

**THE AFFECTIVE FORCES OF THE STATE:
OVERCOMING BIOGRAPHIES OF VIOLENCE
IN YEJIDE KILANKO'S *DAUGHTERS WHO WALK
THIS PATH***

**LAS FUERZAS AFECTIVAS DEL ESTADO:
SUPERANDO LAS BIOGRAFÍAS DE VIOLENCIA
EN *DAUGHTERS WHO WALK THIS PATH*,
DE YEJIDE KILANKO**

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CRISTINA CRUZ GUTIÉRREZ

Universitat de les Illes Balears

Cristina.cruz@uib.es

<<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2614-6959>>

131

Abstract

This article delves into the abuses stemming from the Nigerian state forces and their failure to protect Nigerian citizens as illustrated in Yejide Kilanko's *Daughters Who Walk this Path* (2012). The novel narrates the struggles undergone by young Morayo as she is repeatedly abused as a child by an elder cousin, Bros T. Here, I seek to trace a parallelism between the instances of physical and affective violence against Morayo and the episodes of "intra-societal violence" (Hill 2012: 15) occurring in Nigeria from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, when the country's socio-political sphere was marked by the social chaos resulting from armed robberies, military coups, rigged elections, and instances of police brutality towards women. I shall analyze such episodes as instances of 'forced intimacy' within the public and private spheres, which translates into the impositions of negative forms of affect upon personal and collective development. In this context, the physical and psychological abuses suffered by Morayo will be presented as shaping what Ahmed refers to as one's "biographies of violence" (2017: 23). My ultimate aim is to trace Morayo's development of what I will describe as 'affective resilience' against the affective forces of the state.

Keywords: forced intimacy, Yejide Kilanko, biographies of violence, Nigeria, affect.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza los abusos cometidos por las fuerzas del estado en Nigeria y su incapacidad de proteger a los ciudadanos, tal y como se refleja en la novela de Yejide Kilanko *Daughters Who Walk this Path* (2012). Kilanko narra las dificultades sufridas por la joven Morayo al ser repetidamente violada durante su niñez por su primo, Bros T. Este artículo trazará un paralelismo entre la violencia física y afectiva sufrida por Morayo, lo cual se relacionará con los episodios de “intra-societal violence” (Hill 2012: 15) que tuvieron lugar en Nigeria entre la década a los ochenta y los noventa, cuando la esfera socio-política del país estuvo marcado por un caos social resultado de la ola de robos armados, golpes de estado, fraude electoral, e instancias de brutalidad policial hacia mujeres. Dichos episodios se analizarán como instancias de ‘intimidación forzada’ tanto en la esfera pública como en la privada, lo cual se traduce en la imposición de formas negativas de afecto en la evolución personal de Morayo y colectiva de Nigeria. En este contexto, los abusos físicos y psicológicos sufridos por Morayo se presentarán como un ejemplo de lo que Ahmed denomina “biografías de violencia” (2017: 23). Finalmente, el desarrollo personal de Morayo se analizará como una forma de ‘resiliencia afectiva’ que se desata contra las fuerzas afectivas del estado.

Palabras clave: intimidación forzosa, Yejide Kilanko, biografías de violencia, Nigeria, afecto.

1. Introduction

Police brutality and corruption within the Nigerian armed forces have increasingly become two major issues of concern in Nigeria, causing particular unrest among young Nigerians (Orjinmo 2020). A study by Antonia Okoosi-Simbine reveals that the Police is deemed to be the most corrupt profession in Nigeria (2011: 164), a matter which has mobilized Nigerians to engage in massive protests since 2017. Amnesty International denounced that there were “at least 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment and extra-judicial execution by SARS¹ between January 2017 and May 2020” (Orjinmo 2020). Dissent reached its zenith on October 20, 2020, after a series of marches in Lagos against the Nigerian Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). This event turned into a tragedy known as the Lekki Massacre after the Nigerian Army opened fire against peaceful protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate (“Nigeria: The Lekki Toll Gate Massacre” 2020). Using the hashtag #ENDSARS (“End Sars Protests” 2020), protesters had been rallying crowds for two weeks before the attack, with daily demonstrations leading to the official ending of the SARS unit (“End Sars Protests” 2020). The history of ruthlessness attributed to

Nigerian police and military forces has demonstrated that “corruption, brutality and little regard for human rights” are generally perceived as intrinsic features of the Nigerian armed forces (Orjinmo 2020). The protests following the Lekki Massacre are but an open expression of today’s socio-political unrest in Nigeria; the result of previous decades of oppression on the part of those meant to protect civilian rights. The irritation with law-enforcement officers can be metaphorically read as evidence of the general sense of frustration with the Nigerian political system.

