

# On Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, colonial Afro-masculinities and the subjection of African cultural praxis in *Inxeba*

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## ABSTRACT

The understudied work of Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí has pointed to the incommensurability of the westernised phenomenon of gender with African conceptions of personhood and social identity. Oyèwùmí's work has challenged the idea of gender as a universal identity and subject position, not by arguing for a distinct form of gender embodiment that is African in its phenomenology, but by historically and conceptually demonstrating that gender is a product of western social constructs not universally related or applicable to African social schemas. Oyèwùmí presents the argument that the presence of gender as a social signifier of African peoples' identity (whom prior to colonialism inhabited a cultural order without gender as a primary organising principle) occurs at the co-instance of western cultural domination and colonialisation of Africa. Relying on such a view toward African society's historically non-gendered social organisation schemas, this paper offers a critique of the film *Inxeba* (Tregrove 2017), arguing that, contrary to the popular reception of the film as a gender progressive representation of African queer identity and its attendant liberation from a purportedly hetero-patriarchal African culture, the film in effect constitutes the inverse. In essence, the reception around *Inxeba* inadvertently re-inscribes colonial gender grammars into an African cultural praxis and in the process undercuts African cultural autonomy for self-progression on its own terms. I further argue that the film's thematic treatment of both a purported "African hetero-patriarchal masculinity" and an "African Queer masculinity" could be read as merely mimicking western/colonial gender embodiment discourse.

**Keywords:** Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, pre-colonial African gender, *Inxeba* (Tregrove 2017), queer masculinity, Afro-masculinities.

# Introduction

The social categories “women” and “men” are social constructs deriving from the Western assumption that “physical bodies are social bodies” [...] the original impulse to apply this assumption transculturally is rooted in the simplistic notion that gender is a natural and universal way of organizing society [...] But gender is socially constructed: it is historical and culture-bound. – Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women* (1997:9)

Current revival of previously understudied work on African culture, history and philosophy has reintroduced a critical and riveting form of African-centered scholarship whose study and analysis of the social phenomenon of gender within African culture posits that westernised notions of gender, notwithstanding its presence within African culture, is socio-culturally incommensurate with African conceptions of personhood and social identity. Such scholarship on African cultural, history, languages and philosophy presents the argument that the phenomenon of gender is but, according to Oyèwùmí (1997:9), the socio-cultural outcome of western epistemologies and political power dynamic and, as such, the phenomenon of gender is endogenous to western socio-cultural, economic and political life. And further, that gender’s presence in African culture and identity politics is but one of the endless instantiation of the colonial imposition of western socio-cultural grammars of identity upon African people and African culture (Oyèwùmí 1997:10). This critical African scholarship (re)enters the arena of gender politics and discourses by taking western gender theory’s enduring claim that gender is a cultural construct (Wittig 2003:245-251) to its full (socio)logical conclusion. This scholarship argues that if gender is a cultural construct then it must follow that different cultural orders will give rise to distinct cultural persuasions of gender – if even at all (Hartman 1996:540-555).

Further, such African scholarship insists that any analysis of gender within the context of African social schemas and cultural practices has to take into account the history of anti-blackness and colonialism with regard to such African cultural life and praxis (see Curry 2014:2). If in terms of western gender theory, gender amounts to ‘the sum total of those societally predetermined and culturally choreographed behaviors we ritualistically and habitually dramatize in order to give effect to a cultural framework of gender and sexuality’ (Butler 1990:34), then a set of different societal predetermination and choreographies of behaviors will constitute identities that are differentially gendered or even non-gendered in their primary social conception. In this regard some other mode of subjectivity – such as social seniority based on relative age and kinship structure (Oyèwùmí 1997:9) – may be to an African cultural framework as gender is to a western cultural framework.

In this paper, I offer an analysis of the recent South African film *Inxeba* from the perspective of such Africanist critique of gender (politics). In the first part of the paper, I explicate the argument of gender as a western sociological phenomenon smuggled into African cultural life by way of the wars of colonialism. In the second part, I offer a critical reading of *Inxeba* against the background developed in the first part of this paper. In this regard, I argue that the film's narrative echoes processes of colonial inscription of genders onto an African cultural praxis, and not necessarily one of queer resistance against an alleged African hetero-patriarchal masculinity and culture. In closing, I briefly explore how a true reckoning with intra-black gender conflict requires a grammar of critique that takes into account the context of colonialism in both the making of contemporary African identities and the erosion of the historical meaning of certain praxis within and of African culture.

