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**AN ARTISTIC CREATION OF FEMALE MASCULINITY FEATURES IN  
OSOFISAN'S MOROUNTODUN AND RED IS THE FREEDOM ROAD**

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**Abstract**

*Female masculinity is an expression of male gender traits in females. These masculine traits in female characters have received little attention from scholars all over the places, Nigerian literary writings inclusive, when compared to their focus on the socio cultural constructs of females as weak, soft and inferior. This paper examined different ways by which some female protagonists in selected plays of Osofisan express related masculine attributes with a view to determining the existence of masculinity features in them. The paper adopted Nussbaum's model of Liberal Feminist theories. Two of Osofisan's drama texts were purposively selected based on their thematic affinities for revolutionary attributes in females. These include Morountodun and Other Plays (MT) and Red is freedom Road (RED). Data were subjected to literary analysis. These females engage in diverse forms of era-bound masculinity clues to control people and situations. The clues include dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language. In dress code (transvestism), Titubi (MT) engages in a psychological warfare-fashioned disguise to suppress warlords in their aggressive states. Voice act (mannerisms, persuasions) are subtly, but effectively used by both protagonists. Ibidun (RED), uses persuasions with doggedness to subvert men. Titubi (MT) and Ibidun (RED), use Assertiveness clues (persistence and revolutionary qualities to transform the lives of their people. Body language clues are displayed by both protagonists to entrap people to succumb to their wills. Titubi's (MT) use of beauty, courage and determination quell the militant peasants, making the riotous society peaceful. These semiotic features establish the era-bound differential exhibition of female masculinity in the dramatic works of Osofisan*

**.Keywords:** Female masculinity, Nigerian plays, Literature and gender, Masculinity clues.

Literary writers make use of language to create potent and influential words and ideas in their literary creativities. Since writers are human beings fashioned out of the creator's image, they are naturally gifted to be creative by nature. They are then creative people who 'create' with words, which, according to Ezeigbo, (2008:1) can heal, condemn, destroy, encourage and convict. In the hands of a writer, words can do a lot of things! And since literature is a field which privileges clarity of expression and competence in the use of language, especially in literary discourse, writers use their creativity to instruct and entertain people and establish literary traditions that become factual and have remained undeniable facts in the society, nowadays.

It is therefore, expedient to say that "words are palm oil with which yams are eaten"(Achebe). Language, therefore, becomes the vehicle through which literature delights as well as instructs, and an indispensable tool to the creative artist and literary critic, who must have a facility for words as Ezeigbo, further amplifies. With the creative abilities vested on these contemporary writers, the last couple of decades have prominently featured matters concerning women and gender issues worldwide.

The concept of gender in feminist writings and other sociological discourses became popular in the early 1970s. In simple terms, gender explains the differences between men and women in social terms as men, and what a man can and cannot do, and as women, and what a woman can or cannot do. Therefore, gender is an analytical category that is socially constructed to differentiate the biological difference between men and women. The term gender is also used to describe the differences in behaviour between men and women which are described as masculine and feminine (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:56).

Feminist writings focus on this aspect and claim that these differences are not biological but social constructions of patriarchal society. Some theorists suggest that the biological differences between men and women also result in their mental and physical differences. They argue that biologically, men are physically and mentally superior to women. Other theorists suggest that the biological difference between men and women are exaggerated. The differences are socially constructed by the patriarchal system of society by which men are described as superior to women.

Infact, the general assumptions in Western culture and in post-independence African societies have been hinged on the fact that women are perceived, regarded and treated as inferior, weaklings and powerless when social and cultural issues relating to the society are raised. Women,too believed that they are sidetracked and severed from other social structures of life, such as culture, politics and administration. This notion stemmed from the fact that masculinity, one of the operative concepts in gender studies, has become the paradigm for measuring social ideals and qualities relating to being superior, strong,

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assertive, reasonable and brilliant. These are some of the attributes ascribed to being ‘masculine’ and attributable to ‘men’. However, the opposite and negative variables, such as weak, inferior, soft and unreasonable, are mistakenly accorded women such that they are regarded as being ‘feminine’ and female’.

