

From Male's Perspective to Female's: a Contrastive Analysis of the Male and Female Writers' Portrayal of the Female Characters

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Abstract

A contrast of such African male writers as Oyono whose novel entitled Houseboy portrays women as opportunistic, weak, sexual objects and lacking sufficient will-power, Ogot's The Strange Bride (2006) anticipates a different perspective on the female character. The objectives of this study are: to determine the nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used to refer to the female characters in Houseboy and in The Strange Bride, to identify the roles of the female characters in the two novels and to establish if these appellations and roles valorize or devalue the female characters in the novels. This study supports the assertion by Kenneth Little the feminist article that the male francophone African writers routinely portray their female characters in the stereotype as an oppressed and subjected wife who has little, if any, say in shaping her destiny or in changing the system that deprives and oppresses her, and seeks to find out the extent to which Ogot's The Strange Bride challenge this assertion. This study is based on the enunciation theory which posits subjectivity in language developed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006). Nouns, noun and/or adjectival phrases, comparisons (implicit/explicit) are the important linguistic units. This study shows that even though, the undeniable inherent cultural injustices, have always denied the African woman the authority to make her own choices in how to live her life, overcome cultural limitations, identify and possibly exploit men's culture, the female character is capable of being independent, resourceful and dynamic as the male character. The data collection techniques are grounded in library research as well as reading of Houseboy and The Strange Bride. The study is limited to Houseboy and The Strange Bride. Data is analyzed qualitatively since qualitative analysis lays greater emphasis on holistic description of data. The study adopts a textual analysis design because it entails analyzing existing data sets.

Key Words: noun, noun phrase, comparison, role, valorize, devalue

1. Introduction

Feminist critics argue that male characters depict female characters as “defined by their relationship to men, someone's daughter or wife or mother, shadowy figures who hover on the fringes of the plot, suckling infants, working, plaiting their hair... (They fall) into a specific category of female stereotypes of men appendages, men's possession and prostitutes or jealous beings. These images reflect the traditional stereotypes cited above. However, it should be noted that these roles are mere situations “individual and concrete situations of a woman just as there are among men, fathers, bureaucrats, professors, bachelors as evidenced even by female writing, the problem of existence still lurks behind each role; a being has to distinguish itself by choosing to transcend its situation.

1.1 Research problem

- i) A woman is like an antelope in the savannah; a fish in water (father-in-law addressing his son-in-law while negotiating dowry payment)
- ii) A woman is a cob of maize for any mouth that has its teeth (Houseboy)
- iii) The brown one showed me that a girl is surely good. How sad, that a basket full of sorghum has spilt. (The Strange Bride)

In the first utterance, a woman is compared to an antelope and to a fish, an illusion made to the liberty of whoever becomes her master. In the second declaration, Oyono compares her to a cob of maize, ready to be consumed at the moment of need. In the third utterance Ogot refers to her as a basket full of sorghum, because in the Luo community, at the time of her marriage, sorghum was given to the girl's parents in exchange for the daughter's hand in marriage. Over the years, different socio-cultural African communities resorted to the use of nouns, noun phrases and implicit as well as explicit comparisons to refer to women. The nouns, noun phrases and comparisons have always been in many cases pejorative and inconsiderate to women, encouraging prejudice and stereotype which, consequently result to violence against women and propensity of HIV and AIDS among women. The numerous incidences of rape registered daily both in and outside Kenya as well as their catastrophic consequences to the society are worth contemplating.

If the language used by writers in our societies and in their writings in form of novels, short stories and others is not neutral, it contributes, in one way or another to the categorization and dichotomization of human beings. To name is to categorize and names reveal a system of representation which have repercussion on judgment, behaviors and actions.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to compare the image of the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*. In particular, the study looks at how Oyono and Ogot characterize the female characters by giving individual attributes and the effect of these attributes to the female character.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The research was guided by the following objectives:

- i) To determine the noun, noun phrases and comparisons used to refer to the female character in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*.
- ii) To establish whether the nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used valorize or devalue the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*.
- iii) To identify the roles of the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*.
- iv) To establish if the roles valorize or devalue the female characters in the novels.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i) What are the nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used to refer to the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*?
- ii) Do the nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used to refer to the female characters valorize or devalue the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*?
- iii) What roles are assigned to the female characters in the novels?
- iv) Do these roles valorize or devalue the female characters?