## Part one: Colonialism's gender

Fewer dominant theories of gender incorporate an analysis of the effects of colonialism and anti-blackness in both the making of western gender embodiments and the empiricist universalisation onto the 'colonies'. Foucault-Butler-De Beauvoir is often taught in South Africa in a dangerously universal tenor that often fails to account for how gendered experience unfold within a social and political global paradigm of white supremacy, colonial wars and anti-black social dispensations. In other words, most dominant western theories of gender do not address the ways in which the social negation of African people through the wars of colonialism, the project of western cultural imperialism and its regimes of anti-blackness affect western intellectual studies of the phenomenon of gender. In addition to this, the cultural integrity of Africans is rarely seriously studied in order to give a holistic socio-scientific account of how Africans societies organise themselves, constitute the personhood of its people and their attendant social identities. African philosophical propositions on being, ontology, reason, metaphysics, cosmologies as well as African social institutions, kinship structures, customary laws, civilisational norms, languages, aesthetic orders and ancient history are rarely afforded sustained critical scholarly attention with the aim of understanding the cultural and lived experiences of African societies and the unique forms and natures of the identities that such world(s) give rise to. Western studies and theories of gender, which dominate the global discourse on gender, rely on its own socio-cultural particularities to make sense of and to subsequently (by way of intellectual imperialism) give an account of the sociological dynamics of African cultures and its praxis. For example, the way Butlerian theory is utilised in South African, for the most part, in its dense and complex unpacking of the construction of gender and its cultural

hermeneutics and history, struggles to consider the radicalising implications of colonialism, slavery and global racism next to a universal account of the phenomenology of gender.

The response to the intellectual absence of an equally extensive and intense critical study in gender theory of how colonialism might affect one's "becoming of a woman", or complicate a "history of sexuality" or even interrupt the normative "performances of gender" has been merely to stack the experiences and theories of race to the experiences and theories of normative westernised notions of gender. Apart from the rather tokenistic manners in which intersectionality is incorporated, this stacking approach in gender studies has attracted criticism from critical race theorist Tommy Curry, who laments such failure in the methodological study of the particularity of the experience and condition of racism and colonialism (Curry 2011:140-141) to gender matters of blackness. What I term a stacking of the black experience of colonialism and anti-blackness to the dominant theories of gender, Curry describes as an 'integrationist' (Curry 2011:146,155) move in critical gender discourse, arguing that the move to not tamper with the theories and philosophies of white thinkers in spite of their fundamental dereliction of the race question and the history of colonialism (and in some instances even these theories' inadvertent contribution to the project of racial subjugation), amount to a destructive revisionism dedicated to marrying [black] perspectives to the already established traditions of philosophy's Eurocentric enterprise (Curry 2011:146-148).

In this regard, Curry argues that matters of gender within African cultural life ought to be made sense of from the perspective of and in light of colonialism's cultural and political domination of African societies (Curry 2011:140-141). He chastises this trend of merely taking western perspectives on gender that were theorised from observation that fundamentally neglected the fact and conditions of racism and white supremacy, and extending them to the black experience as a 'deplorable' theoretical practice in mainstream gender studies (Curry 2011:146,155). In theory and in reality, this manifest in the obsessive buckling of 'black' to 'white' social theories, as in 'black gender performance' or 'African masculinity' (Curry 2011:141). Closely related to this is the reading of African gender theorist as 'spirit' incarnation of white gender theory, as in phrases such as 'the black Judith Butler' (Curry 2011:140-141).

Spillers, also speaking to the need to problematise normative western gender theory, highlights the fact of African persons' subjectivities as having been constructed outside of the traditional symbolic realm of western gender since the algebra of racism sanctioned the diminution of African people to the position of the non-human (Spillers 1987:4). This position of non-human Spillers describes as 'zero-degree social

conceptualization' (Spillers 1987:5), and by such a description means to direct focus to the distinct social conditions under which western normative genders are constructed, juxtaposed with those under which African subjectivities were colonially constructed. Spillers argues that the western social world order, in terms of which Africans were racialised and marked as non-humans with zero degree social conceptualisation, is the same social order within which Africans have their social identities constructed (Spillers 1987:5). As such, African-ness, because of its original counter-normative position in relation to the western normative social world (from which western normative gender embodiment schemas emerge), necessarily possess a discursive relationship to western normative gender (Spillers 1987:5-9) itself. The gender of the Africans-rendered-non-human within the ruling and dominant western colonial social world, has, since the colonial encounter, been discursively formed and, as such, requires a different political grammar for contesting its constitutive terms and political nature.