Scholars of Western and Nigerian literatures like Galford (1988), Dorkin (1989) and Chinweizu (1990:9) and Halberstem, (2001:15), addressed this, claiming that “women are slaves and men are masters” and “all housewives are being economically exploited; all working women are oppressed”. Halberstain, (2001:18) reiterates that feminist literary critics believe that women have been treated and perceived as men’s inferiors for a long time, focusing on the socio-cultural constructs of females as weak, soft, inferior and voiceless. They also affirm that as time evolved, there have been lots of changes as women are not better or worse human beings than men. If and where there are differences, such are apparent, and are only products of cultural and social conditioning of the society, which lead to the division of human traits into femininity and masculinity that invariably complicate human relationships. Many other scholars posit that women have equal and powerful status in the society, believing that, ‘the definition of womanhood is not always biological or sexual and that there are socio-economic points and levels where women ceased to be seen as women, but are officially and spiritually designated as men.

In other words, there are situations where women exercise authorities that are quite binding on their subjects as men do. These facts erase any doubt as to whether female masculinity and its exercise by women, the history of a male identified women in power’ and also the male femininity trait which could be found in man, which this paper identifies as masculine attributes in women and feminine in men, are in existence.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this paper are, among others to:

- i. Examine diverse ways by which female protagonists in the selected plays express related masculine attributes in determining the existence of masculinity features in them.
- ii. Establish the existence and practice of differential modes and means of female masculinity traits by the female protagonists as created in the plays.
- iii. Contribute to the efforts to search for the ideal ways of adding a newer definition to gender ideology, as relates to the concepts of masculinities and femininities as cross-gendered variables found in both genders, sex differentiations notwithstanding.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Much has been said in favour of the fact that women are weak, inferior and would not even hurt a fly. Some critics even hold that, in as much as all human beings are created equally by the same 'being', definitely, they share same traits, since the same blood and veins run through them. They begin to see that women are not better or worse human beings than men, and that any perceived differences are merely products of cultural and social conditioning of the society.

However, masculine traits in female characters have received little attention from scholars of Western and Nigerian literary writings when compared to their focus on the socio-cultural constructs of women as highlighted above. Therefore, there is need to properly investigate the artistic 'originality' and 'expressiveness' of female masculinity aesthetics in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Red is the Freedom Road* in the light of the difference in opinions shared by different scholars above. It is historical that there are powerful women in the societies in question whose traits correspond in status to men's and who equally wield some forms of masculine power and authority within their societies. As such, the paper reiterates the fact that women do exercise the masculinity inherent in them without necessarily going through conventional but subtle means, and in their female-bodied characters. The paper attempts to proffer solutions to the research questions raised thus.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions served the focus of the paper:

1. Do women exhibit masculine attributes similar to or different from the men?
2. How does dress code express masculinity in the physical turn out of the protagonists in the texts?
3. What are the testing agents that voice-act express related masculine traits in the utterances of the female protagonists created in the plays?
4. What are the different means by which these female protagonists engage in assertive-related masculine attributes?
5. How do body language features in the protagonists reflect female masculinity traits?
6. Of what relevance are the features of female masculinity created and exhibited by these female protagonists to gender issues in contemporary society?

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study presupposes that it is possible for masculinity, the construct which has almost invariably been ascribed to men, to be exhibited by women. Such masculinity may, or may not take a different form from the masculinity exhibited by men.

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The purpose of this paper is to identify indicators of female masculinity traits exhibited either through behaviours, actions and words by women to influence others such as: *dress code, voice act, assertiveness* and *body language* clues in selected drama texts of Femi Osofisan. However, the paper emphasised the fact that masculinity is merely a socio-cultural concept and a behavioural trait, which does not mark gender or sex but could be found in individual, irrespective of gender. This study is hinged on the fact that everybody is equally created both male and female and the notion that human beings intrinsically possess a foundational core (essence), typically associated with ‘Humanism’, which sets them apart from other animals. This implies that men and women share and can exhibit equal traits besides performing similar gender roles, as informs by the playwright whose creativity nature is to use his work to instruct and entertain people and establish a literary tradition that becomes factual and remained undeniable point in the society, nowadays.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

The concept of masculinity may be looked at from diverse perspectives, depending on each scholar’s perception of the ideology. However, this paper focused on the expression of male gender traits in women, a type of female masculinity, which emphasises masculine characteristics that may be displayed in a person, who does not appear in any way male. And which debunks the usual fundamental claims by the womenfolk, that women are naturally powerless and are oppressed by men within the society; that women are subservient to men at home and all housewives are exploited and subjugated.

