's *Undoing Gender* 2004, the same phenomenon is carried forward in a different Context. Here she is suggesting a ‘performative’ activity rather than being seeing from the ‘illusion’. The mindset is a very integral bearer of human activity. The needs to undo these scenarios and to propel a new life that will enhance egalitarian society are vigorously expressed by Butler. Her subjection is very mechanical because in undoing gender there is an exigency to note that, gender discrimination applied tacitly to women, that no longer serves as the exclusive framework for understanding its contemporary usage.

Discrimination against women continues —especially poor women and women of color, if we consider the differential levels of poverty and literacy not only in the United States, but globally—so this dimension of gender discrimination remains crucial to acknowledge.

But gender now also means gender identity, a particularly salient issue in the politics and theory of transgenderism and transsexuality. Transgender refers to those persons who cross-identify or who live as another gender, but who may or may not have undergone hormonal treatments or sex reassignment operations. Among transsexuals and transgendered persons, there are those who identify as men (if female to male) or women (if male to female), and yet others who, with or without surgery, with or without hormones, identify as *trans*, as transmen or transwomen; each of these social practices carries distinct social burdens and promises. Colloquially, "transgender" can apply to the entire range of these positions as well. Transgendered and transsexual people are subjected to pathologization and violence that is, once again, heightened in the case of trans persons from communities of color. (Butler, 2004: 6).

From the above, one can see clearly the degree of *genderization* and social degeneration which have eaten deep into the Nigerian system. Some Nigerian writers follow the precedents of chauvinist writers who feel that their only way out in art and culture is to celebrate. Butler is extremely critical to the type of writing that sectionalizes the people and makes them identified with violence and protest. This type of writing in Nigeria does not propel distinct contribution to the economic and political landscape. Looking at the religious aspect of the Nigerian literature, we shall see sham, pretence and greed perpetuated to separate the identity of man and women in the churches. In Nigeria, same sex marriage is illegal, gay and lesbian marriages are not encouraged, in fact, one risks prison term if s/he talks about same sex marriage. The House of Representatives and the Senate recently passed a law to uphold the government's position in not supporting the project.

Many Churches preached against the project as well. Many people cannot exercise their fundamental rights of same sex marriage in Nigeria. Ironically these leaders are found messing up young teenage girls who are not up to eighteen years in their quest to have satisfaction.

Recently, the former Zamfara State governor now a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria married a thirteen year old girl and sponsored a bill on the floor of the house to legalise teenage marriage (girl below eighteen years).

That is the example of gender violence which is frequently celebrated in the Nigerian society and literature.

The Senator (Sanni Ahmed) later divorced the Egyptian girl when she became fifteen and remarried another thirteen years Egyptian girl to continue his sexual harassment and sexual violence in Nigeria. Some pastors are found sectionalizing the church for selfish and egocentric reasons in order to further create 'identities' and 'social *genderization*' because that is the only way to satisfy the yearnings of their greedy intentions.

In '*An Examination of Schism in the Politics and Secession amongst Pentecostal Groups in Nigeria*...', (2011), the dialectics of pretense and sham are being exhibited to the fullest. Women and the poor are being identified as individuals with no contribution to the system. After the emancipation of African churches, men emancipated economically without emancipating their female members who struggle and toil with them from the beginning.

In the article, it demonstrated that, Violence, hatred, oppression, tussle for leadership power and divisions have characterized the indigenous Pentecostal churches in Nigeria particularly in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Historically, the schisms, rifts, divisions and secessions could be traced to doctrinal practices, leadership problems, different interpretations and manipulations of prophetic gifts and sundries. Today, some church pioneers have been alleged of fake prophecies and revelations. These attitudes have negative implications on church growth and on church membership (2011: 21).

In most cases, women are at the receiving end. 'They were made to be seen and not to be heard' (Chukwuma, 1990:8) and that is why 'in Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*, Amaka wishes to be fully functional by saying bye- bye to husband but not bye-bye to sex' (Chukwuma, 1990:9). This drastic shift is a reaction against the violent treatment received from males.

However, instead of saying bye-bye to husband and not to sex, why still think in the heterosexual dimension when a woman can direct her tentacles towards the bisexual perspective. The configuration of gender violence and social demarcation is what this paper sets out to achieve. Butler is very critical of this social degeneration in literature because it is extremely 'complicated' and it requires 'self-determination' to 'dispossess the self in order to take possession in itself' (*Undoing Gender*, 2004:17).

This will 'combat false form of universalism that services a tacit or explicit cultural imperialism' (19).

By so doing, the illusive exercise of gender will give sway to the 'performative' in order to 'emphatically' enhance the 'viability' of the 'exercise of woman anatomy' (22) so that it will lead to a proper organization of 'sexuality in the service of reproduction relations' (112).