The abuse stemming from the state forces and their failure to protect Nigerian citizens are illustrated in Yejide Kilanko’s *Daughters Who Walk this Path* (2012). Kilanko’s novel is an exploration of the struggles undergone by its female protagonist, Morayo, after being repeatedly abused as a child by her cousin, Bros T. Morayo’s first-person narrative retells her brave journey of self-acceptance, her overcoming of the family shame she endures, and her difficulties in conciliating the memories of the assaults with an affective relationship and healthy sexual life as an adolescent. Kilanko’s novel has mainly been explored from the perspective of Trauma Studies, particularly focusing on Morayo’s emotional trauma after enduring sexual violence and emotional abuse (Chandran et al. 2018) and on the intrusive thoughts and psychological distress experienced by Morayo as a trauma survivor of sexual abuse and parental neglect (Dodhy 2017a). The novel has also been explored in terms of the sexism and victimization stemming from intra-familial rape in African countries (Nutsukpo 2018). The traumatic effects of rape as a form of sexual victimization in African societies has also been an object of discussion in relation to Morayo’s evolution (Ogbazi and Amah 2021). Mary B. Aiyetoro and Esther U. Amarachukwu have explored Kilanko’s novel as exposing a conflictive relationship of tradition and modernity within the Yoruba family structure (2020: 178). In this article, I explore instances of physical and affective violence against Morayo as related to a national context marked by social chaos as a result of armed robberies, military coups, rigged elections, and instances of police brutality towards women. Although Kilanko narrates Morayo’s personal growth from 1982 to the 2000s, my focus is on the period ranging from 1982 to the mid-1990s, the period covering the initial steps in Morayo’s identity formation. This part of Morayo’s life coincides with Nigeria undergoing massive political unrest, for the country endured three consecutive military regimes: from 1983 to 1999 General Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985), General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (1985-1993), and General Sani Abacha (1993-1998) ruled the country before civilian rule was reinstated in 1999.

Kilanko’s depiction of armed assaults, police violence, and rigged elections work as the actual settings for acts of abuse exerted upon Morayo. I refer to such abuses as

134 episodes of ‘forced intimacy’, which involves the endurance of private and public forms of abuse such as the encouragement of heterosexual behaviors and affects, the imposition of family-arranged courtship and marriages, including polygyny practices, sexual abuses, and the socialization into reproduction (Cruz-Gutiérrez, forthcoming). Forced intimacy is thus the act of imposing or creating negative affects, such as shame, disgust or hatred, on the other. Braidotti explains that this type of behaviour may counter and menace the stability of positive affects such as love, joy, or pride, thus exerting a devastating impact on the human capacity to perceive the reality and interact with others (2009: 50). Nonetheless, as I argue in relation to Morayo, it is possible to transform negative affects into positive affects with the potential to become “a resource for political action” (Cvetkovich 2007: 460). The first section of this article will explore the episodes of forced intimacy endured by Morayo in the 1980s as a metaphorical representation of the violence Nigerians endured in the wave of armed robberies which marked that decade. I will discuss those instances of forced intimacy as influencing the development of Morayo’s identity in regard to the formation of “biographies of violence” (Ahmed 2017: 23). In the second section, I will focus on Morayo’s involvement in politics during the 1990s and on the role of her Auntie Morenike as a feminist figure who teaches her to develop what I shall refer to as affective resilience counterbalancing the effects of “intra-societal violence” (Hill 2012: 15).

2. Private and Public Acts of Forced Intimacy

Morayo is entrapped into a net of forced intimacy within her own household. The endurance of such violence shapes the girl’s perception of reality and by extension influences her account of the negative affects experienced at a physical and psychological level, thus defining her narrative as what Ahmed calls “biographies of violence” (2017: 23). The fact that these events occur against the background of armed robberies taking place in Nigeria during the 1980s allows Kilanko to establish a parallelism between private and public forms of violence and denounce how state failure affects the course of the lives of Nigerian citizens. The novel demonstrates that affective violence is sticky and fluid, capable of permeating into the private domain and infecting it with the corruption of the public sphere.

Yejide Kilanko starts her novel by associating the first act of forced intimacy committed against Morayo with the wave of violent burglaries which dominated Nigeria during the 1980s and 1990s. Historically, the 1980s and 1990s can be remembered in terms of a national crisis reflected in a climate of political unrest in which several military coups and/or coup attempts succeeded each other.² One of the consequences of this crisis was that armed robberies in Nigeria dramatically

increased from 12,150 in 1970 to 106,857 in 1976, 271,240 in 1982, and 311,961 in 1983 (Aderinto 2018: 264). *Daughters Who Walk this Path* illustrates the extent to which Nigerians had normalized the trespassing of armed robberies into their lives. Early in the novel, during Buhari's military rule, young Morayo has "recurring nightmares [about] armed robbers in the house" (Kilanko 2012: 67). Her nightmares appear to have become true when one night she notices an intrusion in her bedroom. After hearing a strange noise, Morayo wakes up and recalls that robbers had indeed sent a letter to her neighbors "announcing that they were coming and warning against any police involvement" (67). Morayo has also heard stories about neighbors not complying with their wishes and being punished by robbers "forcing some of the male tenants to sleep with their neighbours' wives while their husbands watched" (67). But Morayo realizes that the noise is not caused by a trespasser but by her cousin, Bros T, who is meant to take care of her while her family is away. She suddenly realizes that Bros T is entering her room to sexually assault her.