1.5 Rationale

Originally composed in Ogot's Dholuo language as *Miaha* (1983), the English edition of *The Strange Bride* – translated by Okoth Okombo – was first published in 1989 and reformatted in 2006 by East African Educational Publishers. As with her various works, *The Strange Bride* expresses the discrimination against the African woman in traditional society. It revokes the traditional myth that criticizes women as the source of suffering in the world. Richard Jonson in his translation of the *Road to Europe* calls Oyono's first two novels "classics of modern African literature" that are "taught... in schools and in universities throughout Africa, Europe and America". The novel is worthy for its straight forward language and its intense realism.

The chosen texts, *Houseboy* and *The Strange Bride* have been literary texts in Kenyan secondary schools and still remain literary texts in Kenyan universities.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on enunciation theory which posits subjectivity in language developed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006). Nouns, noun and/ or adjectival phrases, comparisons (implicit/explicit) are the important linguistic units. According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni, "each lexical unit is sense subjective."

This is because words of a language are only substitute or interpretation of things”. This is to say that words are a connotation, in varying degrees, different “praxis” characteristic of the society that uses them and which generate all sorts of subjective interpretations in the linguistic subconscious of the community. These lexical units have a form of subjectivity which varies from one phrase to another (p. 72-73). Kerbrat-Orecchioni distinguishes among these lexical units, two terms: those that are pejorative (devaluing) and those that valorize. These terms come into play when evaluating a particular object, an evaluation that depends on the speaker’s system of appreciation.

According to Boachman (1975), the subjective linguistic unit is an emotive connotation which expresses an attitude (true or false), of the subject in question vis-à-vis the message intended. These attitudes can go beyond the individual level and include an entire group, social class etc. these subjective lexical units are commonly found in discourse/texts written by men in respect to women in which a man seeks to valorize himself and devalue the other; that is the woman.

2.0 Research Methodology

The research adopts a survey design because it is used for collecting data on facts or individuals in order to comprehend a phenomenon as a whole (Grinnell 1993). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) surveys are conducted to describe the characteristics of a population. Generally, in a descriptive survey, researchers are not so much concerned with why the observed distribution exists rather with what distribution is. A corpus of data comprising of nouns, noun phrases and explicit as well as implicit comparisons used to refer to the female characters was extracted from *Houseboy* and *The Strange Bride*.

2.1 Population and Sampling

The study has a total of 33 female characters (15 from *The Strange Bride* and 18 female from *Houseboy*). We made a summary of all the nouns, noun phrases and the explicit as well as implicit comparisons making reference to the female characters in the texts.

Purposive sampling was used for selecting *Houseboy* and *The Strange Bride* and not any other novel because the novels reveal the place of the African woman in the African society. Using the nouns, noun phrases comparisons (implicit or explicit) we were able to differentiate and describe the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*.

2.2 Data Collection Method

Content analysis of *Houseboy* and of *The Strange Bride* was most appropriate technique for the study. L. Bardin (1998) defines content analysis as a whole combination of techniques of communication analysis which aims at describing the content of messages, to obtain permanent indicators, inferences of knowledge relative to conditions of production and reception of these messages. This definition reflects the method in which content analysis is designed today. Its advantage is that it does not exclude any aspect of communication content; both latent and manifest content of messages. In this study, we refer to manifest content that are related to noun, noun phrases and implicit as well as explicit comparisons.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative analysis is mainly descriptive (Gall, Borg and Gall 1996). Qualitative technique involved analysis of the nouns, noun phrases and the implicit as well as the explicit comparisons used to refer to the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride*. We therefore identified from the texts what is said about them throughout the novels and the sentence was regarded as the contextual unit. Our concern was not to find out the frequency at which each character appeared throughout the novel. For data analysis, we adopted the model analysis based on the theory of enunciation by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980) which conceives enunciation as the “search for linguistic process which the speaker transmits his mark to utterances, registers himself in his message (explicitly or implicitly) and situates himself in relation to himself”.

