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Òwé, The Horse of Language: A Feminist Analysis of Women's Representation in Yorùbá and Portuguese Proverbs

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Abstract

Every society is marked by its culture, history, tradition, food, and technology, and language plays a role as a unifying factor. People communicate, express their feelings, and assign duties and positions using language. Yorùbá, as one of the major languages in Nigeria, is rich in proverbs that embellish communication. Similarly Portuguese, which is spoken in Brazil, has a strong African influence in its cultural and literary traditions, and values proverbs a great deal. Both languages are used to assign gender roles where males and females are allotted different spaces of operation. This paper argues that despite the numerous achievements of women in both societies, the patriarchal system still prevails through proverbs that repress them and naturalize stereotypes with impunity. The paper uses Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Theory to problematize the representation of Yorùbá and Brazilian women as portrayed by proverbs in the two languages. The analysis discovers a uniformity of gender discrimination in the proverbs of the two languages, and establishes the interdependence of language, gender and power, highlighting the relativism in discourse analysis and gender equality.

Keywords: gender, Yorùbá proverbs, Brazilian proverbs, language, culture

Introduction

Yorùbás are people of rich culture and tradition. Their cultural influence has spread to various parts of the world, especially Caribe, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, and Cuba. (Olupona 2007; Ayoh'Omidire 2020). Yorùbá cultural and traditional elements include language, culinary,

economics, dressing, art, sculpture, religion, aesthetics, textile, naming, music, funerals, and philosophy, and the embellished culture contributes immensely to the lives of people in the diaspora where the inherited African culture serves as the pillar of identity-formation and survival for Afro-descendants suffering from various systemic racial discriminations. In the same way that the culture has positively affected the diaspora, it has also helped in grooming the new generation in Yorùbá society towards the valorization and preservation of culture in the face of Eurocentric ideology affecting the younger generation.

The òwe in the Yorùbá language (i.e. Yorùbá proverbs) are regarded as products of Yorùbá oral tradition, which has been documented to serve people in their daily interactions. Oyekan Owomoyela considers Yorùbá proverbs as verbal embellishments commonly deployed in both formal and informal contexts among the Yoruba people that occupy largely the southwestern geopolitical zone of Nigeria (12). The common tag-opener for deep conversation among elders in Yorùbá communities is a proverb (òwe): “*owe leṣin oro, bí oro-o bá sọ̀nù, owe la fì ñwá a*” (the proverb is the horse of speech: when speech is lost, the proverb is the means we use to hunt for it)” (Owomoyela 12). This particular proverb indicates the efficacy of proverbs in spicing conversation and social relationships among the Yorùbá people. Nurudeen Lawal describes proverbs as:

(...) a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charms. It is characterized by the economic use of words and the sharpness of focus and touch of literary/poetic beauty. The construction of proverbs can be traced to the creativity of artists at particular periods of time in human history. It is then used by folks when it is discovered to contain applicable facts of life and appeal to their imagination by the neatness and beauty in which it is framed. Proverbs can be traced to three sources- folktales, personal/communal historical experiences, and observation of various aspects of the natural environment as well as general human affairs.

Adetutu Aragbuwai and Omotunde Samuel, discussing the impact of proverbs in communication and human relations, especially in gender classification, cite various definitions:

Proverbs are richly flavored, pithy, and fixed oral expressions that epitomize the essence of most African cultures; hence, they are conceptual literary expressions metaphorically, poetically, and aesthetically used to mirror the cultural worldviews, social and moral values, ethos, and experiences of Africans from generation to generation.

Remi Raji affirms that proverbs still maintain their traditional wisdom, “*They are ‘culture markers’*” (3). Although, over the years, language and social evolution occurred differently around Yorùbá proverbs, producing new proverbs which he calls “Postproverbial in Yorùbá culture”:

This tradition of the supplementary proverb, the product of which may be inadvertent or unintentional, is what I call the phenomenon of the postproverbial in Yoruba culture. My immediate concern here is to record the development of a normative rupture in the production of this traditional verbal genre and by extension establish the presence of “new” proverbs with new forms, new meanings, and, perhaps, new values... As an illustration, the original proverb, *Eni t’òjìn sí kòtò, kq*

ará iyókù lqgbqn (He who falls into a pit, is a lesson to others), has its supplementary alternative in *Eni t'ójìn sí kòtò, ojú è' ló fq* (He who falls into a pit is blind) (75-76, emphasis mine).

