

# Liberatory Queer Performance and the Coloniality of Gender in Melibea Obono's *La Bastarda*

---

**Isaac Veysey-White**

*Michigan State University*

---

**Abstract:** Although Afro-Hispanic literature has a lot to offer the field of Hispanic studies, it has been largely ignored in the academy. In this essay, I consider one of these pieces of literature and highlight its importance to the modern era. Trifonia Melibea Obono's *La Bastarda* (2016) emerges as a particularly subversive novel, celebrating the queer subject in Africa. Basing this work upon the conceptualizations of Judith Butler, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, and María Lugones surrounding queer theory and the coloniality of gender, I analyze how Melibea Obono uses the queer subject as a site of resistance in postcolonial Equatorial Guinea, and in postcolonial Fang society especially. Queer performativity is presented as a useful site of resistance against the coloniality of gender and sexuality in postcolonial Fang society, and through it, the queer woman of color, repressed as she is by Eurocentric, patriarchal norms, can find her liberation.

**Keywords:** *La Bastarda*, Trifonia Melibea Obono, homophobia, misogyny, queer theory

Equatorial Guinean literature is a rich site for continuing and future research. Although it had long been colonized by Spain before achieving its independence, it does not receive the attention it is due in the field of Hispanic studies. This is a gap that this article will seek to address, as Equatorial Guinean literature attends to many important contemporary issues, among which is the continued subalternization of women of color and of queer people. In this article, I will demonstrate this through an engagement with Trifonia Melibea Obono's *La Bastarda* (2016), which focuses on Okomo, a young, Fang, lesbian woman trapped within heteropatriarchal social norms who defies these limitations by rejecting societal expectations and forming a new queer community apart from it. Engaging with queer theory and postcolonial theory, and especially with the theories of Judith Butler, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, and Maria Lugones, this article will show that Okomo's deliberate performance of her queerness in spite of social norms challenges male exploitation of women's bodies and advocates for the liberation of women and queer folk in Equatorial Guinean and Fang culture. In so doing, Melibea Obono demonstrates that queer performativity is a useful site of resistance against the coloniality of gender and sexuality in postcolonial Fang society. Through it, the queer African woman, repressed by Eurocentric, patriarchal norms even after independence from Europe, can find her liberation. A centering of considerations of this work and others is necessary to bring the marginalized voices represented in Equatorial Guinean literature into the forefront of conversations in literary and Hispanic studies.

Melibea Obono's *La Bastarda* finds its context in a nation that has experienced much turmoil since its independence from Spain in 1968, and a brief

engagement with this history and the literary works that have emerged from it will help inform my analysis. Consisting predominantly of the Fang and Bubi peoples, among other groups, Equatorial Guinea has experienced two authoritarian regimes since gaining its independence in 1968. The first dictatorship followed independence and was under Francisco Macías Nguema, and the second was under Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo following Nguema's overthrow in 1969 and is still ongoing (Aixela Cabre 10). This is a legacy of Spanish colonialism. As Rosa Medina-Doménech has described, the Spanish metropole would routinely impose Spanish nationality and Spanish national identity upon the people of Equatorial Guinea. This was especially true during the Franco dictatorship, which would make Equatorial Guinea the focus of an attempt to rebuild Spanish national identity through "Hispanicization" and "detribalization" (Medina-Doménech 81, 86). This included Francoist patriarchal values. The violence and policies of the Francoist regime in Spain (which lasted from 1939 until Franco's death in 1975) would inspire both dictatorships that Equatorial Guinea experienced post-independence, promoting the emphasis on and institutionalization of a small, male, family elite. As a result, the wealthiest 5% of the population would benefit most from the large oil windfall that would put the country on the global scene. Meanwhile, the majority of the populace has been placed on the outskirts of the national project (Wood 554, 560-61) with the Bubi peoples in particular suffering human rights abuses (Baynham 28).