3.0 Results and Discussions

In the part that follows, we examine whether the nouns, noun phrases and the comparisons used on the female characters in *The Strange Bride* and in *Houseboy* valorize or devalue the female characters and establish their impact on the social and psychological set up.

Sophie seems to be the victim of the society and ultimately men. Apart from being the lover of the agricultural engineer; she has also an affair with Janopoulos who is old enough to be her grandfather. In the very sarcastic tone, Magnol refers to her as the fiancée-mistress of Toundi even though she is not.

Because of the inherent cultural injustices, Sophie can't choose a partner for herself, her father gives her to the European agricultural engineer who treats her the same way he would treat an animal or any other African under the tenets of imperialism and colonialism. Sophie constantly questions her position in the society and seems to have no control over her happiness.

In Oyono's *Houseboy*, Sophie like many women appears to be completely controlled by the culture surrounding her daily life. Even though she cries and complains to Toundi while in private conversation, she cannot tell her lover, the agricultural engineer, what she feels. When introducing Sophie to the Commandant, the engineer refers to her as his cook and Sophie cannot do anything to explain her hurt and her unhappiness to the engineer. Sophie, while talking to Toundi states that she has not "*slept with a son of the soil in the same hut*" (p. 43).

Even though Sophie is portrayed as a victim of the engineer's presence, she blossoms when speaking to Toundi in private. Sophie tells Toundi of her secret plan to run away to Guinea Spanish. Although she states that she doesn't mean anything to the engineer and that fortunately "*it's good job its mutual*" (p. 27), she later questions what "*other women have that she does not have*" (p. 38). She appears to have some control over the engineer when he brings her out on an outing with him for fear of leaving her with the old Janopoulos who also uses her as his sexual object. When Sophie is next mentioned, we read of an opportunistic thief who runs away with the engineer's money and belonging.

Sophie displays a dual role of a victim and a controller. Sophie appears to be controlled in very possible way by the engineer and the social conduct. In the presence of Toundi she opens up and expresses her immense unhappiness and anger at her current predicament. She eventually takes control of her own existence by running off with the engineer's 150,000 francs and achieving a semblance of freedom for the first time in her life. Through Sophie, Oyono depicts a female character who has eschewed social convention and determinism to redefine or remake herself within given situations.

It is worth noticing that Oyono's novel relentlessly portrays women as weak sexually, no wonder his novel can't be complete before presenting Prostitute of Mekongo the Five adulterous Christians. The Africans in *Houseboy* are well aware of the European hypocrites. They express resentment and criticism through snide remarks which is evidences as Mekongo narrated his sexual experience with one of his prostitutes, (p.50), bawdy humor, tricks like-striking with a paten as Toundi to one of the white girls in the church, but all these are perpetrated behind the European backs.

Toundi dimly recognizes a link between frustrated sexuality and violence in father Vandermayer but dismisses it because he was not affected: he loves to beat the Christians who have committed adultery – native Christians of course. He makes the undress in his office while he repeats in bad Ndjem, *when you were kissing, weren't you ashamed before God?* (p. 50). Toundi's tacit acceptance of Vandermayer's hypocrisy becomes the threshold of his own descent into the European confusion of sexuality and violence explored throughout the rest of the novel. Evidently, violence is used to control female sexuality behavior and this is why violence against women finds expression in sexual forms.

Contrary to Sophie, in *The Strange Bride*, Ogot's presents to us Nyawir, the heroine of *The Strange Bride*, as the transformative character that is instrumental not only in determining her destiny in the male dominated society but transforming the whole nation's economy and politics. Ogot places Nyawir, the character who signifies both custom and change, to advocate for change in a transformation that eventually enabled the people of Got Owaga to embrace the technology of fishing.

From the beginning, as a child, Nyawir knows what she wants, and she goes for it. A little girl, Nyawir does not want to be alone (p.10) so she goes to look for her mother and ends up getting lost. When she reappears as a girl of marriageable age, Awino cannot fathom who could have taught Nyawir to talk like she did. She is not only argumentative and unyielding, but she also knows the value of silence, so when she realizes that handling Awino isn't easy, she opts to be calm and retreat (p.15). She reveals the same traits while persuading Owing to divulge the secret of the society relating to the hoe and to crown it, Nyawir's persistence compels Lwak to give her the sacred hoe.