Yorùbá proverbs are often used to spice the music in some Nigerian hip-hop songs. Scholars classify them into various themes such as honesty/truth, wisdom, good name, morality, religion, deity, aesthetics, rituals, music, sacrifices, occupation, diligence, perseverance, economy, traditional education, justice, afterlife, courage/cowardice, conflict and resolution, power, leadership, and most importantly, gender (Salami 2004; Asiyanbola, 2007; Owomoyela 2005). Nevertheless, the proverbs are not limited to the Yorùbá language but are present in languages such as English, Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese. For the sake of this paper, some proverbs used in Brazil will be considered within the parameter of representation of Brazilian women. Anamarija Marinovic states that "*Proverbs are with concise forms where concentrated popular wisdom has accumulated over centuries, it can be said in few words and in a clear way and simple words of great facts that make one think about people of many generations.*"¹ In this paper, common proverbs used in Brazil with some in Yorùbá were selected within the following gender analysis parameters; gender relation, demonization of women, stereotype and gender discrimination, and criminalization of women's sexuality.

Yorùbá Proverbs and Gender

Many scholars have analyzed the reality and the condition of women using the elements of capitalist patriarchal society as the space to explain the exploration and oppression of women. (Costa 1997; Arndt 2002; Arnfred 2011). On the other hand, Susan Arndt notes the economic and political power of women in African societies and shows how men and women have divided the public space, citing some regions and ethnic groups like Ashanti in Ghana, and Yorùbá and Igbo in Nigeria where women contributed greatly to the development of their societies (28-29). Despite the condition of colonialism, the Yorùbá people have been able to preserve and transmit their oral tradition including their cultural values, past experiences, and norms to the new generation, as found in the oral literature (Sheba 207).

Moreover, gender roles and language are inseparable. Michelle M. Lazar describes gender roles specification in society:

First, 'gender' functions as an interpretative category that enables participants in a community to make sense of and structure their particular social practices. Second, gender is a social relation that enters into and partially constitutes all other social relations and activities. Based on the specific, asymmetric meanings of 'male' and 'female', and the consequences of being assigned to one or the other within concrete social practices, such an allocation becomes a constraint on further practices. (5)

¹ "*Sendo os provérbios formas concisas em que se encontra condensada a sabedoria popular acumulada durante séculos, pode-se dizer que em poucas palavras e de uma maneira clara e simples ditas grandes verdades que fazem pensar muitas gerações de pessoas.*" Anamarija Marinovic, "Provérbios e a mulher: O lugar da mulher nos provérbios portugueses e sérvios" 2012 www.webartigos.com Accessed on 17th March, 2022.

The analysis of these proverbs will be done using the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The theory seeks to engage various studies with a gender focus which mostly adopts a critical feminist view of gender relations, motivated by the need to change the existing conditions of these relations (Lazar 2). Ajibade justifies this approach:

The images of men and women in oral history are important sources of cultural knowledge and understanding of gender issues. The study of images of a social or gender group in a society's oral art reveals cultural and social codes in that society. This not only reveals certain conventional traits that are characteristic of genres of literature but also reflects underlying social class and worldviews specific to gender, social class, and perhaps religious groups. By application, an analysis of such cultural and ideological images has relevance for issues of socio-economic development (137).

Sample of Yorùbá Proverbs – TABLE 1²

S/N	GENDER RELATION	DEMONIZATION OF WOMEN	STEREOTYPE & GENDER DISCRIMINATION	CRIMINALIZATION OF WOMEN'S SEXUALITY
a.	Bí obìnrin kò bá ní orogún, obè kò ní dùn.	Obìnrin bí mo fún ni kò ní kó má pa ni.	Ìyàwó tí a fi ijó fé, ìrán ni ó wò lo	Idan ni filà àgbèrè tí òbò dé wá láti òrun
b.	Àísí obìnrin lóòdè, bí eni lu àsán ilù kan ni.	Eni bá gun esin obìnrin yó subú.- Disloyal	Eni fé arewà fé ìyonu, gbogbo ayé ló n bá won tan.	Méta ni t'obìnrin, gbà fi bo enu, gbà fi bo ara, gbà fi bo abé.
c.	Oko gbégbá n gbé agbòn ní mú ilé gún.	Obìnrin fi omo fún oko méfà, ó ní òun kò fé ìyonu, tó bá tún fé wáyé ejó n kó.	Eni tí ó bá da aso obìnrin bora wèrèpè ló dà bora- Unreliable	Òpe ni obìnrin, gbogbo eni bá ní igbà lówó ló n gùn.
d.	Òrisà jé n pé méjì obìnrin kò dénú	Pamí n kú obìnrin se orí benben sí oko.	Filà ni obìnrin won kù bá ode wo ìtì- Women loves easy life	Bí a kò bá tètè gé idan ní kékeré, bí bá dagba tánebo nlá ni ó ma gbà lówó oko