A more explicitly African-centered critique of western gender discourse and theories has emerged in Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí, specifically in *The invention of Women: Making an African sense of western gender discourses* (1997). In this incendiary anthropological investigation, Oyèwùmí incites a groundbreaking critique of a number of contemporary, westernised discourses of gender and arraigns them for their historical and continued colonial and imperialist universalisation of gender. Using the Yoruba social world and culture as primary case study, she presents research into, amongst others, the linguistic structure of the Yoruba as well as its systems and modes of social organisation. This study demonstrates that gender has not been an ordering principle of the Yoruba culture (Oyèwùmí 1997:29) – a culture from which a number of African cultures are derived (Diop 1974). In conjunction to studying the Yoruba culture on its own terms, unhinged from dominant western gender discourses, Oyèwùmí also treats colonialism first and foremost as a system of cultural domination to understand how it managed to stratify the Yoruba along a logic of gender – showing how the enterprise of colonialism is conducted with gendering as part of its apparatus (Oyèwùmí 1997:76). She thus argues that in the same way that many linguistic, religious and epistemological facets of colonialism didn't exist among Africans prior to their colonial inscription into the notion of "Africa", so too gender was imposed using the very same tactics of cultural en-framing and en-writing (Oyèwùmí 1997:76).

Oyèwùmí insists that the colonial enterprise was 'a male institution in all its aspects, its "masculine" ideology, its military organization and processes, its rituals of power and hierarchy, its strong boundaries between the sexes' (Oyèwùmí 1997:77); noting how colonial custom and practices emerged out of western rationalities and social practices of hierarchising persons within its society and as such paved the way for gender and its associated power dynamics (Oyèwùmí 1997:76). She expounds on the

former point by arguing that such racist systems of hierarchising does not merely classify subjects in terms of a racialised schematic (coloniser over native, white over black, human over non-human), but includes the hierarchising of the colonial masculine over the colonial feminine (Oyèwùmí 1997:77). Gender must thus be understood with conceptual reference to its western cultural origins, and later as part of the system of colonialism during the colonial expansion of the west. Curry (2014), too, in an analysis of how a study of gender within African social life ought to incorporate, at its core, a substantive consideration of the implications of anti-blackness and colonialism to such gender, impresses on us to understand racism and colonialism as not being exclusive of racial antipathy but as being inherently inclusive of racist-gendering or colonial-gendering (Curry 2014:1).

In respect of the question of how “western society” becomes universalised as “gendered society”, Oyèwùmí (1997) argues that the categories and social conception of gender that are particular to western culture as its primary organising principles arose from western culture’s socio-cultural means of making sense of reality (see also Curry 2014:2). She states, any concept of gender ‘as it is invoked in the western scholarship is derived from western experience and history, a history rooted in philosophical discourses’ steeped in biological determinism (Oyèwùmí 1997:xiii). Here is presented the analysis that the reason why the body (which is a primary site of gender – and by extension race) and its appearance is so central to western conception of social and cultural identities: because, as Oyèwùmí claims, the west privileges sight over other senses. Because of this, in western society and culture, the body is always ‘in view and on view’ and permanently available for ‘categorization’ and meaning inscription (Oyèwùmí 1997:2). Or, as Spillers has formulated, the body ‘become[s] a territory of cultural and political maneuver’ (Spillers 1987:67). Further to the point about the sight-centric social structure of the western epistemologies, Oyèwùmí highlights how in western philosophical discourses, it is the case that things must be *seen* before they can be made sense of as evidence in adages such as ‘the truth that must be brought to light’ or ‘knowledge as illumination’ or ‘seeing is believing’ (Oyèwùmí 1997:21), pointing out that

[a] concentration on vision as the primary mode of comprehending reality promotes what can be seen over that which is not apparent to the eye; it misses the other levels and nuances of existence.