An element of change, Nyawir teaches girls of Got Owaga how to make holes through gems in order to decorate their hair and ends up introducing a new hairstyle to the girls of the mountain. Far from being seen as failing to conform to a rigid tradition, Nyawir's unique hairstyle which she introduces to all the girls of Got Owaga works to demonstrate the emphasis that Ogot in *The Strange Bride* places on transformation.

Ogot's work values marriage as much as she values the dignity of a woman, and may even be said to see marriage as part of that dignity of a woman, provided the husband recognizes the woman's rights and respects her feelings, no wonder, her heroine Nyawir only marries the man with whom she is in love, and unlike Sophia, Nyawir shows proof of sexual purity; it is Owiny her husband who breaks her virginity. Because of the great love that Owiny has for bride, she refers to her as "*Rapudo, daughter of my mother-in-law, the pupil of my eye with which I see*". The Bride price among the people of Got Owaga is the sorghum, and for sexual purity, her parents get rewarded with many baskets of sorghum, thus the appellation "*a basket full of sorghum*" befits Nyawir.

As a new bride Nyawir angers god by hitting the ground with the hoe against the convention. While Nyawir could be criticized for condemning the society to work rather than to sit back as the farmlands till themselves, thus earning her the appellations: *witch, headstrong, mischievous, strong-headed, misfortune-bringer* (p.11), the narrative seems to celebrate her rebellious nature which leads to a revolutionary change in which people start farming more aggressively.

In *The Strange Bride*, Nyawir overwhelms male characters. Actually, Nyawir's husband owes his leadership position to her advocacy. In other words, by privileging the female voice Ogot not only anticipates *The Strange Bride* where Nyawir's intellect dominates, but with Nyawir she sets the standards.

This female character bears numerous appellations mentioned above. Evidently, she is very beautiful and the whole of Got Owaga praises her beauty (p.35). It is interesting to note that whoever set eyes on Nyawir couldn't restrain from commenting on her beauty, for example, about her, women of Got Owaga comment: "*Eee, that man's daughter was built; we can't refuse to acknowledge what our eyes are showing us tho!*"(p.56), and about her the father in-law- says: *Owiny has brought us such a beautiful girl; a girl who shines like the sun's eye; who is as pretty as a copper ornament*" (p.58).

Different from Ogot's queen of beauty, Oyono's queens of beauty is Mrs. Decazy. This female character bears numerous appellations such as a *sheep* in "the panther is prowling around the sheep" and a *fruit* in "he is not the kind of man to wait for the fruit to drop off the tree". Evidently, she can't bar other men from engaging in sexual intercourse with her even though she is already married, no wonder the Commandant tells her: "*you didn't even give it a bit of time before you started deceiving me as well... I know, I know the old story, your great weakness. How easily you go off the rails.*" Mrs Decazy repeatedly commits adultery and the locals say this in reference to her, "a woman is like a cob of maize for any mouth that has teeth". Despite being of the inferior gender, Madam possesses the power and the looks to manipulate men into doing her will or turning a blind eye.

Madam Decazy's beauty and wit are most likely to be the main factors in her power. Madam Decazy showcases her beauty through her dressing. Through her, Oyono depicts beautiful women as objects of sexual prowess. It should however be noted that unlike Oyono, the vast majority of Ogot's protagonists are women, and nearly all of them are cast in the heroic mold or at least in a favorable light.

A look at Achola, Nyawir's co-wife reveals a hardworking selfless young woman who loves her family dearly. She does not tire in working hard to prepare sorghum meant to pay the bride price for her sister-in-law. Because of her sister-in-law's love for him, Owiny addresses her with an endearing title "*law kwach*" (*leopard skin-cloth*). Like the bee that has become itchy in its honey, Achola joins the wives and daughters of the soil who leave their homestead in order to take the bride's wealth to Nyawir's family so as to settle marriage requirements. Her love and devotion to her mother-in-law is worth admiration Right from the beginning of the narration, she pampers her mother-in-law: *This time I want you to sit down and rest like a queen*" (p.47) and Lwak acknowledges that even her own daughter would not have looked after her the way Achola did. And when Opii breaks her mother's heart by accusing her before the crowd, it is Achola who calms and wipes away her tears. Lwak considers Achola as the guardian of order and peace after death.