Analysis of Table 1

Under the classification of "Gender Relations" in Table one is the proverb, "Bí obìnrin kò bá ní orogún, obè rè kò ní dùn" (If a woman does not have a rival, her stew cannot be delicious) (Sheba 11). It establishes the concept of rivalry among women especially in polygamous family. The patriarchal society places a control over the private and public life of women, including their sexuality. Polygamy has been part of Yorùbá agrarian society due to the necessity of many

² Sheba, Laide. *Yorùbá Proverbs with Feminine Lexis*. Spectrum Books Ltd., 2016.

labourers for farm work; however, the domination of women and the ideology of colonization, where a man has been placed over a woman within the sexual division of labor gave men the (un)-natural idea that polygamy can be a standing model for the marriage institution, disregarding the consequences of rivalry and hatred within polygamous families.

In addition, the proverb succinctly calls for competition, implying that Yorùbá women can only attain perfection in whatever they do if they are faced with rivalry. This ideology condemns the innate potential and capacity of women. On the contrary, the next proverb affirms the weak point in the naturalization of polygamy as it echoes the voice of women against polygamous marriage: “Òrisà jé n pé méjì obìnrin kò dénú” (Creator give me a marital rival, is never a wish of any woman) (Sheba 59). The reality in many cases has shown that men only capitalize on the domineering ideology for their gain. Kate Linker made a feminist theoretical submission on representation and reality within society, “...in the perception that the reality can only be known through the forms which articulate it, there is no reality outside the representation.”³ Currently, the new polygamous marriage is described as a situation where various women are married to a single man but live separately. An example of this new polygamy in Mozambique is called *Friendship Polygamy* (“*Poligamia Amantismo*”) (Arnfred 88-90; Omidire 117). It is a system redesign to limit rivalry among the wives. This assumption requires further studies.

The two proverbs here celebrate the value of women within the society: “Àísí obìnrin lóòdè, bí eni lu àsán ilù kan ni” (The absence of a woman in a family is like beating a single drum) (Sheba 63), and “Okò gbégbá n gbé agbòn ní mú ilé gún,” (Husband carry a calabash while I carry a basket make a home steady) (Sheba 33). The first proverb highlights the importance of a woman in the family institution and community while the second emphatically declares gender equality in the division of labor among the Yorùbá people. It could surprise us that this type of proverb could still be in use to date.

The second category in Table 1 refers to the “Demonization of women” through the proverbs (Ex. a-d). They are: “Obìnrin bí mo fún ni kò ní kó má pa ni.” (That a woman has a child for her husband does not prevent her from killing him) (Sheba 13); “Eni bá gun esin obìnrin yó subú” (Whoever trust a woman will fall) (88); “Obìnrin fí omo fún oko méfà, ó ní òun kò fé ìyonu, tó bá tún fé wáyé ejó n kó” (A woman marries her daughter to six husbands consecutively and claims she doesn't want trouble, in case she does, what could have happened?) (55); and “Pamí n kú obìnrin se orí benben sí oko” (An obstinate woman usually proves stubborn to her husband) (60). In these proverbs, a woman is seen as a killer, deceitful, outspoken, disloyal and troublesome. All these (mis)representations of women are carved out within the patriarchal rules where women are expected to be docile, quiet, submissive, and indecisive, and any woman that acts contrary to this prototype is classified as an outlaw.

The proverbs on stereotypes and gender discrimination against Yorùbá women are “Ìyàwó tí a fí ijó fé, irán ni ó wò lo” (A wife married due to her dancing expertise will walk away one day”) (Sheba 81); “Eni fé arewà fé ìyonu, gbogbo ayé ló n bá won tan” (Whoever marries a beautiful woman marries problem because she will claim she is related to all) (15); “Eni tí ó bá da aso obìnrin bora wèrèpè ló dà bora” (Whoever relies on a woman is looking for trouble) (88); and “Filà ni obìnrin won kíí bá ode wo ìtì” (Women are like caps, they don't follow the hunter to the dense forest) (88). These proverbs classify Yorùbá women as unreliable, lacking the potential to