To this end, Oyèwùmí insists that it is the legacy of this sight-centered approach to giving account of reality that leads the western world (and, through imperialism and colonialism, the societies of the global colony) to conceptualise of a socialisation of biological rationalities (Oyèwùmí 1997:21-22). In contrast, the Yoruba, Oyèwùmí notes,

places major emphasis on the auditory; as far as the Yoruba people are concerned, one cannot extrapolate another person's identity or social roles just by looking at them, since an auditory centered order of making sense of the world places importance on that which is heard and said and not that which is seen (Oyèwùmí 1997:19). For Oyèwùmí, it is sight-hinged sensibilities in the making of knowledge and the organising of peoples from whence western gender biologics emanates (Oyèwùmí 1997:21), as a reflection of a specific epistemological and social model of making sense of bodies and ordering of society (Oyèwùmí 1997:22) that is endogenous to western society and does not prove any biological, natural or universal principles of being (Oyèwùmí 1997:21).

Oyèwùmí's work is radical in that it rejects the frameworks of gender identities which are founded on biological determinism (of sex, but also of race) – or what she terms 'bio-logics' and 'body reasoning' (Oyèwùmí 1997:8). For Oyèwùmí, a rumination on whether gender identity is a natural occurrence or a cultural construction is not a point of theoretical intrigue to a cultural schematic in which biological bodies are not primary resources in the determination of one's social and cultural identity, social role, structure of desire or one's relation to others (Oyèwùmí 1997:8). This claim of the non-centrality of the body among the Yoruba (hence gender not seen as primary organising principle) should not be read as claiming that biological bodies do/did not exist among the Yoruba (Oyèwùmí 1997:18), but rather that it was not the primary go-to site for naming and meaning making of subjecthood, and certainly not for the distribution of social roles and the value of people (Oyèwùmí 1997:18). Oyèwùmí does concede to the corporeal and material conception of the body within the Yoruba culture (and cautions against any interpretation of her work as insinuating otherwise) but is quick to highlight that capabilities such as breastfeeding and birthing children amounted to 'mere anatomical fact' (Oyèwùmí 1997:18). Such facts of/about the anatomy did not serve as the source material from which to develop social theory and practice or to arbitrarily group certain people (i.e. mothers) based on mere observable fact of their shared anatomical capabilities (Oyèwùmí 1997:18).

## Part two: The phantasmagoric genders of *Inxeba*

Oyèwùmí notes that in pre-colonial Yoruba culture there existed no primary connection between the body and social roles, positions and hierarchies, most particularly ones that would come to define a group of people as a specific gender in terms of which they are then conceptualised of as either subordinate or superior to another (Oyèwùmí 1997:18). In this regards, and as a rebuttal to the sight-centric nature of western

epistemologies, she calls for a making 'sense' of African epistemologies as it relates to debates around gender, instead of uncritically adopting a Eurocentric worldview in respect of African cultural praxis. In light of the theories discussed above, a critique of the political persuasions of the gender-centric narrative of the South African film *Inxeba* is offered. The kind of public discourse it gave rise to has revitalise the urgency to think more critically about the presence of gender within African cultural (and the manner in which South African scholarship engages with notions of gender construction).

Public discourse surrounding this film was often intellectually lacking in its approach to the themes and political commentary the film thrust into national public discourse. In some quarters, the film was received with reactionary objections that functioned to undercut what ought to have been a rigorous national dialogue on the tension between African cultural praxis and modern configuration of African (gender) identity. In my view, both the groups who hailed the film as progressive and those who were antagonistic toward it (to the point of petitioning to censor and ban it) approached the film's themes uncritically. To the extent that the vast majority of the public held, to a fashion, that the film marked a major step forward for LGBT representation and constituted an exemplary form of progressive (and even radical queer) cinema, the focus of my critique lies in the gendered dimension of the film that relates to the cultural praxis of initiation.

*Inxeba* centers around two gay African male characters as they reckon with desire, love and attraction within the context and journey of the isiXhosa ritual of male initiation. The film relies heavily, both thematically and visually, on the setting and symbolic quality of these rituals and ritualised spaces – a space which is cast as an antagonistic context (in relation to the main characters' outsidership). As such, the male initiation ritual, through the absence of critical analysis of its cultural significance, cultural purpose and complexity, is (mis)represented as the antipathetic political and symbolic context within which the two main gay characters are to wrestle with desire and its social recognition. Popular public discourse praised the film as a groundbreaking and visionary treatment of black queer marginality and its structural challenges in navigating what the film insinuates is a hetero-patriarchal African cultural order and praxis. The film, as it was widely claimed, constituted a possible emancipatory queer counter current against a cultural praxis overdetermined by the gender and sexual conventions of a hetero-patriarchal masculinity.