The young girl is repeatedly raped by Bros T. The violation of her body becomes the crucial event in configuring her biography of violence, shaped not only by physical and sexual abuse, but by the betrayal of her trust, beliefs, and rights (Ahmed 2017: 23). Through Morayo's rape, then, Kilanko visibilizes the common experience of many young women in the country, as well as the ongoing problem of sexual abuse exerted by an elder member of the family.³ The accumulation of episodes of forced intimacy against Morayo provokes a change in her perception of the world that surrounds her, of her family, and even of her own body, with the result that Morayo senses the world as a danger (Kilanko 2012: 24). In Morayo's case, the private trauma of being physically abused extends to the public fear of being attacked by armed robbers. Morayo's traumatic experience coincides with the impassivity of the Buhari Administration with regard to these forms of sexual violence as well as its inefficacy in preventing and punishing such crimes. This shows that Kilanko's denunciation is twofold as the citizens' acceptance of armed robberies on a regular basis is intermixed with the normalization of assaults towards girls by members of the family. In this manner, Kilanko follows a present trend in contemporary Nigerian literature in which "the family's misfortune is that of society writ small" (Eze 2016: 74).

Aderinto explains this devastating wave of armed robberies as directly stemming from the economic crisis of the 1980s (2018: 264), in turn deriving from a context of embezzlement and corruption where, as Nigerian scholar Stephen Ekpenyong argued in a 1989 article, "ostentatious display of ill-gotten wealth is applauded; where criminals, men in positions of power and trust, and law enforcement agents tend to collude, and where the needs and aspirations of the majority are neglected,

[which] is likely to breed armed robbers” (1989: 21). In this regard, Aderinto points at the “failure of political leadership at all levels of the society” as the most important cause of disorder (2018: 267). Similarly, Marenin underlines that Nigerians were aware of the increase in crime as “a dramatic illustration of the shortcomings of national life” (2008: 268). The fact that this historical episode is featured in a number of contemporary Nigerian novels⁴ reflects that negative affects toward the nation, such as hatred, can ultimately turn against innocent Nigerian citizens. In the novel, the circulation of negative affects extends from the body of the nation to Morayo’s body. She is unprotected in her own house, in the same manner in which citizens are not safe in their own country. If intimacy is understood as what “links the instability of individual lives to the trajectories of the collective” (Berlant 1998: 283), forced intimacy becomes sticky, as it can impregnate both the political and private spheres. The intertwining of private and public forced intimacies evinces to what extent affects are social (Brennan 2004: 65), since they are “attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects” (Sedgwick 2002: 19).

136

Following in the steps of a negligent state, Morayo’s parents not only fail to protect their daughter but actively become complicit in the exertion of forced intimacy towards her. Weeks before enduring her first sexual assault, during one of NEPA’s⁵ frequent blackouts, Morayo’s dad tells her and her sister Eniayo a Yoruba story about a woman who is punished as a result of not being able to keep a secret. The story concludes: “if you don’t want everyone to know your secret, don’t share it with anyone” (Kilanko 2012: 14). This Yoruba tale enforces customary moral lessons on Morayo and Eniayo, preventing Morayo from telling her family about the horrid reality she is living as Bros T continues to abuse her for months (76). The tale constitutes yet another instance of forced intimacy, as Morayo is advised to remain silent to avoid public exposure. That this particular lesson is taught during one of NEPA’s blackouts is indeed symbolic because Morayo is being taught to keep her secret in the dark. In the novel, Morayo explains that “any time the lights flickered out, Eniayo and I would raise our fists in the air and shout with frustration, ‘NEPA!’ Outside, we heard our neighbours shouting too” (11). The blackout episode⁶ serves Kilanko to illustrate NEPA’s incompetence in failing to supply electricity to the country as “emblematic of the ineptitude of the Nigerian state to meet citizen needs that are crucial to functioning in the contemporary world” (Okome 2013a: 4-5). The depiction of Nigeria’s neglect of the needs of its citizens runs in parallel with Morayo’s parents exerting psychologically forced intimacy towards her. In this manner, this episode strengthens the relation between the public and the private that Kilanko delineates in the novel.