³ “...na medida que a realidade só pode ser conhecida através das formas que a articulam, não existe nenhuma realidade fora da representação...”(2002:10).

support men in hardship, and as funfair lovers. This stereotype and gender discrimination define the space for many women while few struggle to compete with men in the labour market (OMIDIRE). Lazar notes this emancipation of women via Feminist Critical Analysis theory, stating some beneficial methods that women can use to strive above stereotypes such as working together as a group:

While it is important to acknowledge the social, economic, and political strides achieved by a growing number of young women in many industrialized societies today, there is a need also to exercise critical reflexivity on the matter. One of the problematic assumptions of post-feminist discourse is that women can 'have it all if only they try hard enough,' which makes women's struggles and accomplishments a purely personal matter, obscuring the actual social and material constraints faced by different groups of women. Concomitantly, there seems to be an inward-looking focus and contentment only in the achievement of personal freedoms and fulfillment. A self-focused 'me-feminism' of this sort detracts from a collective 'we-feminism' needed for a transformational political program.

Nancy F. Cott studies the use of the "Female bond" as suggested above by Lazar within New England women from the late eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth century when new consciousness was invented, "Friendship between women existed in all ages and cultures... And in individual relationships women put their new perceptions into effect, making palpable the bonds of womanhood" (160). This bond is still present among Yorùbá women, it is called, "Egbé"⁴

The criminalization of the sexuality of women is the last category of proverbs: "Idan ni filà àgbèrè tí òbò dé wá láti òrun" (Clitoris is the cap of prostitution that vagina wore from heaven); "Méta ni t'òbìnrin, gbà fi bo enu, gbà fi bo ara, gbà fi bo abé" (Three choices are for women, take one for your mouth, another for your body and the last for your vagina) (Sheba 19); "Òpe ni obìnrin, gbogbo eni bá ní igbà lówó ló n gùn" (Woman are like a Palm tree, all with a cord will mount on her) (91); and "Bí a kò bá tètè gé idan ní kékeré, bí o bá dagba tán ebo nlá ni ó ma gbà lówó oko" (If we are tardy to cut clitoris from childhood, when it gets into adulthood it requests for the large penis) (Sheba 88). These proverbs criminalize female sexuality. While men are free to explore their own, women are often barred from full exploration of their sexuality, and this traditional belief led to the practice of female gender mutilation (FGM). Jane-Frances C. Nzenwa, in her paper, "Blood, Tears and Folly-Female Genital Mutilation in Nigeria," condemns this act and states certain efforts put in place to eradicate FGM:

From the standpoint of the public health and Human Rights, advocating any type of cutting on the genitals of a girl or woman is tantamount to violating the rights of life, physical integrity and health of a girl child or woman. Therefore, medical health workers who carry out the procedure of FGM are violating the fundamental medical ethics of 'do no harm'... A joint interagency that comprised the United Nations, International Experts and the Members states called Global Strategy to Stop Health-Care Providers from Performing FGM was released in 2010. (235)

⁴ Egbé in Yorùbá culture refers to small or large group formed by people of same interest (Omidire 48).

Despite male domination of the labour market and decision-making, attitudes to women, and of women themselves, have advanced enormously under the combined impact of Feminism and contraception (German 1981; Owoeye and Aragbuwa 2021). Another measure on the part of the Government is the Domestic abuse law (2015) operating in States version in Lagos State, Ekiti, FCT, Abuja, Enugu, Bauchi, Oyo, and Kaduna. This law criminalizes all form of violence against the female gender.

TABLE 2⁵ Sample of Portuguese Language Proverbs

S/N	GENDER RELATION	DEMONIZATION OF WOMEN	STEREOTYPE & GENDER DISCRIMINATION	CRIMINALIZATION OF WOMEN'S SEXUALITY
a.	A casa é das mulheres e a rua é dos homens	Do vinho e da mulher livre-se o homem, se puder	Com afagos, a mula e a mulher fazem o que o homem quer.	A mulher e o vinho tiram o homem do seu juízo.
b.	A homem calado e a mulher barbada em tua casa não dê pousada	Da má mulher te guarda e da boa não te fies nada.	Mulher como o vento e ventura, de pressa muda	Mulher que a dois ama a dois engana.
c.	De onde és homem? De onde é a minha mulher	Homem de palha vale mais que mulher de ouro.	A mula e a mulher como pau se quer.	Formosura de mulher não enriquece o homem.
d.	Não há nada como uma mulher para fazer do homem quanto quer	Do mar se tira o sal e da mulher o mal.	A mulher e a loba, no escolher.	O cão é fiel, a mulher não.