The paper concentrated on four specific areas through which female masculinity traits are exemplified: voice art, dress code, assertiveness and body language (where the female protagonists under study, Titubi and Ibidun, exhibit their autocratic powers to achieve their desires in the selected texts).

### **Research Methodology**

The paper adopted Derrida’s Deconstruction theory, which states that binary oppositions relating to gender identities could be reversed, displaced and hierarchies overturned to change social attitudes and perceptions of people for implied meanings. It was library-based, whereby journals, books, periodicals and other scholarly website information were employed to underpin the philosophical elucidation of the primary dramatic texts. It analyses expressions of female masculinity traits in the texts through the various contexts of dress code, voice act, assertive tendency and body language.

### **Analysis of Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Red is the Freedom Road***

Here, an attempt is made to analyse the selected plays with the aim of bringing out some of the features of female masculinity as exhibited by the female protagonists examined.

Writers generally draw from their environments, from the past and the present in the course of writing their texts. This is why a brief consideration of osofisan's background, his artistic vision and ideology shall be touched before analysing his plays.

Femi Osofisan was born on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1946. He had his early education at Government College, Ibadan and subsequently his university education in Nigeria, Dakar and Paris. Osofisan, a professor of Drama and Theatre, is a versatile, energetic and committed writer. His drama gives voice to the down-trodden people, especially women of the society and presents the common and the oppressed who become assertive in their quests to advocate for social change. Most of his drama is energised, full of positive, revolutionary ideologies and fall back on histories which have a common storyline with the local histories. He reworks most of these histories, myths and legendary past as in his *Red is the freedom road* and *Morountodun*, in order to revise, reinterpret and challenge such for the benefit of his contemporaneous age. He tries to reconstruct history, radicalise myths and legend to become appropriate 'vehicles' to bring his ideological vision into reality (Obafemi, 2001:164).

Thus, in Osofisan's drama, the immediate and relevant problems of the society are rehearsed and shown before the audience. Through this, his drama becomes a means of showing the society's need for change and liberation, and to show how either men or women have always and can still challenge any act of tyranny or oppression within the society just to allow for equal treatment of both sexes through the collective endeavor of the people.

In appreciating the fact that women are positioned as underprivileged and have been culturally intimidated within the Nigerian society, Osofisan still recognises their ubiquitous power and strengths in exercising some pronounced degree of control and power over their destinies (Olanrewaju, 2014:105) Osofisan also gives us a vision of a new and progressive society with militant, masculine women who share equal traits with men. By so doing, he thus sees the new society where old prejudices crumble, giving way to reconciliation and equality of gender where females' militant actions become visible and acknowledged. His work is preoccupied with female masculine characters that are concerned with radical, forceful, as well as revolutionary traits. The characters are those who stand firmly in their quest for social change and to assert their masculine will, not minding the outcome. In his work, women share equal status with men and are usually determined to transform people or collaborate with them in the quest for transformation in the society. An evidence of this is

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shown in *Morountodun* which prominently featured women whose commitment to active participation in the cause of the society are as valid and critical to its success as the men who physically take up arms to defend it (Ajayi,1996), cited in Olanrewaju, 2014:138).

How most of his women in the plays portray masculine traits in them to dethrone and debunk patriarchal subjugation and discrimination under the hegemonic rule of the society of their time shall be examined. Thus, in our analysis of Osofisan’s plays, we highlight the radical stance of the heroines, their rejection of patriarchal marginalisation and intimidation and how his women portray the masculinity in them, deconstructing the established male paradigms of power, toughness and militancy.

### **Dramatic works of Femi Osofisan**

For the sake of brevity, our references shall be limited to two play texts of this great playwright of note: He shows how unequal powers were challenged in the past even by females and thereby justifies the fact that use of power in any form does not reside with just a sex but in both to achieve justice and equity among people. This is the case with *Morountodun* and *Red is the Freedom Road* where the heroines use their powers to bring sanity to reign even within the then patriarchal society. Thus, in the analysis of Osofisan selected plays, radical concept of female heroism is highlighted.