In a review of 'On Black Men', Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (2011:359) makes the following observation:

Queer theory may unwittingly diminish its criticality if it fails to acknowledge the role anti-black racism plays in shaping the discursive practices of gender and sexuality. The violence that produces blackness necessitates that from the existential vantage point of black lived experience, gender and sexuality lose their coherence as normative categories.

Taking my cue from Jackson, I argue that the uncritical dimensions of *Inxeba*'s reception are precisely to be found in the stability and cohesion of a gender-centric narrative in conjunction with the nature in which the film represents the isiXhosa male initiation ritual. It is my claim that the film premises its gender narrative upon a simplistic and un-problematized oppositionality between African hetero-patriarchal masculinity and contemporary African queer masculinity. In effect, the film's gender narrative, critically considered, amounts to the endorsement of a neat polarity between the two, in which the latter is represented as the normative African gender embodiment against which the non-conforming queer masculinity is to challenge and free itself from. To give effect to the film's thematic claims of a normative and dominant African hetero-patriarchal masculinity, the isiXhosa ritual of male initiation is rallied as the most effective context for animating and giving effect to this film's purported African hetero-patriarchal masculinity. By couching the gendered embodiment of hetero-patriarchal masculinities within the context of this ritual (which already suffers mischaracterisation as a primitive and patriarchal practice) such practices coded as "specifically-African" is from the onset thematically and politically positioned as unprogressive and atavistic in relation to the African queer masculinity for which the film campaigns.

In the same way that feminist theorists have, for instance, highlighted the practice of heterosexual marriage as functioning to reify normative gender expectation, institutionalise patriarchy and advance the unfairly gendered power dynamics upon which marriages are premised (see Card 1966:1-2) so too is the isiXhosa male initiation ritual represented along these same logic lines; namely, that practice of the ritual is the political site for the production and affirmation of a hetero-patriarchy. The film's tacit acceptance of hetero-patriarchal gender as an indigenous feature of African cultural life, through the attribution of "tribal" origins, perpetuates the historical colonial gendering of African culture. In light of Oyèwùmí's delineation of the import of westernised gendered schematics, such neat narratological tension between African hetero-patriarchal masculinity and African queer masculinity shows the film to be engaging in anti-black narratological maneuvers – representing, antagonistically, the isiXhosa praxis as the originally natural site for an African hetero-patriarchal masculinity.

The narratological and cinematic naturalisation of hetero-patriarchal masculinity to this rite effectively represents such praxis as factually, originally, historically and

traditionally, and natively hetero-patriarch in nature. This, as argued in part one, is not true of African culture, its social models, or its relationship to gender or the historicity of the phenomenon of gender. The film's failure to interrogate and complicate such cinematic and narratological enframing mirrors the same failure in South African scholarship, where queer theory is not brought into conversation with the effects of colonialism and anti-blackness in gendering African cultural life and praxis. Instead of African hetero-patriarchal masculinity being discredited for its continued inhabitation of a colonial gender embodiment, this hetero-patriarchy is instead indigenised into the ritual of isiXhosa male initiation and, as such, African cultural praxis within the film is inseparably associated with the colonial legacy of gender. Such a blatant cinematic re-signification of an African cultural praxis as originally and historically restricting or confining the expression of same-sex desire does not only limit a reading of the film's themes but also of the cinematic potential. By this I mean to make the point that the rich aesthetic history of the isiXhosa initiation rituals not only lends to the film an cinematographic tone but it also functions to advance a set of metaphors that communicate the initiation praxis as fundamentally hetero-patriarchal and aversive to same-sex desire.