Importantly, several significant literary works and in-depth analysis of them have emerged from this historical, political, and social climate that, like *La Bastarda*, focus on the silenced voices of the subaltern communities of postcolonial Equatorial Guinea. Elisa Rizo, for example, notes the lasting mark that Spanish colonization has left on Equatorial Guinea since the 18th century and examines the body of work that has arisen in recent decades from the authoritarianism and oil boom in that country. Analyzing specifically what she refers to as *petro-teatro*, a term that she hopes will encapsulate this particular historical moment in which Equatorial Guinea finds itself, these works (such as Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel's *El fracaso de las sombras* and Recaredo S. Boturu's *É Bilabba*) emerge in contrast to works that support the authoritarian government<sup>1</sup> and analyze the Equatorial Guinean national reality from the point of view of the oppressed (Rizo 66-67). She especially highlights local epistemologies in order to critique the injustices experienced by sub-Saharan African women (75-76). However, Rizo notes that the fact that these works are written predominantly by men highlights the inequality in education and resources that persists as an obstacle to African women. Mendigo Minsongui Dieudonné, however, takes note of

---

1 These literatures in support of authoritarian regimes have taken various forms since the days of Spanish colonialism, but one of the most prominent, according to Mbare Gnom, was children's literature. Colonial powers would use this literature in order to indoctrinate and Europeanize the children of Equatorial Guinea (Ngom 59-60).

one important novel that is related to this article's consideration of Melibebe Obono's *La Bastarda. Ekomo*, a novel by the late María Nsúé Angüe, comments not only on the subalternization of Equatorial Guinean and sub-Saharan African women, but also of the subaltern position of Fang women in particular. Noting that postcolonial Fang culture remains very patriarchal,<sup>2</sup> Minsongui Dieudonné observes that the titular character of this novel presents a feminist discourse by continually resisting societal and patriarchal expectations placed upon her, including through the resistance to an arranged marriage (Minsongui Dieudonné 212). Overall, Nsúé Angüe emerged as a feminist author, respecting Fang tradition while simultaneously lobbying for the equality of women (218). *La Bastarda* thus emerges in context with well-established and important work previously undertaken by authors such as Nsúé Angüe.

In addition, my analysis of *La Bastarda* is done in conversation with a previous academic study of the novel itself by Beatriz Celaya Carrillo, who highlights the importance of the feminist and queer discourse both here and in Melibebe Obono's other novels. According to Celaya Carrillo, these works find power in their female protagonists' persistence, putting themselves at risk in order to actively defy social norms and seek out a better life and better treatment for themselves. She explains that:

De forma general, las mujeres guineoecuatorianas que refleja la autora aparecen altamente determinadas por su función sexual normativa, siendo fuertemente presionadas para que su supervivencia dependa de la satisfacción de un hombre, con su trabajo en la casa y los hijos, y su permanente disponibilidad sexual. (Celaya Carrillo 64)

This emerges in a country whose authoritarian and patriarchal system is a direct result of Spanish colonization, descended from Francoism's brand of Christianity (72). In *La Bastarda* specifically, Celaya Carrillo notes that Melibebe Obono confronts this by building a space in which queer folk can exist within Equatorial Guinea through a depiction of feminine and queer escape made reality. Ultimately *La Bastarda* affirms the rights of African women, creating new symbolic spaces for gender equality and sexual liberty in the nation. She notes that sexual rights, the right to education, and personal autonomy are paramount in the structuring of this discourse (73-74).

---

2 Indeed, as Yolanda Aixela Cabre reports, postcolonial Fang society remains very androcentric, and many women have turned to matricentrism (that is, embracing the role of motherhood) as a way to gain a certain amount of power within the androcentric system (Aixela Cabre 20). She reports that those who leave Equatorial Guinea and return often have difficulties readjusting to the extreme androcentrism of postcolonial Equatorial Guinean society (26).

Hubert Edzodzomo Ondo's considerations of *La Bastarda* agree with those of Celaya Carrillo. He notes that not only does Melibea Obono successfully challenge queer marginalization in Equatorial Guinea, but also does so in a cross-border narrative. He highlights the importance of the neighboring nation of Gabón as well as Equatorial Guinea, as Okomo's experiences include interacting with the Fang people in that country as well as her own. The coloniality of gender and sexuality is as active there as it is in Equatorial Guinea (Edzodzomo Ondo 305).