It focuses on dress code; disguise variables, as clue to expressing female masculinity in the plays. Attention is also given to voice act; persuasion variables as expression of related masculine attributes. It further examines assertiveness clue in form of persistence, coercion, control and dominance variables as means of exhibiting female masculinity . Equally, it considers body language clues in form of gestures, aesthetics and flirtatious outlook to exhibiting masculine traits in the selected plays.

### **Dresscode clue: (disguise/impersonation) in *Morountodun* (MT)**

Let me also wear. Such deliberate disguises  
Rats, coat, Cow skin, crossed staves in  
a field behaving as the wind behaves.  
(T S Eliot -The Hollow Men).

Osofisan sets his stories within real and familiar surroundings in which people’s beliefs are easily recognised by those who are accustomed with the terrains within which those stories are situated. Also, some of Osofisan’s stories are based on daily matters that are much relevant to the socio-cultural order of the Nigerian society. These are stories fashioned out of

the cultural practices that obtain where male intimidation and subjugation are the order of the day.

The female protagonists in his plays challenge the convention about chauvinistic power of the males to always arrest any situation and refuse to accept the supremacy of men over others in a given situation. (Ajayi,1996), in Olanrewaju, 2014:139), reiterates the fact that the playwright “pays tribute to, and gives recognition to the silent-behind-the-scene roles that women have always played in national, social, political or economic struggles”. He employs disguise as a means of exercising female masculinity but his females do not engage in cross-dressing in the physical mode but do that psychologically, as in case of Titubi who does disguise psychologically to become Morountodun- a Moremi personified.

*Morountodun*, which literally means ‘I have found something of substance’, is a play based on the Moremi myth. Moremi is a legendary Queen of Ile Ife. During one of the internal wars waged against the Yorubas by the Igbos, the queen abandoned her royalty and infiltrated the Igbo camp to seek victory for her people. Similarly, Osofisan recreates this Moremi myth, linking it with the historical 1969 Agbekoya revolt which involved the Yoruba farmers’ protest against the then government’s excessive exploitation and connecting it with Titubi.

In *MT*, Titubi, the daughter of Alhaja Kabirat disguises psychologically, as if she were Moremi, and she is unconsciously assuming the name and the status of the renowned Moremi, the legend of Ile Ife, who at one time undertook the missionary journey into the enemy’s territory. Titubi sees herself performing similar role of first protecting her class though she later becomes sympathetic to the peasants’ oppressive state of being. Her disguise dimension here is through the process of ‘conscientization’ through which she undergoes a radical change to cast off a self-centered and selfish status. She metamorphoses into an aggressive and manly role in order to support the peasants and repress oppression and intimidation. She undergoes a psychological disguise by gallantly taking a step forcing her way into the arena where men fear to tread in order to crush the peasants’ revolt which has led to fracas in the town. She goes to the market place with hired thugs and the inscriptions on the placards shouting: “Down with Agitators! Wipe out the insane lovers of poverty! crush the peasant revolt” ( 7).

To further exercise the masculinity in her, Titubi, out of curiosity and bravery, goes on an adventure into the peasant farmers’ camp, volunteering to go and arrest the peasants’ leaders through espionage. That is, it requires Titubi engaging in a psychological warfare-fashioned disguise journey, similar to Moremi’s, to suppress those warlords in their aggressive states:



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**Titubi:** Suppose I do volunteer? Suppose I offer to fight the peasants? I will do it Mama, one woman did it before. (26)

Here, Titubi undergoes an ideological transformatory disguise under the assumption of Moremi’s integrity and status other than her real self. Nkiruka, (2011:14), further emphasises this point:

Titubi’s projected success on the spy mission is predicated on her sexuality as a female. She is daring but her qualification for the job emphasises not her intelligence, but her personality as a sexual object.