The love and sincerity portrayed by the women in *The Strange Bride* challenges the perpetual jealousy associated with women as revealed by the Doctor's wife in *Houseboy*. When Madam Decazy arrives in Dangan, the wife of the Doctor feels infuriated by Madam Decazy's beauty and to this effect Toundi writes : "*The doctor's wife looked as flat as putty flung at a wall*" (p. 48).

However, when Madam Decazy's infidelity gets to be known by the locals, she comes to warn her to be more discrete since the Commandant had not yet known. By encouraging Madam Decazy to go on with her infidelity discretely, she comes out as a poor counselor.

Lwak is portrayed as a very loving woman; her love for her family is unflinching. She is very obedient and loving towards the husband who also loves her so much and called her *Ragwel* (the bow-legged one (traditionally, the bow-legged women are considered very beautiful by Luo men)). When her son has to go live in the wilderness because of his wife's "sin", she mourns bitterly, in her heart she longs to go die in the wilderness with her beloved son, but her love for her husband restrains her. She is the mother of the community and takes her responsibilities seriously. She uses her power and respect to hold the society together particularly its female members.

Contrary to Ogot, Oyono's persistently presents the female character in very negative light. As shown in the novel by the character Kalisia, women at this time are sometimes treated as sexual servants; these women regard this treatment as ordinary and common. Kalisia does not react when her relative states that: "*the white are all crazy about her behind, those lovely elephant's liver bulging beneath the cloth*" (p. 90). Sophie is even surprised when Toundi refuses to have sex with her because "*his mouth is tired*", (p.43). Although Oyono depicts Kalisia as a new woman, he does not lose sight of the different orientations of this woman and how she perceived the world. About her, Toundi writes "*Kalisia had had enough of the whites and she lived for a long time with one of the coast Negroes... then she left him. She lived with "other white men, other black men, and other men who were not quite black and not quite white"*, (p. 43).

This negative light on women seems to permeate all through the Oyono's novel. He thus presents the mother of Toundi as a voiceless, resigned, docile robot like object who helplessly bows to the forces of social criticism to which she is condemned. Toundi's mother reminds us of a wife who confines herself to her female role of cooking as Toundi indicates "*my mother was famous in the village for her cooking of porcupine*" (p. 10)

Violence against women is generally seen to cut across cultures, class and religion. The actual nature and extent of wife beating is eminent as the beginning of the novel where Toundi states: "*my father however was not a stranger and I was well acquainted with what he could do with the stick. Whenever he went for either my mother or me, it took us a week to recover*". Over the theme of violence, Oyono depicts a difference between the black woman and the white woman. After learning of his wife's adultery, the Commandant hurts Toundi more and more, because he cannot vent his rage upon his wife without facing the repercussions from the European community or from her, yet the African man freely beats his wife and indirectly hurls insults at her as the father of Toundi does: "*if you hadn't the blood of gluttons that flows in your mother's veins...*" (p. 10). Another element of violence meted out on women is portrayed at school where M. Salvain declares that: "*the African instructors and pupils were making the girls in the school pregnant. It was like a brother*"(p. 10)

The mother of Toundi's non-aggressive personality keeps her down, no wonder when her husband orders her to serve him Toundi's share of the meal; she helplessly obeys and remains crying. Toundi's family gives a clear example of male domination and female subordination that breeds inequality within marriage.

In a similar fashion Oyono presents Toundi's sister, Anton's wife, the wife of the Prison Director, Wives of the Greek and the mother of Tinati. He portrays these characters as passive women with neither personality nor character, accepting their condition and thus exhibiting no spirit of revolt or freedom. The wife of the Prison Director comes out as a weak helpless entity that can't do anything to stop her unhappiness. Her husband has an affair with Madam Decazy and she helplessly does nothing to stop it. These women are a true reflection that even in the colonial days; culture did not provide an opportunity for a woman to distinguish herself, to separate herself from the others as a consequence of her lack of disposition to assert her own individuality.