In conversation with Celaya Carrillo's and Edzodzomo Ondo's analyses, this article seeks to expand an understanding of Melibea Obono's literary technique in building these symbolic spaces for queer folk in Equatorial Guinea by highlighting the importance of performativity in *La bastarda's* characters. The protagonist Okomo's story not only challenges patriarchal norms, but also develops queer performativity specifically as a site of resistance against the coloniality of gender and sexuality, as well as the subaltern position of African women. The concepts of gender and gender identity are central to this discourse of radical queerness.<sup>3</sup> As Judith Butler notes, while societal norms often seek to define gender as what is "appropriately" masculine or feminine (Butler, "Gender Regulations" 41), gender itself is purely performative (Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" 33). Identity, therefore, cannot be rigidly controlled by societal gender norms, and we see this actively represented in the novel. Okomo rejects the heteropatriarchal social norms placed upon her by embracing and "performing" her own conception of what it means to be a queer African woman. When put in context with issues of the coloniality of gender and of race, this performativity becomes a powerful liberating discourse.

Indeed, a consideration of race and the coloniality of gender and sexuality is integral to the analysis of this novel, as Okomo's identity as a lesbian Fang woman and her status as a subject in a formerly colonized nation cannot be separated. María Lugones describes the coloniality of gender in her work, detailing how European colonialism introduced gender differentials to the colonized subject as a subjugating force. Colonists would enlist the aid of the colonized man in order to subjugate women and dismantle gender systems that did not comply with Eurocentric understandings of gender and sexuality (Lugones 7). Lugones refers to this and its legacy as the "modern/colonial gender system";

---

3 Butler provides us with a starting point for an understanding of queerness in her article "Critically Queer." As a reclaimed word, "queer" is a manifestation of the performative and derives its power from the citation of repressive social norms and the manipulation of them in order to achieve a more progressive end (Butler, "Critically Queer" 17-19). She also notes various important moves within queer theory, one of which is especially relevant to this analysis: a move that seeks to argue that gender is not reducible to heterosexual norms, seeking to show the possibilities for gender beyond hegemonic heterosexuality (Butler, "Gender Regulations" 54)

as a result, heterosexuality becomes mythically constructed and compulsory (11, 15).

Therefore, the coloniality of gender is important to understand as it directly influences Okomo's experiences and sites of resistance. But Okomo's queer performativity troubles colonial conceptualizations of race as much as gender and sexuality. Sexuality is always racially marked, as sexuality and race are not separate factors of subjectivity; indeed, Ian Barnard observes that modern queer theory has failed to take this into account. The concept of race is as much a societal construction as is sexuality, and still has profound social, cultural, and political meanings (Barnard 206).

In this light, it is therefore necessary to prioritize the African dimension in regard to queer studies and what queer resistance means in the African context, as this is at the heart of Melibea Obono's work. For this I cite Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic" (2008). Here, Tinsley highlights how intimately queer bonds are linked with being African, especially as it relates to brutal colonial and enslavement tactics of the European colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean Atlantic. Queer resistance rose from this cruelty:

Yet regardless of whether intimate sexual contact took place between enslaved Africans in the Atlantic or after landing, relationships between shipmates read as queer relationships. *Queer* not in the sense of a "gay" or same-sex loving identity waiting to be excavated from the ocean floor but as a praxis of resistance. *Queer* in the sense of marking disruption to the violence of normative order and powerfully so: connecting in ways that commodified flesh was never supposed to, loving your own kind when your kind was supposed to cease to exist, forging interpersonal connections that counteract imperial desires for Africans' living death. (Tinsley 199)

This perspective is key to developing an understanding of Okomo's performative queer resistance. Though Okomo's narrative does indeed involve same-sex loving identity, colonialist violence (especially through the coloniality of gender) is constantly enacted upon Okomo and her queer network. *La Bastarda* crafts a queer performative space that, as Tinsley describes, is a praxis of resistance against heteropatriarchal normative structures in postcolonial Fang society.