**Body language clue in (MT); Use of beauty, courage and determination**

Aesthetics, according to Effiong (2004:102), “is the study of the mind and emotions in relation to the sense of beauty.” Aesthetics, therefore, has to do with being beautiful from the psychological perspectives where it concerns the study of mind and emotions. It can be noted that drama has a lot in common with the issue of aesthetics, of beauty. Osofisan values aesthetics in his works, as well as in his heroine, In *MT*, Titubi takes a bold step infiltrating the farmers’ camp in an attempt to capture their leader – Marshal. This she does by extolling the charming power in her heroic sense of adventure; her virtue cum the effective use of her beauty, courage and determination put together into quelling all the fierce looking warlords at the battle field and turning the riotous society into a peaceful one. In Titubi’s strong desire to be the modern day Moremi, she uses her beauty, having been encouraged by the role Moremi played with her beauty to capture the militant Igbo warlords. Titubi further believes that her physical appearance would be a trap to bewitch the peasant’s mighty warrior without any controversy. And without mincing words, her beauty casts a spell on the mighty man of valour as Marshal confesses:

We have met your parents. We have been to the house from which your manners were furnished. We have grown to cherish you, and that is enough. Therefore, I pluck her from the storehouse of beauty and tenderness, she is the goddess of beauty herself. I name her Morountodun. (75)

Very unlike the flirtatious look used by some of the other western heroines to entrap men, Titubi’s natural beauty coupled with her elegance and virtues cast the spell on her beholders; Marshal and Bogunde. Bogunde seems to be the only one that is able to discern the real beauty of Titubi from its pretentious power. This he does by declaring publicly that people should not try to be influenced by her beauty as general Marshal has already been bewitched, thus declaring Titubi as the goddess of beauty herself. Bogunde, at first takes Titubi’s real beauty as mere supposition and warns that women are cunning and dangerous

and could disguise to be beautiful just to achieve their ambitious plans as it happens at the end.

From the above, it could be discovered that women have their unique ways of achieving their objectives and enforcing powers without necessarily going tough as men would. So without much stress or flexing of the muscles, Titubi is able to quell the fiery fire burning and creating serious tension in the society, when men, like the Superintendent, have been reluctant and jittery to take such bold steps. Titubi, eventually uses all her attribute, saesthetics, courage, persistence and determination to suppress both the militant warlords and the aggressive peasants. At the end, the riotous society becomes pacified and peaceful. Definitely, females are heroic and could activate the masculine attributes in them to play prominent roles as shown in some of plays examined in the study. Most of these females are naturally endowed with militant and revolutionary traits like the males.

#### **Assertiveness /Voiced clues in: *Red is the Freedom Road (RED)***

Women display assertive tendencies by being persuasive and persistent in subtle, respective and confident manners. An average assertive woman does this with a smile, with self confidence and an assured posture. In ‘the assertive clues’ we clarify the masculinity in the female characters who choose to assert themselves in love, through either dominant, persuasive, persistent, control or coercive means and by engaging in societal wars single handedly or in company of others.

From the above facts, *Red is the Freedom Road (RED)* portrays a good example of a strong-willed and heroic protagonist who exhibits female masculinity traits inherent in her to achieve what the husband could not. The above concurs with what Lindsay and Miescher (2003:53) observe that African women, and in particular Nigerian women, have been known right from the beginning of their existence to occupy a variety of leadership roles in their societies. Women and men have always coexisted to complement their societal needs. In some cases, a system of joint sovereignty exists whereby leadership roles are shared between the leader and his female counterpart. In a system of this kind, women’s powerful traits are acknowledged as equally as the men’s.

So, in the Nigerian society, gender becomes flexible and fluid, allowing women active participation in the progress of the society. This heroic status of women has always been noted as it happens when Ibidun in *Red* takes a bold and assertive decision to gear up her husband, Akanji to step out boldly and lead other captives to regain their freedom from the oppressive king. Ibidun tries to incite Akanji, her husband, to militantly set other slaves free from their incarceration. In this play, the playwright appreciates Ibidun’s constructive and revolutionary qualities as she is determined to assist the husband in

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transforming the life of those who have been wickedly captured into slavery by an oppressive king of the clan.