The misinformation that Morayo's mother gives her about sexuality further blocks her way out of the emotional trap of forced intimacy, as Morayo becomes unable to share her emotional turmoil and the negative affects she is forced to experience. Until Bros T assaults her, Morayo's interaction with boys is limited to her friend Kachi "sneaking glances" at her in class (Kilanko 2012: 39) or walking her home after school. When her mother finds out that Morayo and Kachi have spent time together she tells her: "if you let a boy touch any part of your body, [...] if I catch you, Morayo, I will kill you before you bring shame to this family" (39). Her mother prevents any interchange of information or possibility of answering questions about her sexuality when she cuts short Morayo's innocent curiosity by exclaiming: "what kind of nonsense talk is this?" (47). This is reinforced when Morayo's mother scolds her for seeing Kachi without supervision: "have you no shame?" [...] "Tell me, who would want such a woman as a wife?" (55). Negative affect in the form of shame submits Morayo to her mother's will, and makes it impossible for Morayo to evolve, as she explains: "Mummy always told Eniayo and me that having no shame was a terrible flaw" (55). As a result, Morayo experiences a psychological trauma caused by her mother's discouragement to disclose pain, with the consequence that "instead of forgetting the traumatic experience [...] the intrusive thoughts interfere with her thought processes, thus contaminating her mental health" (Dodhy 2017a: 99). Her parents' behavior, together with Bros T's rape, can be interpreted as a con-joined succession of acts of forced intimacy that Morayo cannot fight. Morayo feels that she must conform to the teachings of her parents if she does not want to bring shame onto her family. The novel then illustrates the combined workings of two institutions contributing to the formation of biographies of violence: the family, which forcibly inculcates customary laws or socially accepted patterns of behavior to prevent shame; and the government, which fails to pass laws that protect children (and girls) as Nigeria's most vulnerable citizens.

Morayo's reluctance to tell the truth plays against her development as she enters a state of apathy towards her assaulter, accepting the attacks and realizing that "Bros T's violation had lost its strangeness. It had become... familiar. With each passing month, his hand at my neck became gentler and gentler, until there was no need for it to remain there" (Kilanko 2012: 90). Her giving in to these violations and the shame stemming from them are part of a process that Ahmed refers to as "the effect of being made a stranger" (in Antwi et al. 2013: 4). This occurs when affects and emotions are repetitively imposed on a body to the extent that such acts become detached and strange. This mechanism is conducive to one's intimacy and agency not belonging to oneself but to those who force an act of intimacy on one. One's space and emotions are lived through those of others, which gives way to "alienated intimacy' [or] how some are made into the aliens in spaces they call

home” (in Antwi et al. 2013: 4). Morayo’s description of Bros T’s violations becoming familiar recalls Ahmed’s description of shame as a negative affect that “impresses upon the skin” as it is an “intense and painful sensation” which is “felt by and on the body”, being ultimately “bound up with how the self feels about itself” (2014: 103). This description becomes quite literal in Morayo’s case, as her shame is the result of physical abuse. As a result, Morayo begins to perceive her world as a danger, a place where nobody can be trusted. At this point, she contemplates the idea of committing suicide, as “it would feel like not to be trapped in [her] heavy body but floating around free” (Kilanko 2012: 96). Her idea denotes a need to detach the suffering of her body from the shame of her mind by means of ceding her body to abuse in an attempt to achieve mental and emotional ease.

138

Morayo’s normalization of shame within the private domain echoes how Nigerians ultimately came to accept conflicts and acts of public violence, such as the wave of armed robberies, as part of their lives (Aderinto 2018: 264). To avoid further and more brutal violence, very much like Morayo, in the 1980s Nigerian citizens learned to comply with the robbers’ wishes (Aderinto 2018: 264). The novel shows how neighbors packed money and belongings, handing them over to the robbers on the terms they specified (Kilanko 2012: 67). The notion of being made a stranger as a result of the imposition of affects also applies to Nigerians, as they progressively became apathetic before the coups and counter-coups of a country which was betraying them instead of reciprocating their hope that the 1960 independence from the British Empire would bring a better future (Aderinto 2018: 263).

Unfortunately, apathy and alienation do not bring ease but rather perpetuate the pain and shame caused by forced intimacy. In Morayo’s case, the lethargy of her body leads to what she refers to as “silent screams in [her] head” (Kilanko 2012: 82) which provoke her first act of rebellion. This occurs when she decides to tell her family about the sexual abuse after having an abortion (81). She describes this moment with a combination of relief, indifference, and remorse:

my voice rang out clearly in the silence: “Bros T has been coming to my room at night”. [...] I exhaled, sitting back in my chair. Mummy’s eyes filled with tears. [...] While [Daddy’s] face gave nothing away, his trembling hands told a different story. [Mummy] laid her hand on Daddy’s arm, silently pleading with him. (82-83)

Such “silent screams” in her head are arguably the spark that incites agency for her liberating transformation. Her indignation and exasperation can be perceived as negative emotions growing inside her as a result of the injustices she experiences. Humiliation progressively mutates into disappointment and rage towards her father, who shows no emotions, and her mother, who clearly “pleads for her

nephew” (Kilanko 2012: 84), Bros T, and who instead of consoling her daughter is worried about personal discredit.