It is this understanding of gender, queer performance, and race that informs my analysis of Trifonia Melibea Obono's *La Bastarda*. Okomo's queer performativity resists not only the exploitation of women's bodies in postcolonial Fang society but also the coloniality of gender that remains embedded in it as well. Rejecting Fang heteropatriarchal expectations, the protagonist Okomo "performs" her own queer, liberated version of her identity as an African queer woman. Okomo is a *bastarda*, her mother having died in childbirth and her

father absent and labeled a scoundrel by the community. Okomo is told only that her father pursued her mother but never paid the bride price for her. The subalternization of women in postcolonial Equatorial Guinean society is made clear here, as blame is put on Okomo's mother as much as her father for this predicament. "I don't want you to make the same mistake as your mother," Okomo's grandmother tells her. "She never learned a woman's place in Fang tradition. She lived much too freely" (Melinea Obono 3). It is made clear to Okomo that a woman is not free. She lives in the oppressive household of her grandfather, Osá, the family patriarch and a Fang hero from the time of the Spanish occupation. Okomo is forced to listen to Osá's tales of her male Fang forebears and is constantly reminded that it is a woman's duty to bear children and marry in order to support the family. The very patriarch to which she must answer promises nothing but continued ownership.

Not all the male figures in her life follow this restrictive binary, however. One member in particular empowers her to resist through queer liberation. This man, Okomo's uncle Marcelo, lives at the margin of society because he is considered a "man-woman." He is revealed to be gay and becomes a foundational figure for Okomo's queer community building. He is ridiculed for his failure to consummate the marriages that had previously been arranged for him and for refusing to impregnate the wife of his evidently sterile brother. For this, he is ostracized. Because of his perceived perversions, the village blames its woes on Marcelo, including crop failure and illness. Eventually the community tries to murder him by setting fire to his home, but he escapes into the forest. For daring to exist outside of Fang patriarchal norms, he is faced with the ultimate punishment: death. Only by existing on the periphery can he hope to survive.

Okomo, meanwhile, becomes very close with three young women—Linda, Pilar, and Dina—who will also empower her queer performativity, although her grandmother (Osá's first wife) adamantly demands she avoid them. Through them, she experiences a sexual awakening. The four of them make love in the forest, and Okomo is inaugurated as a member of their secret "Indecency Club." This is a defining moment for Okomo, as she explains: "I was enjoying it, and, for the first time in my life, I felt sexually free" (Melibea Obono 36). After years of being burdened with the guilt of desiring the bodily autonomy previously denied to her, she experiences her first taste of queer sexual liberation. This Indecency Club's community is strengthened with Marcelo's support. He and the young women keep each other's confidence; Marcelo himself is in love with another man, who like him was labelled a "man-woman" and ostracized by his community. In direct rejection of society's expectation of them, this queer community embraces an identity that affirms the love they share and their true identities.

Over time Okomo falls in love with Dina, although her grandmother has deep misgivings about their closeness. She is deeply suspicious that Dina has

not yet married and insists that Okomo herself must do so as soon as possible in order to uphold tradition and support the family. Okomo and Dina, however, continue to meet in secret. They confess their love for one another and break the Indecency Club's pact to only make love as a group:

We embraced and walked toward the House of the Word without making a sound. There we made love in the beds of the Council of Elders, interrupted only by the bleating of the sheep that fought to find a spot to spend the night, huddling up against the nearest houses. We women, women who love other women, are the sheep of society, I thought. (44)

Okomo has begun to come into her own. Not only does she fully embrace her subversive identity and own this performativity of gender and sexuality that makes her whole, she does so in a traditionally masculine and heteropatriarchal space.

Shortly after, however, Okomo's grandmother sends her away to the town of Ebian to carry a message to Okomo's aunt, demanding 50,000 francs to help pay a *curandera* to lure Osá back to their marriage bed. He had abandoned her for a younger wife some years prior. Okomo's aunt informs her that she will be expected to work to earn money towards this sum; yet again, Okomo is expected to allow her family to appropriate her body and labor in accordance with institutionalized coloniality of gender. It is another way in which she, like so many other women, is considered a commodity to be bought, sold, and used. She crosses the border into Gabón and sees how the people there—despite also being Fang—treat her as an outsider. This calls into question for her the supposed unity of the Fang people, another apparent fallacy in the patriarchal hegemony that her grandfather upholds. This speaks to the cross-border narrative that Edzodzomo Ondo identifies within the text, discussed above. The Fang peoples have been divided and separated by colonial forces.

After Okomo returns home, she and Dina visit her uncle Marcelo in the forest and meet his long-term romantic partner Jesúsín. They discuss the concept of identity, and how there does not seem to be an equivalent to “man-woman” for Okomo and Dina in Fang society: “‘There isn't a word for it. It's like you don't exist,’ my uncle said bluntly. ‘You and Dina love each other, right? That's what matters’” (67). This passage reveals the erasure that Fang lesbian women face, as they are offered no means to be seen nor heard. It is for this reason that queer performance is so subversive and liberating for Okomo; it defies her erasure in postcolonial Fang society. The love that Okomo and Dina share is itself a praxis of resistance, as Tinsley describes it. The two are manipulating the gender norms of their community to forge their own liberation from the coloniality of gender.