Analysis of Table 2

Anabela Couto describes the proverbs in relation to woman's image within the Portuguese society and it is applicable to the Brazilian society: *"If in the proverbs and literature, the culture of people is seen, then through these proverbs we also know the role of a woman in the Portuguese society."*⁶ The gender relation is projected within the following common proverbs, (Ex. a-d), under the division of gender roles: "A casa é das mulheres e a rua é dos homens" (The house is for women and the public sphere for men); "A homem calado e a mulher barbada em tua casa não dê pousada" (the silent man and the

⁵ Anabela Couto, "A mulher nos provérbios e ditados populares" 2005. www.jpn.up.pt Accessed: 3rd March 2022.

⁶ "Se nos provérbios e na literatura se reflete a cultura de um povo, através deles conhecemos também o papel da mulher na sociedade portuguesa." Ibid, 2005, www.jpn.up.pt Accessed: 3rd March 2022.

bearded woman in your house don't stay); "De onde és homem? De onde é a minha mulher," (From where man came, so also my wife); "Não há nada como uma mulher para fazer do homem quanto quer" (There is nothing like a woman to make a man do whatever she wants). These proverbs listed above indicate the patriarchal template of gender relation rating women as manipulators, troublemakers, and at the same time home keepers while men are dignified, smart, and explorers. However, Language has played a strong role in naturalization of the gender roles within the society, serving as the limitation icons for women's self and professional advancement. To thus produce another gender norm as confirmed by the Feminist Critical Discourses Analysis theory states:

At the most global level, CDA (Critical Discourse analysis) increases awareness of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure. More specifically, critical discourse analysts aim to describe the ways in which power and dominance are produced and reproduced in social practice through the discourse structures of everyday interactions. (Lazar 31)

And in discussing gender and power, Luisa Martín Rojo and Concepción Gómez Esteban emphasize the challenges that women face within the public sphere where male dominance persists:

Male networks operate as a mechanism of exclusion of women that is justified by 'discomfort' with regard to the other gender. This mechanism reduces the influence of women within the organization, hinders their promotion, and facilitates the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices with regard to women's communication and management style. Added to this marginalization suffered by women is, in many cases, the difficulty of finding female models of reference and mentors who could help them in their professional careers and teach them the rules of the game. (72)

Furthermore, this proverb among others, (Ex. c.) "***De onde és homem? De onde é a minha mulher,***" (From where man came, so my wife) (emphasis mine), signals the achievement of feminist struggle and female gender emancipation within the Brazilian society and in the world generally. This proverb states gender equality within the society, an exception to many proverbs where male dominance and supremacy are projected. As found in Yorùbá proverbs too, the choice of proverbs we use and promote in our daily interaction reflects our gender ideology. The use of such proverbs will surely promote gender equality.

For the demonization of women (Ex. a-d): "Do vinho e da mulher livre-se o homem, se puder" (From wine and woman a man should free himself if he could); "Da má mulher te guarda e da boa não te fies nada" (I can promise you a bad woman but not a good one); "Homem de palha vale mais que mulher de ouro" (A man of dry straw is more valuable than a woman of gold); and "Do mar se tira o sal e da mulher o mal" (From the sea comes salt and from a woman wickedness). The repression of women within the patriarchal society includes disqualification of women in terms of moral values. These Portuguese proverbs are always used to describe women as wicked, uncontrollable and bad. This image tends to affect social stratification, as noted by Rojo and Esteban: "Communication practices affect all aspects of life in work organizations. It is through acts of communication

that information flows and circulates, that activities and tasks are organized, that relationships are established, and that teams and social networks are formed" (65).