In *RED*, Akanji and all the men are regarded as ‘ordinary slaves’ in bondage. And since slaves have no freedom, they too have entertained no thought of being free, until Ibidun, who is endowed with revolutionary qualities, intervenes by spurring the men into fighting their way out of captivity. While this is going on, one of the soldiers disreputably addresses her as slave and instantly, without controversy, Ibidun vehemently fights against the insult metted on her by the soldier. Ibidun defies the hungry-looking faces of the soldiers and fiercely protests the derogatory name “slave-woman”. She looks straight into the man’s eyes and calls him to order while seeming to doubt Akanji’s sanity:

**2<sup>nd</sup> soldier:** You were alone.

**Akanji:** I am not alone but see (gestures towards Ibidun)

**1<sup>st</sup> soldier:** (insulted) That is only a slave, son of thunder, a woman and only a slave.

**2<sup>nd</sup> soldier:** Not a person to be counted where men are speaking.

**Ibidun:** Do you stand there while they say all that to me? Akanji, do you bear insult to your wife?

**Akanji:** (To his wife) Keep quiet! (To soldiers) forgive me....I understand.

**Ibidun:** You understand! Akanji are you well? What has happened to you?... Has Soponno visited my house? Isn’t this my husband?...

Ibidun knows and sees herself a real woman and not a slave that would not talk or have any say in the society. She would rather call a spade a spade, not shovel. So in her troubled state of mind, she believes in the liberal tradition’s value of individual freedom and equal civil rights for women as public citizens. Akanji, like any other man, a male chauvinist, may not have been bordered but has only been too jittery and cowardly, not wanting to be associated with his wife. Until this strong woman asserts herself and boldly gears Akanji back to action. Ibidun, in her masculinity power, openly scolds and disagrees with Akanji’s inactiveness and feminine disposition:

So you sell your own people for power? No, I can’t believe it! You’ll serve a man who lay waste your homeland... Who killed your father? Enslaved your people... for what?..... You are no longer my husband.

I could kill myself.

(119)

At the King's palace, Ibidun's mother-in-law is apportioned her own insult of being tortured too as nobody, not even her son, Akanji, is able to save her. Ibidun further demonstrates her masculinity as this courageous woman never keeps silent when all other slaves do so. The masculine trait in her spurs her to radically reject and denounce the oppressive and tyrannical leadership of the King. It is this action taken by Ibidun that alerts other soldiers to beware of the impending revolution that would eventually rid their town of all oppression and usher in peace:

**1<sup>st</sup> Soldier:** First, you have the revolution, the revolt, or the coup d'état. The killing, to end all killings, oppression to punish oppression. Detention to banish detention. And every one prepares for peace.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Soldier:** Yes, darkness will fall.

(133)

Here, Ibidun calls her husband, a warrior, back to his senses as he promptly saves the situation. The exhibition of female masculinity here stems from the fact that Ibidun does not see any difference between herself and Akanji especially when the problems on ground need to be instantly solved. Prompt actions have to have been taken by Akanji, a warlord, but because the feminine attribute in him overshadows his inherent masculinity traits at the moment, his wife assists in gearing him up. Ibidun is not rude here but coordinating all the senses in her to save Akanji from the psychological destruction that is imminent from slavery effect. Ibidun's action agrees with what Squires (1999) in Nussbaum, (2000:62), calls formal equality which does not recognise women's reality and experience as different from men's. It denotes that women have the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in public sphere of influence. Ibidun further recognises the fact that both of them may have different needs and preferences, but at the moment, freedom for all matters and should be taken as a matter of urgency. The rights, opportunities and responsibilities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Human beings, men, women, are universal categories with sound reasonings (Nussbaum, (2000: 62). Reason, she says, overcomes the existing forms of power which is one of the Post-modern discourses which are (all) deconstructive in that they seek to distance people from and make them sceptical about beliefs concerning knowledge, power, and the self. It is on this premise that Derrida's deconstruction theory hinged on the fact that 'binaries are not fixed or static but fluid' as they can be challenged or changed while the list goes on. It is the idea of believing one opposition as having primacy over the other that Derrida challenges through deconstruction. He is of the opinion that reversing the

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opposition in the hierarchical order opens new opportunities for new meanings, the new meanings being the direct result of new thinking, new way of doing or undoing the text. This will only be made possible with the consciousness that the relationship between binary oppositions is unstable. It also engages in “pulling down” textual structures, recognising that any human statement has “a multitude of responsibility for meaning that the simplest statement may be hard and thus interpreted in a variety of ways”(Dobbie, 2009:156). In other words, a given text has several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings. The text has no fixed meaning but only what we invent and choose to believe.

Accordingly, Akanji suddenly becomes charged:

(Now mad) Stop! Stop, you’ll kill her!  
Enough I say! Idiot, give me that whip,  
and taste it yourself!