However, the Indecency Club soon faces punishment for transgressing the binary gender norms of their community. Linda and Pilar become jealous of Okomo and Dina's love and are angry with them for breaking the Indecency Club's pact. As a result, they out them to their families. The resulting uproar and inquisition reveal the truth about all four women, and they are each punished in turn. Linda is sold into marriage to cover a debt. Dina is also forced into an unwanted marriage. Pilar is locked in at home, where she is sexually assaulted and impregnated by her father. Okomo is kept under constant surveillance and eventually sent off to live with an uncle in a nearby city.

After her forced relocation, Okomo eventually encounters Linda again, who informs her that all the girls of the Indecency Club had escaped and fled to the forest to build a new community with Marcelo. She invites Okomo to join them. Before doing so, however, Okomo seeks out her father who lives nearby. Looking for the truth of the man who had abandoned her, she meets his new family and asks why he has never sent for her. Here she is met, yet again, with rejection. He says that because he never paid the bride price for her mother, common law says that she is not his daughter. He rejects her for being a *bastarda*. As a result, Okomo's disillusionment with the patriarchal expectations fully manifests:

So, I escaped to the forest to live with my uncle Marcelo, the man-woman, and the other three indecent girls from my village, the only family that life had given me... The forest was the only refuge for those who had no place in Fang tradition, like me. I'm a *bastarda*, a Fang woman; I'm a *bastarda*, daughter of an unmarried Fang woman; I'm a *bastarda*, a lesbian. (87)

Postcolonial Fang society, Okomo comes to realize, will never accept her embracing and freely "performing" her queer identity. She, Marcelo, and the rest of the Indecency Club refuse to be subjugated by heteropatriarchal expectations and form their own community in the forest, one where they are safe to be who they are. Importantly, it must be noted how Okomo becomes conscious of the inextricable nature of her various facets of identities in this moment. Her status as a Fang woman, a subject of a colonized nation, is inextricably linked with her lesbian identity, and it is through an embracing of queer performativity and community that she resists the patriarchal coloniality of gender and achieves a form of freedom.

It would be perhaps obvious to indicate that the text sharply critiques homophobia and misogyny in postcolonial Fang culture and Equatorial Guinea at large. At issue here are the larger implications. This novel demonstrates how queer performance specifically is a powerful praxis of resistance against the patriarchal coloniality of gender that feeds off the subordination of women. An examination of these patriarchal hierarchies themselves is a perfect starting

point for this consideration, precisely because Okomo's village is an incarnation of them. Gender is defined in this society by means of strict subordination of women through binary considerations, as described by Butler and Lugones. Women are expected to marry, earn a good bride price, conceive children, and sell their labor. Their families and husbands expect to be able to benefit from every facet of their existence. "It's time you find a man who might support the family at last," Okomo's grandmother tells her at one point in the novel. "Especially now that you're getting your monthlies!" (63). Okomo's own bodily autonomy becomes the ultimate price for her family's welfare.

In Okomo's grandmother we find a persistent reminder of how oppressive this binary, patriarchal hierarchy is. She represents the misery of those women who fall victim to it, the household being a microcosm of society at large. Despite being Osá's first wife, Okomo's grandmother has been placed on the margins of the household by a younger, second wife and is now met with scorn and derision from both her and Osá himself. As a result, she must continually fight with the younger wife for dominance and try to find ways to lure Osá back to their marriage bed. Okomo gets caught up in this endeavor, as previously mentioned. It is from this social dynamic that the inherent misogyny and homophobia arises. Husband and family cannot exploit the liberated queer body in the same way that it can the heteronormative body, and therefore they have no place for the queer subject. Yet it is through an embracing of queer ontology that Okomo manages to find liberation.