*Giving An Account of Oneself* (2005) is a philosophical re-examination of one's, cultural values and heritage with relations to morality. Butler's perception here is underscored in the domain considering morality as a basis for one's action. She submits a punitive measure for anybody who indulges in moral break down. Consequently, an observation is made on 'Nietzschean's account of punishment' and 'Foucault's account of disciplinary power in the prison' (Butler, 2005:15) for anyone who goes contrary in those basic things of life. There is a need to emphasize good state because 'bad conscience' cannot 'manufacture good values' (16). In addition, this situation should form a basic from which values are created.

In Nigeria and in many African countries, the erosion of this individual 'values' is seen in the projection of 'male superiority' over female existence. A popular Nigeria movie celebrates this superiority and *genderization* in a satiric dimension.

The movie is tagged *My Baby* (2007). In the movie, Nkem Owoh (the husband) initially gets married to two women: the first from Hausa and the second wife from Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria. Both had no son but produced nine female children whom Nkem Owoh the husband constantly calls names like 'cockroaches', 'these things', 'temporary structures', 'devourers', 'polluters', 'consumers' and 'insignificant things' He abandons them entirely to their mothers to take care educationally and otherwise. The movie demonstrates the Igbos preference of male child over the female child.

After many years of violent and turbulent domestic war with the two wives and nine female children, the husband had to take another wife- a Yoruba woman believing that she will produce the long desired son. To his chagrin and frustration, the youngest wife had a baby girl but coincidentally, the most senior wife now had a son for the husband the same day as the youngest wife.

Nkem Owoh-the husband, immediately abandoned the youngest wife he had shown 'better' love and affection for the most senior wife who now had a son for him.

The question Judith Butler asks tentatively is that is it morally right for the husband who creates domestic terrorist activities, violence, tension, crises and gender war to stimulate a value with which the society is governed and regulated? Such male chauvinists are also members of parliament in Nigeria. They make laws which govern the political, economic and cultural disposition of the people. One can ask, to what extent are these laws human and to what extent are such laws culturally oriented to stimulate the moral development of every individual in contemporary experience. The dialectic of this cultural breakdown which one constantly experiences has given rise to two reactions among women folk. Patricia Gurin is very critical of these two movements which try to re-examine cultural and moral breakdown in contemporary literature. According to the article 'Narratology and Gender Discourse in Male Autobiographical Narratives: A Passing Reference' in the *Proceedings of International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2011, Patricia Gurin identifies these two movements as: 'gender consciousness' and 'feminine consciousness' (2011: 85). While gender consciousness centres on the need for gender awareness and the need to understand its sensitive nature, feminine consciousness takes interest in the preparation of the woman for a greater and challenging society.

'The configuration of time and history' in Nigerian postcolonial literature is hereby represented allegorically in poetry and narrative writings in time and space through events, locale, style, character traits and at the level of presentation.

The exemplification of this narrative experience in literary art is what Butler refers to as 'performative'. In *Dispossession: the Performative in the Political* (2013), Judith Butler probes into the plight of those who have lost everything to dispossession. Lost things include cultural rights, citizenships, properties and personal possessions to the powers that be.

In essence, Butler is extremely critical of the loss of the superiority of gender feelings to the male counterpart. She describes as *performative* those things that make women to possess their inalienable rights to capture their lost possessions. The Nigerian woman has been dispossessed in gender, in class stratification and in social motifs in many areas of human endeavor in Nigeria.

Similarly in 'Salient Themes as Voices in African Poetry' (Venets, 2011), the configuration of the dialectics of social dispossession is examined in the article.

Various voices in the collection of poetry are to delineate 'themes' used as 'echoes to salvage various inferences found in the decaying political, economic and social landscape in Nigeria. The dispossession of 'cultural ethos and the contemporary post-independence disillusionment' of the people is being illuminated for clearer understanding (227).

Soyinka, Clark and other contemporary poets in Nigeria like Joe Ushie and others have attempted to show how poetry is used for social revitalization which Butler perceives as 'possession' of the 'dispossessed'. The British divide and rule and the French assimilation policy have dispossessed the African from his roots. Consequently, *genderized* feelings of the African and some Nigerian men have further dispossessed the African woman from her rights with the attempt to paralyze her economically, socially, politically and culturally. These culturally 'dispossessed' persons are 'casualties' in the poem of J.P Clark. Clark uses the poem 'Casualties' to castigate the negligence of children and women in the Nigerian political cosmology. Many people erroneously think that only those people that lost their lives in the Nigerian Biafra war are the casualties. 'Clark is trying to observe the state of the down trodden in our society. Some people are dead and gone, they are casualties, some are forgotten, some are imprisoned, and some are poor and dejected. Clark is of the opinion that nobody should be left out in the regulation of framework of society' for better (243).

This study attempts to model Judith Butler's expressions of gender, sexualities and identities to express the motif of *genderization* and social themes in the postcolonial literature.

## **Conclusion**

The paper explores the trends in gender and identity with recourse to Saussure, Kristeva and Butler and how their theories help explain the concepts. It shows the previously believed perception of who the woman is and the current submission that gender is culturally constructed and not biological.

The paper blends theory with tradition and moves away from the Cartesian concept of subjectivity that lays the perception of struggle for equality without recourse to the performativity and purpose for gender and identity.

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