On stereotype and gender discrimination against women, we have these proverbs (Ex. a-d): "Com afagos, a mula e a mulher fazem o que o homem quer" (With a rope a mule and a woman do what a man wants); "Mulher como o vento e ventura, de pressa muda" (Woman, like wind and fortune, speedily changes); "A mula e a mulher como pau se quer" (A mule and a woman receive beating as they like); and "A mulher e a loba, no escolher" (A woman and a wolf, both are the same). Hyelsa describes this type of proverbs: "*They are popular sentences that people say. They are short but have a strong moral impact and are part of people's culture. In this form, proverbs or popular idioms interfere in the perpetuation of preconception vision in relation to the woman.*"⁷ This segment of proverbs dehumanizes women, classifying them as equal to animals like mules, wolves, dumb, stupid, and unstable. These proverbs show the masculine hegemony within the society, calling for a new discourse that will challenge this language. Kathryn A. Remlinger demands the discontinuation of proverbs and expressions that project pejorative and discriminatory images of women even in the classroom, applicable to all social spaces:

This ability to control the production and function of language enables these members to control a variety of linguistic environments. Van Dijk (1993b: 256) asserts that an analysis of linguistic features 'reveals a rather surprising parallelism between social power and discourse access: the more discourse genres, contexts, participants, audience, scope and text characteristics they actively control or influence, the more powerful social groups, institutions or elites are'. (111)

Proverbs on criminalization of women sexuality are, "A mulher e o vinho tiram o homem do seu juízo" (The pleasure of the woman and wine makes man unreasonable); "Mulher que a dois ama a dois engana" (A woman that two people love, deceives both); "Formosura de mulher não enriquece o homem" (The beauty of a woman cannot enrich a man); and "O cão é fiel, a mulher não" (The dog is faithful but the woman not). In the above proverbs, women are sexually presented as deceitful, erotic, and infidel. The same presentation given to women in Yorùbá proverbs is displayed here, showing the universality of gender discrimination that condemns all women by their sexuality despite their innate potential and contribution to societal development. Many of these expressions and misogynist ideologies are rooted within patriarchal society and are the lens through which women are judged. Cristina Ferreira Pinto confirms this: "*These myths are concerned particularly with the female body and sexuality and with marriage as the institution that sets the boundaries for women's social action...*" (15). Geneviève Fae and Cecil Jeanine Albert Zinani also cite Pierre Bourdieu, in his short story analysis, "La Intrusa", Jorge Luis Borges: *Identidade regional masculina*, that condemns the erotic representation the image of women bringing to us the power of language:

⁷ Hyelsa, "[Provérbios ou Ditados Populares que interferem na perpetuação de visões preconceituosa em relação à mulher](http://www.pprojetoedacaonota1000.com.br)" www.pprojetoedacaonota1000.com.br "São frases populares, que as pessoas dizem. Eles são pequenos, têm um impacto moral e fazem parte da cultura do povo. Desta forma os provérbios ou ditado popular interferem na perpetuação de visões preconceituosas em relação à mulher." 21st March, 2021 Accessed on 21st May, 2022
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... the fact that a woman is reduced to sexuality without perplexity, this is seen with a “naturalized” vision, since the narrator did not question the domination... and when it looks like being questioned, it only points to the “stupid submission” of a woman. She has no option of choice in her life. “the asymmetric is thus radical among the man, the subject, and the woman, transformed product of this work...”⁸

Conclusion

This paper analyzed various classifications of Yorùbá and Portuguese proverbs using gender-related approaches to view the representation of women. A great percentage of these proverbs in both languages degrade women as an entity and promote their objectification. Women are expected to revolt against the repression and domination reflected within the semantic meanings of many of the proverbs cited. It is worthy of note that absorbing gender discrimination as a cultural template and keeping women submissive only makes the female gender the perpetual victims of patriarchal rules and violence. Despite race and color, all should rise to this challenge of repositioning to a valorized image, and reject naturalization of stereotypes, demonization, and criminalization of their sexuality by condemning proverbs or expressions that promote a non-valorized image:

The constant identification of women as victims is, to put it mildly, depressing. Indeed, victim status can be damaging, as research on female sexuality has found: ‘If women increasingly view themselves entirely as victims through the lens of the oppressor and allow themselves to be viewed that way by others, they become enfeebled and miserable.’ (qtd. in Talbot 167)

Culture and tradition are dynamic. Women across the world, especially feminists, should propagate a change in the linguistic expressions used to describe women. The Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis theory establishes in the paper the inter-dependence of gender, power, ideology and language, validating the essentialism in discourse analysis in relation to gender equality.

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⁸ ... o fato de a mulher ser reduzida à sexualidade sem espanto. É visto com “naturalidade”, já que o narrador não questiona a dominação... e quando parece questionar aponta somente à “submissão bestial”... A ela não é dado o poder de escolha sobre sua própria vida. “a dissimetria é, pois, radical entre o homem, sujeito, e a mulher, produto transformado desse trabalho...” (GENEVIÉRVÈ, Fae & CECIL, Jeanine Albert Zinani, 2010, p.156).

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