Her parents perpetuate shame with a behavior which recalls the political landscape of Nigeria. This situation corresponds with Idowu’s claim that the problem of alienation experienced by Nigerian citizens is a consequence of the absence of democracy in the country (1999: 34). Within the context of the family, Morayo’s parents become dictators passing moral judgments and customary laws in the form of tales told to Morayo, impeding a democratic interchange of emotions and feelings through dialog within the household, this being a metaphor of Nigeria. As a result of her parents’ disappointing reaction, Morayo appears to be condemned to endure the abuses that Nigeria suffered until the turn of the century. Yet, her Auntie Morenike shall appear as a figure of hope that helps Morayo to develop what I will define as ‘affective resilience’. This change will constitute my focus of attention in the following section, as I analyze Morayo’s shame turning into emancipatory anger against national abuse.

3. Towards Emancipation: Anger as a Catalyst of Affective Resilience

139

The forced intimacy experienced by Morayo is not only reflected in the wave of armed robberies affecting Nigeria in the 1980s but also in the instances of police brutality and rigged elections endured by Nigerians in the 1990s. In this section, I analyze these public events as defining Morayo’s later life. The novel depicts Morayo’s involvement in the Ibadan local elections of 1990 as a narrative strategy through which Kilanko tackles the role of women in the public and political sphere during Babangida’s rule of Nigeria. I will also pay attention to Morayo’s relationship with her Auntie Morenike, who introduces Morayo into the world of Nigerian politics, underlining the interrelation between politics and intimacy. Morenike helps Morayo to understand and discuss the abuses she has endured, to develop what I refer to as affective resilience, and to embrace her anger, an emotion prompting Morayo’s emancipation despite the political landscape of the early 1990s. In this respect, I shall argue that, as a result of their having endured manifold forms of forced intimacy in the private sphere, both can critically perceive and oppose national abuses.

The bonding between Morayo and Auntie Morenike starts to unfold when Morenike stops Morayo from committing suicide. Morenike embodies an iconic figure in contemporary Nigerian literature: the emotionally supportive aunt who compensates for parental neglect (Andrade 2011: 97), which can be read as a

metaphor of the national neglect examined above. Morenike shares with Morayo that she too has suffered sexual violence (Kilanko 2012: 105). In 1981, Morenike is assaulted by her father's friend when he is taking her to school. Subsequently, she becomes a victim of the Nigerian political system, more specifically of the Ministry of Education, as its regulation "clearly stipulates that pregnant students be automatically expelled" (Kilanko 2012: 113). Morenike decides to continue with her pregnancy despite also being expelled from her house by her father. Morenike stands as an example of how Nigerian laws disadvantage women but also as a badge of feminist success: she manages to complete a degree in English and Sociology and joins the BAOBAB for women's Human Rights association.⁷ Through Morenike, Kilanko voices the dedication of this real association "to promote, protect, and defend the rights of women and girls" at a religious, legislative, and customary level ("BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights" 2023). Although her story is briefly sketched in the novel, it is clear that Morenike overcomes forced intimacy and becomes an advocate for women's participation in the political sphere. Her fight for women's rights suggests the character is based on Nigerian female activist Lady O. Morenike Abayomi, who dedicated her life to "social work and the improvement of women" (Falola et al. 2008: 16). As the embodiment of the spirit of female comradeship, Morenike soon becomes Morayo's role model.

140

It is only with Morenike that Morayo can discuss her inner fears without being judged or silenced. As a woman who has undergone the same affective and sexual violence, Morenike teaches Morayo to detach the emotions and affects of the mind from the sensations and reactions experienced by her body, and convinces Morayo that what Bros T did to her was not her fault:

"But even though I didn't want him to come to my room, what he did felt good". My chest tightened and I whispered the words tainted by shame. "And I liked it". Auntie Morenike sighed. "It still was not your fault".
"But ..."
"You know how you cry when cutting onions?"
I nodded. "Yes".
"It's because the vapours from the onions make you cry, even though you're not sad. Those feelings in your body were just like that: mere physical reactions. It does not mean that you wanted him to do what he did". (Kilanko 2012: 99)

This is how Morenike sparks critical thinking in Morayo, instructing her to question shame and guilt. Considering Morenike's words, it can be argued that, when forced intimacy comes into play, imposed physical emotions are part of the coercion stemming from negative affects. Morenike teaches Morayo to distinguish between the affects which stem from her emotions and the mere physical reactions

resulting from forced intimacy. This lesson incorporates a dynamic view of negative affects necessary to change their nature (Braidotti 2009: 52) and to turn pain, shame, and horror into the political activism that shall help Morayo to free herself from the position of victimhood.