The existence of this subversive queer subject within *La Bastarda* is certainly not in doubt. The citation (and subsequent "queering") of the social norms surrounding gender and sexuality is visible in many places in the text and gives rise to a progressive and subversive discourse within the novel. As Judith Butler describes, queerness itself is a performance that denies postcolonial, heteropatriarchal norms. Okomo herself is perhaps the quintessential representation of this. We can take as an example Okomo's discomfort with almost every aspect of traditionally feminine performativity, especially when it is forced upon her by her grandmother or other family members. Her family members are always trying to get her to wear makeup, style her hair in certain ways, and wear dresses so that she attracts a man to support the family financially. Okomo, however, hates this. For Okomo, compulsory colonial gender performativity is not true to her own understanding of herself and her identity. She only feels at home in a queer performative expression of her gender and sexuality.

Okomo's love for Dina is similarly important. Postcolonial Fang society reserves love and sexual intimacy with women to men and men only, attempting to define gender norms by means of sexual subordination. Okomo's performativity, however, denies this exploitation. As has been already demonstrated, making love with the Indecency Club and falling in love with Dina is a moment of rebirth for her. Everything grows from this moment, and the story fully culminates

in her living her truth. In leaving postcolonial Fang society to live with their newfound queer community, she is committing the ultimate act of resistance: permanently denying patriarchal society (itself built upon the coloniality of gender) the ability to exploit her and her body. As she embraces a subversive performativity of sex, gender, and race, Okomo is not existing outside of social norms, but rather is citing and queering those norms to make them her own and achieve her own liberation. This is the way in which Melibea Obono develops a powerful subversive discourse.

For truly, Okomo's queer performativity is a subversive act. Firstly, we see a radical transformation in Okomo herself. Let us consider two moments in the text, the first of which occurs just after Okomo makes love with the Indecency Club for the first time: "That feeling had always made me ashamed of myself. I am sick, I thought often, sick with sin, embarrassed that I couldn't tear my eyes away from her feminine curves" (36). Here, Okomo is reeling from her first taste of freedom, still putting her newly embraced queerness in context with the shame that society had instilled in her. Later, however, Okomo and Dina confess their love for one another in the space of the Council of Elders, an inherently masculine environment, and are intimate there. This act is doubly transgressive; as the two women make love here, they take back a space that would be denied to them based on their gender. They assert their right to exist not only at the margins, but at the center as well. These passages reveal how powerfully Okomo is transformed by her embracing of her own queerness.

Marcelo's transgressive queerness is similarly important. Marcelo's resistance stems from a rejection and queering of colonial and patriarchal norms that might otherwise privilege him. For the act of giving his love to another man he is branded a "man-woman" and nearly killed. However, Marcelo's subversive performativity of gender and sexuality also lends its weight behind Melibea Obono's challenging of the coloniality of gender. He refuses to engage in the sexual subjection of Fang women by repeatedly resisting arranged marriages that would have brought him back into the fold. Marcelo's partner Jesús also expresses his disdain for society's disrespect for women: "Besides, the offensive label man-woman implies disdain toward women. It reduces them to passive sexual objects that never act on their own desires" (68). He and Marcelo encourage and empower Okomo and Dina to live the truth of their love together.

Ultimately, the subversive power of queer performativity is demonstrated upon the novel's conclusion. At the climax of the novel, Okomo, Dina, Pilar, and Linda have been outed and punished for daring to transgress against heterosexual, patriarchal hierarchies. Nevertheless, they each manage to find their way to sanctuary, successfully escaping their forced submission. Though they seem to have been relegated to the periphery of society, they have in fact managed to persevere and create a world in their own image, a world in which they can forge a type of queer refuge. This serves as the novel's final strike against

the norms that seek to exploit women's bodies for their own benefit, and the misogyny and homophobia that arise from them. The subversive queer subject will not bow to oppression.

The importance of this discourse cannot be overstated, especially given the colonial history of Equatorial Guinea, and the violent authoritarian states that such colonialism has inspired.<sup>4</sup> Western colonialism, as previously demonstrated, has left a lasting mark on Equatorial Guinean society, and as such the colonized (and neo-colonized) state of women such as Okomo is inextricable from their gender and sexuality. The coloniality of gender means that these are forces with which the postcolonial subject must continue to grapple for their liberation. Thus, queer theory and postcolonial theory are likewise inextricable from my analysis of *La Bastarda*. Okomo's queer performance not only troubles notions of gender and sexuality in her society (and in the world at large), but also of race and of the colonial/national subject. Ian Barnard notes that "queer" can apply to race just as much as it can to gender and sexuality, and queer relationships as praxis of resistance have deep roots in Africa, as Tinsley describes. The separation of these concepts would be deeply problematic and a capitulation with predominantly Western patriarchal norms. Melibea Obono's novel is the perfect example of necessary subversive queerness and as such warrants in-depth consideration in cultural and literary studies.