Akanji immediately responds to the wife’s alarm even though he is not compelled to do so. Such is as effective as an unavoidable influence an average woman may have over her best half. Equality in genders does not mean sameness of action but that each of them has the ability to do similar things, having the same opportunities in life.

Ibidun demonstrates her masculinity when she gallantly rebuffs Akanji when the latter wants to explain all his past hidden inactive actions to her. She wants to handle Akanji and be sure he realises his passivity and behaves properly.

**Akanji:** Wait, Ibidun, wait! I am Akanji, your husband.

**Ibidun:** (slaps him) whose husband? Repeat that only  
once, and, dear commander not all your forces  
will save you from my nails. (127)

What stresses the idea of female masculinity here is the fact that Ibidun sees herself sharing equal responsibilities with her husband as she warns him not to go further in his explanation of his strange actions towards all the maltreatments meted on them by their captors. It is evident here that females exercise autocratic power, a kind of female supremacy, indirectly to oppress, to orientate anybody, anytime. Here, Ibidun acts mainly based on the belief that women share the same opportunities in life as men such as the ability to actively feature in the public sphere. This agrees with the liberal feminist idea that this oppressive measure could go a long way in destabilising even a hard-hearted man from making a concrete decision. Akanji advises that Ibidun be taken away to avoid being hurt or beaten by him.

Osofisan does not hesitate in extolling the virtues of doggedness, determination and perseverance in any of his characters irrespective of their sex. In *Red is the Freedom Road*, the playwright cherishes the fact that it is only through determination that social justice can be achieved. Based on this, that Ibidun, the iron lady, is seen to have doggedly held on to her decision not to succumb to the society's hegemonic humiliation or subjugation right from the beginning even at the risk of death. Although in the Nigerian society, women have not been associated with powerful decisions yet they wield considerable authority, however subtle. This makes masculinity wielded by females to be highly influential. This is evident in the mother power that, Akanji's mother on her death bed, and her subsequent death, bring to bear on him and which troubles his conscience when he learns that he has lost his mother and the unborn child through his carelessness:

The child is dead! Mother you too. The world is narrow, nowhere to hide from pain. ...O mother where are you now... My people will you forgive me, when the tale is told? ... Give me tonight... one night only and all will be well.

From the textual analyses of the selected texts, an attempt has been made to use some of the clues of masculine attributes in the protagonists while blending such with Derrida's theory, believing, that texts are flexible and therefore subject to as many interpretations as possible.

Through the analyses of the selected texts, various hierarchies displayed have been reconstructed. For instance, we have identified the traditional binary opposition such as power and powerlessness, masculinity and femininity for women and men. But such notion has been reconstructed in our belief that equal traits are accorded both male and the female, the rich and the poor, 'the haves' and 'the havenots'- men and women everywhere.

From the examination of Osofisan's texts, the main concern has been to extend to women the same rights and privileges that men have, by identifying areas of unequal recognition and treatment and eliminating such to allow for appropriate reformation and transformation of ideas within the society.

Osofisan expresses through his plays, a kind of egalitarian society where there is equal opportunities for all: men, and women, irrespective of status. He, therefore, engages in using literature as a weapon of social change and of awakening in the people, a sense of liberation and equality of sexes. Some of his women are portrayed as forceful militant, progressive as well as radical characters who stand firmly behind their counterparts to advocate for social change, especially equal treatment of individuals, irrespective of the gender. Thus the paper also imbibes the Liberal feminist's notion of equality, according to Bryson (1992), as cited in Olanrewaju, (2014:25) is a state or condition of being the same, especially, in terms of social status -legal or political.

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These playwright’s works were examined using female masculinity clues of dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language; a proof that masculinity or femininity is not gender tied but is a matter of societal identity as either males or females could be so identified and behaved either way.

The study established that females have their unique ways of putting the masculine traits inherent in them into action without raising much dust but such traits command equal obedience and respect in spite of subtleness employed.

Females in the plays display all the masculine attributes of dress code, voice act, assertiveness and body language clues but engaged largely in assertive tendency clues.

The findings reveal that female protagonists in the texts studied exhibited masculine traits. Though, different from the conventional format, they all put up radical intimidating traits that earned them their desired will

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