As part of this mentorship, in 1990, when Morayo turns sixteen, Morenike asks permission to take her to a political rally at Dugbe Market (Kilanko 2012: 151). In this setting, Morayo learns about the mechanics and schemes of Nigerian elections, which in this case involves the election of the Chairman of Ibadan North West Local Government (153). At this point of the narrative, Kilanko introduces young educated and hardworking Tiamiyu, a man who echoes the actual political figure of Chief Gani Fawehinmi,⁸ and who wants to improve the situation for local citizens subjected to the tyranny of Chief Omoniyi. This corrupt figure is considered a “demigod in [Ibadan’s] local government” (155). Despite her age, Morayo is already mature enough to understand the control that Chief Omoniyi exerts upon the citizens of West Ibadan:

his family members and friends held all the top government positions. And his political thugs, notorious for their brutality, were his personal law-enforcement body. Two years earlier, men riding on okadas had gunned down Chief Omoniyi’s main opponent. [...] The year before, a man who publicly challenged Chief Omoniyi at a local government meeting disappeared. He was never found. (155)

141

The fear imposed by Chief Omoniyi and his thugs recalls the actions of Babangida, whose ruling of Nigeria between 1985 and 1993 was characterized by an institutionalized corruption which dominated the political sphere, and more specifically Nigeria’s oil industry (Bourne 2015: 111). Babangida played with the faith and patience of Nigerian citizens. In 1986, soon after his access to power, he promised that, after a series of regulations, civilian rule would follow in 1990. The date was postponed, and Babangida held on to power until 1993, when he declared the voting results null.

Through her involvement in Tiamiyu’s campaign, Morenike teaches Morayo “that women have to be politically active in these issues that affect their lives” (Kilanko 2012: 151) and that women who remain passive before political issues that concern them “will suffer the consequences” (151). In this manner, the novel highlights the connection between intimacy and politics. In line with Giddens’ observation that intimacy is intrinsically linked to social rights and obligations (1992: 190), that intimacy is not merely limited to emotional interactions but to “prerogatives and responsibilities that define agendas of practical activity” (190), voting is not merely presented as a right but as a duty. Morenike’s engagement in political activism bears witness to the possibility of “depathologiz[ing] negative affects so that they can be seen as a possible resource for political action rather than as its

antithesis” (Cvetkovich 2007: 460). By taking Morayo to the market, she further proves that negative affects can be reversed and overcome, albeit not erased, to ultimately become “sites of publicity and community formation” (460).

Morenike’s lessons and their involvement in the local elections recall that Babangida’s regime was the scenario for “marginal numerical gains for women” (Soetan 2013: 162). Women’s political demands during the late 1980s and 1990s served to win certain social battles; for instance, the Ministry for Women’s Affairs was founded during the 1990s (Sandals 2011: 121). In 1985, the Nigerian First Lady, Maryam Babangida, promoted the creation of women’s associations to participate in the public sphere (Soetan 2013: 162). Yet, these advancements were propagandistic and tokenistic, for Babangida’s “regime controlled the extent to which women’s associations and other groups could participate in the public sphere” (162). Very frequently, it was upper-class women such as the wives of army officers or Mrs. Babangida herself who mostly benefited from such advancements (162). Against this political background, despite their feminist advancements, Morenike and Morayo are victims of the rigged local elections in which extortion and bribes triumph (Kilanko 2012: 155). Her mother refuses to vote, claiming that “after all, what difference will [her] voting make anyway? Everybody knows these elections are always rigged” (153). When election day comes, Chief Omoniyi takes advantage of his fellow citizens’ privations and neediness, bribing them with food. Witnessing this injustice, Morayo wonders

if the food was a fair exchange for leaky primary schools, unsafe roads, and dry taps. Even we children knew that the money allocated for these programs and services went towards maintaining Chief Omoniyi’s harem of women and sending his children to the top schools in the United Kingdom and the United States. (175)

This reflection bears witness to Morayo’s impotence before what is clearly an act of forced intimacy in the political terrain. Unfortunately, her progressive gaining of critical thinking as she overcomes forced intimacy does not extend to the national sphere, for her fellow citizens are easily bribed into voting for Chief Omoniyi.

However, Morayo and Morenike fight against the system in spite of their defeat. I consider this a form of resilience deeply intertwined with the affective domain. I propose the term ‘affective resilience’ to describe resistance against the combined forces of the family and the state as the originators of biographies of violence. This resilience stems from outrage and indignation ultimately prevailing over socially imposed shame. I identify this display of resilience as affective because it is specifically addressed towards rebelling against the forced intimacy which produces negative affects such as shame, hate, and fear. In Morayo’s case, the source of such

resilience is indignation and anger. By gaining affective resilience, Morayo overpowers the shame imposed by forced intimacy and the agents of customary law. The development of this form of resilience originates from Morayo's fighting four types of abuse: an abusive environment, being treated as an adult while she is a child, the abuse of her body, and being forced to develop a double self (Namasivayam and Rohimmi 2017: 239).