What I have demonstrated in this essay, therefore, is that Trifonia Melibea Obono's novel *La Bastarda* (2016) goes beyond a mere call for the liberation of women and queer folk. As I examine in context with the theories of Butler, Lugones, and Tinsley, Melibea Obono demonstrates in her writing that queer performativity is a useful and necessary site of resistance against the Western/Eurocentric coloniality of gender, sexuality, and race. In essence, the colonized and oppressed queer subject finds liberation through queer performativity, juxtaposed with compulsory colonial gender performativity. This discourse demonstrates the need to include the narratives and the voices of African women in the canons of literary, Hispanic, and cultural studies to facilitate the work that remains to be done on the world stage toward this project of liberation. For these narratives to be marginalized would mark a continued capitulation with these very same colonial norms.

## Works Cited

- Aixela Cabre, Yolanda. "Equatorial Guinean Women's Roles After Migration to Spain: Conflicts Between Women's Androcentric Socialization in Equatorial Guinea and their Experiences After Migration." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, vol. 42, no. 17, 2013, pp. 1-55.

4 As previously stated, it has been difficult to extricate the Spanish nation from Equatorial Guinea; indeed, the Spanish metropolitan subject has routinely redefined the Guinean subject in the interest of the metropole and placed them at the periphery (Medina-Doménech 104).

- Barnard, Ian. "Queer Race." *Social Semiotics*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1999, pp. 199-212, doi:10.1080/10350339909360432.
- Baynham, Simon. "Politics and Power in Equatorial Guinea." *Africa Insight*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 28-32.
- Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 1, 1993, pp. 17-32.
- . "Gender Regulations." *Undoing Gender*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 40-56.
- . "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire." *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 1990, doi:10.2307/1395391.
- Celaya Carrillo, Beatriz. "Feminista y queer en Guinea Ecuatorial: la vulnerable persistencia de Melibea Obono." *Ámbitos Feministas*, vol. 8, 2019, pp. 61-77.
- Edzodzomo Ondo, Hubert. "Reconocimiento, negación y exclusión de las identidades en *Le Pacte d'Affa* (2009) y *La bastarda* (2016)." *Educación e Inclusión Aportes y Perspectivas de la Educación Comparada para la Equidad*, Universidad de La Laguna. Servicio de Publicaciones, 2018, pp. 299-306. DOI.org (Crossref), doi: 10.25145/c.educomp.2018.16.036.
- Lugones, Maria. "Coloniality of Gender." *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 1-17.
- Medina-Doménech, Rosa. "Scientific Technologies of National Identity as Colonial Legacies: Extracting the Spanish Nation from Equatorial Guinea." *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 1, 2009, pp. 81-112, doi:10.1177/0306312708097658.
- Minsongui Dieudonné, Mendogo. "Mujer y creación literaria en Guinea Ecuatorial." *Epos: Revista de filología*, vol. 13, 1997, pp. 209-18, doi:10.5944/epos.13.1997.10017.
- Ngom, Mbare. "Postcolonial Hispanic African Children's Literature." *Contributions in Afroamerican and African Studies*, vol. 187, 1998, pp. 57-68.
- Nsué Angüe, María. *Ekomo*. SIAL Ed., 2008.
- Obono, Trifonia Melibea. *La Bastarda*. First Femi, The Feminist Press, 2018.
- Rizo, Elisa. "El petro-teatro de Guinea Ecuatorial: La mujer y su trabajo." *Publication of Afro-Latin/American Research Association*, vol. 15, 2011, pp. 66-80.
- Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2-3, 2008, pp. 191-215. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.1215/10642684-2007-030.
- Wood, Geoffrey. "Business and Politics in a Criminal State: The Case of Equatorial Guinea." *African Affairs*, vol. 103, no. 413, 2004, pp. 547-67, doi:10.1093/afraf/adh084.