The enveloping mountains and secluded location for the initiation ritual, which defines the film's visual tone (and are the sites for the eventual death of the one of the characters) not only fulfill an aesthetic agenda, but also double up as metaphors for confinement, enclosure, restrictions and the societal marginality of the queer identities of the main characters. It could also be argued that the non-disclosure of what exactly happens during the male initiation ritual metaphorically supplement the main characters' own non-public disclosure of their same-sex desire. In the same way that Africans within a colonial western racist social schema are misrecognised and denied the integrity of their culture and their existence is dishonored, even as they remain useful for cultural appropriation, labor exploitation, plundering and exoticisation, so too does *Inxeba* tell its narrative along this colonial tradition. To this extent the cultural significance of the mountain, the cultural meaning of the secluded location for the initiation ritual, the claims of its spiritual sacredness, the absence of female characters, the rules forbidding sexual congress and so on, are not addressed in reception (nor represented in the film) in a nuanced way. They are denied substantive representation and cultural integrity even as they remain useful for the achievement of a narrative and a cinematographic tone (and a certain type of reception orientation) that at best pays no regards to them and at worst (mis)represents them in a way as antagonistically hetero-patriarchal to the overall queer narrative. Their cultural significance and the implications of such significance to the formation of identity and spiritual rebirth is disregarded.

In keeping with the film's attribution of hetero-patriarchy to the cultural ritual of male initiation, the characters presented as the hetero-patriarchal corollary of the queer characters are also fortified within hetero-patriarchy as a natural and normative cultural trait of their African embodiment. The (heterosexual-coded) caregiver characters are presented as possessing "excess" heterosexuality and as fundamentalist-adherent enforcers of the hetero-patriarchy pinned onto the initiation ritual. These heterosexual guide-men's characters serve to create a relational dynamic against which the gay characters' queerness can be juxtaposed and contrasted as the sort of 'African' hetero-patriarchal masculinity from which they are to turn against.

Placed in a historical, non-gendered, pre-colonial African context, both the contemporary queer masculinity and the historical hetero-patriarchal masculinity of the film are gender identities structurally inscribed onto the colonised in order to inhabit the colonial order of social relations that have come to impose themselves onto the colonised. As such, the cinematic interplay between the two can be read as but an instantiation of colonial gender fantasies. Contemporary queer masculinity is thus neo-colonial, in so far as it fails to unpack the colonial origins of the hetero-patriarchal masculinity against which it understands itself as being oppositional to – while historical African hetero-patriarchal masculinity is also colonial in so far as it understands its hetero-patriarchy as being African in its cultural and social origins. These are but the phantasmagoric genders of colonialism, standing in as surety of colonialism's enduring attack on African culture.

## Conclusion

*Inxeba* does not manage to untangle its characters from the binds of hetero-patriarchy and the negation of their true sexual desire because the film lacks a rigorous de-colonial understanding of gender – the consequences being that it reproduces a contemporary gender variation of the very restrictive and anti-black gender logics that it narratologically and symbolically attempts to decry. To the extent that heterosexual-patriarchy within African cultural life merely references the legacy of colonial normative gender, the unfortunate pinning of such a mode of gender embodiment to African culture renders African culture bereft of pre-colonial history in terms of which Africans had organised themselves differentially to their colonisers. Read through a reception lens that does not address this, *Inxeba* merely becomes a story of a transition from a historical hetero-patriarchy that was imposed colonially onto a neo-colonial queer reading whose embodiment and politics is possible because of a certain level of disregard to African culture's own grammars of personhood and

social identity.

Such a critique is not meant to be dismissive of queer politics, cinema and reception, but rather seeks to expand the terms on which we discuss gendered liberation in relation to Africa and its various cultural praxes. In this regard, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the always-timely adage that the function of critique is not to destroy the object of analysis, but rather to make it more capacious in its analytics, aims and in its potential for achieving its societal goals. It has the intention here to illustrate how sustained studies of colonialism and anti-blackness need to be central to an understanding of those parts of our social and individual selves that are not of our own cultural making. A failure to do so could see us incorporating ourselves back into colonial and anti-black modes of being even as we profess to be liberating ourselves. To return to Spillers's argument: in trying to understand the colonality of gender (Lugones 2010:742-745), we are, as Spillers counsels, not interested in the amalgamation of our African-ness into the ranks of normative western genders, but rather, we aim to recuperate a lost social embodiment that is not gender-focal in its social conceptualisation (Spillers 1987:18). We also, in essence, commit ourselves to the raising of an anticolonial black consciousness that can instruct us to invent a contemporary African cultural order, inspired by itself and blossoming along different social schemas that has the power to extinguish the neocolonialism that engulfed our African-ness.

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