Despite their affective resilience, Morayo and Morenike are still to endure forced intimacy at the hands of Nigerian military officers. Following the fixed local elections of 1990, in 1991 Morayo and Morenike find themselves involved in an episode of police brutality. When heading to the Bodija Market they encounter the truck of the so-called Operation Finish Them (Kilanko 2012: 187). The truck is described as belonging to a joint police-military task force that "had the mandate to deal with the rampant armed-robbery incidents" but "under the pretext of ridding the streets of prostitutes abducted young girls in broad daylight" to sexually abuse and kill them (187). Needless to say, this is a clear reference to the aforementioned Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), set up by Babangida. Ironically, his attempt to solve the armed robberies turned into an excuse for the forces of the state to further violate the rights of Nigerian citizens, especially women. Upon seeing the truck, Morayo recalls

the stories of missing girls and women, abducted at gunpoint from the roadsides. [...] There were whispers of gang rapes at the barracks and mutilated bodies found in nearby bushes like unwanted trash. Frantic relatives of those who survived then had to pay exorbitant amounts of money to bail out victims held on charges of prostitution! (187)

Morenike and Morayo try to escape, but Morenike falls and an officer ultimately spots her. The officer orders Auntie Morenike to enter the truck, but she refuses to do so, even after being threatened with a gun. With this brave act, Morenike proves her affective resilience before military forces. Having endured the violation of her body in the private sphere, she refuses to allow the forces of the nation to impose forced intimacy upon her. This is clearly stated by Morayo when she explains that "Auntie Morenike would rather die by the roadside than allow the men carry her off" (Kilanko 2012: 189). Fortunately, the officer compelling Morenike to enter the truck is called by a superior and must leave the road in haste. This becomes yet another lesson for Morayo who, aware of the possibility of encountering the truck again, promises herself that "if this happened again, like Auntie Morenike [she] would choose to die by the roadside" (191). Morenike's brave reaction before the Operation Finish Them truck constitutes Kilanko's ultimate lesson of affective and feminist resilience.

The Operation Finish Them is deployed by Kilanko to once again denounce an unresolved problem in contemporary Nigeria, that of Nigerians to compel the government to dissolve the SARS. This can be read as a marker of state failure when it comes to “intra-societal violence” (Hill 2012: 15), that is the violence exerted by those in positions of power towards others who are dependent upon them. The implication is that the state has been unable to stop such violence, which turns into a failure “to promote human flourishing” (16). These instances of failure are caused by a lack of intent on the government’s behalf, as “it is failure through neglect, failure through negligence, failure through disregard rather than of an inability to control” (16). The intra-societal violence condemned in the novel evinces the failure of military rulers to provide security to the nation, first in the manifestly corrupt behavior of the national police forces, and secondly in their refusal to address criminal issues by failing to invest in “education, social service, and a concerned war against corruption” (Aderinto 2018: 264). What predominates at all levels are instances of “petty corruption in the form of extortion that occur [...] among and within the rank and file of the force” (Okoosi-Simbine 2011: 164).

144

Her truncated hopes to help improve Nigeria’s political system at a local level, together with this episode of intra-societal violence, make Morayo realize that the shame she once felt had “turned to anger” (Kilanko 2012: 229). Ahmed refers to anger as a force of feminist empowerment, even in moments in which we are not capable of articulating what we are angry about (2014: 176). Although, as a child, Morayo initially does not understand the situation of forced intimacy she is experiencing, she becomes progressively aware of what she is angry about: her family as supporters of the system of abuse that oppresses her. However, although anger “creates an object, it also is not simply directed against an object, but becomes a response to the world” (Ahmed 2014: 176). In other words, even if Morayo’s family becomes the object of her anger, it is Nigerian customary laws and the corrupt social and political system that her anger is directed at. This becomes evident after the Operation Finish Them situation. After this episode, Morayo decides to leave Ibadan and move to Lagos to enroll in a degree course and become independent. Despite the triumph of affective resilience displayed by Morenike, Morayo is utterly disappointed and angry at Nigeria:

what changed for me was the anger —a smouldering anger that woke up with me in the morning and stayed with me late into the night. Before our roadside encounter, I had told myself countless times that when I became an adult I would be safer, stronger. Just like my Auntie Morenike. But it seemed as if age or education made little difference. Now when I walked out of the house, I often wondered if I would come back. (Kilanko 2012: 193-194)

At this point in her life, Morayo suddenly realizes that education and age do not guarantee women's safety, and that the rudeness of those in public positions of power can at any time destroy and defeat private stability. Morayo's wrath can be read as metaphorically representing that of Nigerians in the 1990s as a result of abuses exerted by the army and the police. Instances of citizens confronting such abuses can be traced to 1999 in Bayelsa State, when the military killed 2,483 citizens after twelve members of the police force had been killed by "armed gangs clamoring for resource control" (Hassan 2018: 461). A similar situation occurred in Benue State in 2001 when over 200 people were killed in retaliation for the death of nineteen soldiers at the hands of armed gangs (461).