Contrary to the mother of Toundi is Awino the mother of Nyawir. She is very hardworking woman who wakes up early in the morning to go fetch water. Her daughter follows her to the river and in the vent she gets lost. She painfully laments the disappearance of her daughter. Even though Opolo (her husband) sternly warns her against lamenting the loss of Nyawir, Awino does not listen to her husband, and she responds: *even our ancestors will be angry with you when you join them* (p.9). She makes wise decisions. For example, when Nyawir reappears to her at the river, she decides to go reveal the matter to her husband before it gets known to any other person. To avoid rumors about the disappearance of her daughter, she says: "*you must keep everything that has happened to you up to this moment in your heart; never utter a word about your strange experience to anyone*"(p.24).

When the husband wants to reveal the reappearance of Nyawir to the headman, Awino wisely advises against drawing too much attention to the child. She finally appears in the narration as a very happy mother in charge of the preparation of food during the customary marriage of her daughter. Even though she is full of joy, she keeps it within herself. It is worth noticing, that unlike the mother of Toundi whose identity is pegged on his son or husband, the mother of Nyawir has a name; Awino

Like in Oyono's *Houseboy*, where The Woman who gave some *arki* to Toundi and the old woman from *sixa* who prepares food for the boys are portrayed as working entities in the society, taking charge of the kitchen, Min Ongisa, Awino's niece, Akeyo, Junior wife of Rabala, Beautiful cousins of Nyawir, Many of her mothers' (the wives of Nyawir's uncles), Fellow young women (who help Achola to prepare sorghum), Owiny's sisters and cousins, Eight married women (who were going to carry baskets of sorghum to the bride's home), The 'grooms sisters' appear as working entities in the novel. However, while Oyono limits the women to the kitchen, Ogot casts very positive light on these women. For example, they prepare sorghum and take it to the bride's home out of love.

Like Oyono's Mme Sylvain, who is defined by her relationship to her husband, Ogot not only reveals this relationship (like Nyawir, wife of Owiny) but goes beyond that. Owiny calls her (Rapudo, the daughter of my mother-in-law), and Lwak calls her daughter of fellow women yet Awino refers to her as daughter of the women of Got Owaga. While Mme Salvain just seems to hover on the fringes of the plot, her presence adding no value to the text, each female character in *The Strange Bride* merits her position in the text. While the reader is left wondering why Oyono included such character as Mme Salvain in the novel, an exclusion of any of the female characters in Ogot's novel would have left a dent.

4.0 Conclusion

Our study set out to examine whether the nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used on the female characters in *Houseboy* and in *The Strange Bride* valorize or devalue the female characters. The findings indicate that the nouns / attributes used for the female characters in *Houseboy* indeed devalue them. Even in the Kenyan society, referring to a woman as a prostitute (as the Oyono does refer to Sophie, Kalisia and Madam Decazy) depicts her as a worthless being. By equating Madam Decazy to a cob of maize indicates how far she has been devalued; apparently she is available to go to bed with any man. As Oloo (2002) observes, an unmarried woman is not approved of by the society, hence the derogatory term prostitute. To clearly identify a woman, Oyono does not tire from highlighting her relation to a man, thus the use of the nouns phrases: *the wife of, the daughter of* and *the mother of* and when portrayed as a working entity, then her workshop is the kitchen.

Such comparisons used in *Houseboy* as *a cob of maize, a sheep or a fruit* in reference to Madam Decazy are devaluing. *The cob of maize* seems to be available for any man with teeth, meaning that she is a sexual object for any man who is sexually active and willing. A sheep as used in traditional societies is used to refer to someone who is not intelligent. Thus by referring to the female character as a sheep, Oyono implies that she has a low intellectual capacity, which is devaluing.

The nouns, nouns phrases and the comparisons used on women as revealed in *Houseboy* do not valorize the female characters at all. Women are seen as property, they are perceived as sexual objects, a view reflected clearly in such practices as wife inheritance in certain African societies like the Luo's of Kenya where, upon the death of her husband, the widow is inherited by the closest male relative, (Oloo, 2002). Sylvia Brian maintains that the cause of womanhood has been inadequately served by African writers in their works, (Brian, 1987).

Through *The Strange Bride*, it is clearly evident that Ogot is troubled by the fact that many women live in a society organized according to male world views and concerns. Her handling of women subjects demonstrate a commitment to the task of bringing out the success in the female characters. In fact nearly all of the female's characters in her novel are heroes. She presents the women as decent and loving beings who overwhelm the male characters. *The Strange Bride* raises the question: why does *Houseboy* writer portray the female character as a weak sexual object?

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Nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used on the female characters in *Houseboy*

No.	Name	Noun	Noun phrase	Comparison
1	Sophie	Prostitute Fiancée-mistress	Lover of the agricultural engineer	
2	Kalisia	Prostitute Chamber girl		
3	Mrs. Decazy	Prostitute	Wife of the Commandant	A cob of maize/ A sheep /A fruit
4	Sister of Toundi		Sister of Toundi	
5	The woman who gave Toundi some <i>arki</i>	Woman		
6	Anton's wife	Wife		
7	An old woman from <i>sixa</i>	Woman		
8	Mme. Salvain		Wife of the head teacher	
9	Wives of the Greek	Wives		
10	M. Diamond's daughter		Daughter of	
11	The mother of Tinati		Mother of	
12	Mother of Toundi		Mother of	
13	Prostitute of Mekongo	Prostitute		
14	5 adulterous Christians	Prostitutes		
15	The wife of the doctor		Wife of	

Nouns, noun phrases and comparisons used on the female characters in *The Strange Bride*

No.	Name	Noun	Noun phrase	Comparison
1	Nyawir	A witch/ strong headed/ the mischievous/ the misfortune-bringer/my daughter/little girl/ only child/ my child/ marriageable girl/ the bride/this woman/ evil girl/ headstrong/ Rapudo	Daughter of Opolo / child of Opolo/ My mother's grandchild / little girl/Daughter of the women of Mount Owaga/ child of my fellow women / my child Nyawir whom the devil took away mysteriously/ Awino's only child/ the slender daughter of Opolo/ The slim waisted girl/ Queen of beauty/ the brown one/a beautiful girl/ a girls who shines like the sun's eye, Fiancée of Owiny/Owiny's wife/ a young man's wife/ the evil woman/ the beautiful one that carries hidden evil/ evil bride/ this bride who has not even given birth/ this woman/ evil daughter-in-law/ Opolo's wayward daughter/ a girl whose kinship was not well known/ My daughter-in-law/ a girls whose eyes don't seem to fear anything; and who appears to be seeing the deep secrets of your heart/ a new woman/ my fellow woman's child/ our child/ the sort of a woman to cause trouble / daughter of my in-laws/daughter of the owner of the millet	copper ornament/A basket full of sorghum/ the cold water that falls from the roof/ the long reed that grows in the river/ the beautiful bamboo that catches the traveler's eye/A lion's den/ hot sand/The tiny ant that cannot be robbed of the termite which it has captured/A very hard place/ the slim growing ogada reed which the traveler feels tempted to cut/ the locust/ a fire-lighter/ the potent fire which does not die out until the day breaks/ the pupil of my eye with which I see/
2	Lwak	Ragwel/ grandmother	Senior wife of Olum/ mother of the nation/ daughter of heroes/ Daughter of Kwanga/ mother of Opii and Owiny/ grandmother/ senior woman who cleanses for all the people of Got Owaga/ the mother of the community	Like a queen
3	Achola	Opii's wife/	daughter-in-law of... Daughter of Adede	leopard-skin-cloth The bee
4	Awino	Mother of Nyawir		
5	Min Ogisa	Mother of Ogisa/	one who cleanses	
6	Awinos' niece	Young woman		
7	Cousin's of Nyawir	Nyawir's cousins		
8	Akeyo	Daughter of Obongo		
9	Akeyo's co-wife	Wives	A dead woman who can see what is going on among the living	
10	Opolo's mother	Mother of...		
11	Rabala's junior wife	Wife of...		
12	Mothers		Many mothers who were worried about Nyawir's long hair	
13	Girls		Girls of Got Owaga	
14	8 married women		Wives and daughters of the soil	