Morayo's expression of her inner fury echoes Chimamanda N. Adichie's words in "We Should All Be Feminist", where she emphasizes her indignation before the fact that gender constructs have not evolved in Nigeria: "anger has a long history of bringing about positive change, but in addition to being angry I am also hopeful" (Adichie 2012). Auntie Morenike notices Morayo's unmeasured ire and prevents her "unchecked anger" from "only erod[ing] self-control" (Kilanko 2012: 197) before the young woman departs to Lagos to become an independent university student. This statement reminds readers of the "problematic distinction between anger and reason" (Ahmed 2014: 177). For anger may catalyze self-emancipation, but can at times blind reason. Yet, with Morenike's wise help, Morayo leaves Ibadan for Lagos to start her new life, away from her family. Anger thus serves as an emancipatory device, a sign of affective resilience against intra-societal violence and its extension to the private sphere. Morayo's triumph in leaving her family behind after developing affective resilience bears witness to Ahmed's claim that "anger is creative; it works to create a language with which to respond to that which one is against, whereby 'the what' is renamed, and brought into a feminist world" (Ahmed 2014: 176). Morayo has learned to fight against the indoctrination of keeping secrets, against victim shaming, and against surrendering before political thugs. These learnings are key for her in Lagos, where she is reunited with Kachi, her first love. Thanks to Morenike, Morayo develops the emotional strategies necessary to establish a healthy affective relationship with Kachi, whom she ultimately marries. Although her relationship with Kachi does not constitute the focus of this paper, it is still relevant to mention that, as a result of her affective resilience, Morayo is capable of establishing a positive affective relationship despite the traumas of her childhood and adolescence. Unfortunately, Kilanko does not transfer such a positive outcome to the body of the nation. The annulment of the democratic elections in 1993 immerses Nigeria in yet another period of military rule until 1999. Yet, as an adult woman, Morayo develops the skills necessary to overcome the multiple episodes of forced intimacy that she shall

continue to endure at a public level, this time stemming from the military system and the state forces.

4. Conclusion

Daughters Who Walk this Path reflects upon sexual violence against women, police brutality, and rigged elections as unresolved episodes of forced intimacy in Nigeria's history. Focusing on the socio-political events taking place in Nigeria from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, I have traced Morayo's and Morenike's biographies of violence, which stand as a metaphor of Nigerians enduring intra-societal violence. Anger becomes a catalyst for emancipation for Morayo, who after suffering forced intimacy in the private sphere develops a sense of critical thinking that helps her cope with abuses in the Nigerian public domain. Hence, the novel shows that she has learned to cope with the consequences of being abused in the same manner in which she learns to critically approach the faults in the governmental management of infrastructure and public services.

146

Although Morayo's development is presented as a hopeful message for affective resilience in the form of feminist resistance, this does not translate into a synonym for Nigerian citizens rebelling against authority. This idea is further conveyed in Kilanko's tackling of unresolved issues in the Nigerian political sphere such as ongoing police brutality, armed robberies, the inefficiency of NEPA, and political bribery. In this manner, *Daughters Who Walk this Path* offers hope for the personal development of Nigerian citizens by introducing the positive progression of an abused female character in spite of the ongoing problems in the Nigerian public sphere.

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Notes

1. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad was created in 1992 by Ibrahim Babangida. Since its creation, the squad “has been accused of harassing and physically abusing thousands of civilians” (“Nigeria’s SARS” 2020).

2. These decades were overshadowed by “oil bust, economic collapse, devaluation of the currency, the closing of Nigerian publishing houses and the evaporation of book markets [which] exacerbated the country’s political troubles” (Hewett 2005: 74). The year 1979 saw the birth of a rather short Second Republic (1979-1983) led by Shehu Shagari, after whom two dictators—Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985) and Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993)—overthrew the government. The 1980s were also marked by a deep economic crisis which “roared heavily in the 1990s” (Aderinto 2018: 265). Five different Heads of State ruled Nigeria during the nineties, thus bearing witness to the instability of the government.

3. As a sociological study carried out among Nigerian adolescents in 2017 reveals, sampled women report their age of sexual debut to be between ten and fifteen years old (Envuladu et al. 2017: 2). Sadly enough, a high number of females, especially those out of school, reported having been forced to have sex by older men “including family members” (3).

4. Lola Shoneyin’s *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi’s Wives* (2010) and Ayòbámi

Adébáyò’s *Stay with Me* (2017) introduce burglaries as a metaphor for national chaos, focusing on armed robberies as a source and/or context for forced intimacy, sexual or otherwise.

5. Nigeria’s National Electric Power Authority is known as NEPA.

6. This very same strategy of casually introducing NEPA’s blackouts in the daily lives of fictional characters can be found in contemporary Nigerian works such as Noo Saro-Wiwa’s *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* (2012); Chibundu Onuzo’s *Welcome to Lagos* (2017); Chimamanda N. Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2003); and Chinelo Okparanta’s “Runs Girl” and “Wahala!” included in the collection of short stories *Happiness Like Water* (2013).

7 “BAOBAB for Women’s Human Rights is a not for profit, non-governmental women’s human rights organization that is committed to the promotion and protection of rights of women and girls under the three parallel systems of law in Nigeria: namely customary, statutory, and religious laws” (“BAOBAB for Women’s Human Rights” 2023).

8. Chief Gani Fawehinmi (1938-2009) was a man “who worked for social justice and fundamental human rights. He want[ed] to bring a positive change in the lives of masses who are victims of institutional corruption” (Dodhy 2017b: 94).

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