

**MOTHER/DAUGHTER DIS/CONNECTION: FEMALE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION
IN CALIXTHE BEYALA’S *YOUR NAME SHALL BE TANGA***

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Abstract

This paper accentuates the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship in feminist scholarship and delineates the range and direction of this relationship in Calixthe Beyala’s *Your Name Shall be Tanga*, a Cameroonian female novelist. My focus is to illustrate that in *Your Name Shall be Tanga*, Beyala appropriates the psychoanalytic emphasis to depict the mother-daughter bond/rupture. However, precarious postcolonial social and economic conditions that inform Beyala’s text twirl her appropriation into a re-visioning, and she crafts a rather intricate and complicated female identity construction. Thus, guided by the sociological and gender relations critical perspectives, I intend to prove that the mother-daughter dyad is not a universal condition. It is constructed socially and materialised within a specific set of economic and material conditions which interlock and interact with equally specific expectations and values associated with the relationship’s contradictions.

Introduction

The question of maternal love, the duties of motherhood and obligatory maternity, were already explored in the late 70s by African women writers such as Buchi Emecheta in her *The Joys of Motherhood* and *The Bride Price* and Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* and *One is Enough*. Notwithstanding Emecheta’s and Nwapa’s portrayal of the mother’s role in society, there has been so far a literary, sociological and theoretical silence hanging over the mother-daughter relationship in Africa. Writing in 1976, Adrienne Rich observed in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* that “the cathexis between mother and daughter – essential, distorted, misused – is the great unwritten story” (227). She traces this relationship which she maintains is “minimized and trivialized in the annals of patriarchy” (236) and comments that while examples of classical drama such as *Oedipus*, *Hamlet* and *Lear*, often celebratory, accounts of attachments between mothers and sons and fathers and daughters, “there is no presently enduring recognition of mother/daughter passion and rupture” (237). Rich’s was an alert to the silence that has surrounded the most formative relationship in the life of every woman. Marianne Hirsch in “Mothers and Daughters” has observed that since Rich demonstrated the absence of the mother-daughter relationship from theology, art, sociology, and

psychoanalysis, and its centrality in women's lives, many voices have come to fill this gap, to create speech and meaning where there has been silence and absence. Hirsh maintains that the literary representation of the mother-daughter relationship in Western fiction captures basically the ways women have imagined and represented their bonds with their daughters. For example, Demeter's reunion with Persephone in the Homeric hymn "To Demeter"; the mother's creeping deathbed speech in *La princesse de Clèves*; the appearance in *Jane Eyre* of the moon who guides, "My daughter, flee temptation!"; Mrs Tulliver's instinctive though ignorant and uncomprehending loyalty to her daughter who has been disgraced; the plea of the middle-aged Colette for approval from the dead mother she conjures up in her imagination; Lily Briscoe's Epiphanic vision of Mrs Ramsey who, by appearing, approves; the mother's regrets in Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing"; the mother's generous protection of the ugly and needy daughter in Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" (214).

Beyala's representation of this relationship in *Your Name Shall be Tanga*, offers fresh, often frightening, peculiar and complicated perspectives that do not necessarily represent the positive bond, but a controversial connection that in turn creates a rupture between the mother and the daughter as the writer appropriates and revises psychoanalytic emphasis. The fact that Beyala is one of those many voices who craft speech and meaning into the female identity construction process, through the mother-daughter relationship and that her perspective on the mother-daughter dyad is fresh and complicated, are the motivating factors behind this paper. With this motivation, I intend to answer the following questions: How does Beyala negotiate the psychoanalytic emphasis in her depiction of the mother-daughter relationship? How does the depiction of the relationship affect the narrative structure and the language of the text? What makes the construction of female identity in Beyala's novel peculiar and intricate? The aim of this paper is to prove that Beyala's depiction of the mother-daughter relationship is influenced by the psychoanalytic emphasis. However, the socio-economic conditions that inform Beyala's text make her depiction of female identity construction peculiar and intricate and I choose to read her depiction of the mother-daughter relationship as a re-visioning of the Freudian, Post-Freudian and Feminist psychoanalytic emphasis as she rejects, contests, subverts, transforms and reinvents new meanings for her own purposes.

The sociological approach that guides this research holds that writers are influenced by the socio-cultural, political, economic and religious backgrounds within which they write and evolve. In this case, the mother-daughter relationship in Beyala's *Your Name shall be Tanga* is seen as the product of a collective phenomenon that has metamorphosed into the author. But, beyond that, Jacques Dubois warns that the society to be considered must first and foremost be that of the work of art. He maintains that a particular work of art has internal unity and coherence and must be considered as self focusing and self-sufficient before establishing any homology with its socio-cultural background, a homology that is dialectical (56). The dual nature of the literary text is also considered by Pierre V. Zima who maintains that a literary text should not be directly or uncritically related to real life, for the facts in the text are not denotative, but are connotative (95). Dubois and Zima insist on the symbiotic but dialectical relationship between text and context that must be taken seriously in a sociological account. The intricate and complex intra-gender relationship between Tanga and her mother in the text can also be delineated in terms of the gender relations theory. According to Candida March in *A Guide to Gender Analysis Framework*, gender relations, in this case intra-gender relations are simultaneously relations of cooperation, connection, and mutual support, and of conflict, separation, and competition, of difference and inequality.

The next section of this paper aims to prove that in depicting the mother-daughter relationship in *Your Name shall be Tanga*, Beyala appropriates the Freudian emphasis on the pre-oedipal attachment to the mother, the Lacanian emphasis on the symbolic order and language determinism and the Western feminist psychoanalytic emphasis on the mother-daughter bond. But given the socio-cultural and economic conditions mothers and daughters dwell in, and given the precarious postcolonial society represented in the novel, Beyala's appropriation of the psychoanalytic emphasis becomes a revision and subversion of that emphasis.

The Mother-daughter Dyad and Female Identity Construction

Female identity construction can be traced through the relationship between the mother and the daughter. This process is demonstrated through female experience and its articulation and expression of intimacy and distance, passion and violence, bonds and rupture, connection and disconnection, cooperation and conflict, mutual support and competition. All of these contradictory aspects are observed interlocking with the emotional, socio-cultural, economic, political conditions of the postcolonial nation state and symbolic structures of patriarchy in Beyala's *Your Name shall be Tanga*. Tanga's trajectory in relation to her mother in the novel elicits how women's identity and sexuality are constructed and represented by a ladder of power struggles materialised within specific set of economic and material conditions. In the novel, Beyala's central concern is Tanga's process of becoming a woman, which involves a sudden leap from childhood into adulthood, compounded by the mother's absolute authority over her. Tanga stresses this fact in her narration, "I am a child. I do not exist. My age cancels me out. My heart lies rooted in a forest of sand" (28). Tanga's childhood is destroyed because her mother pushes her to a sudden and drastic move to womanhood through the act of circumcision and she becomes a "Child-parent to her parents". I read Tanga's mother's position here as one of a woman taking hegemonic position in a patriarchal society and imposing her own ideas and opinions upon another woman at the expense of the latter. Tanga ponders her relationship with her mother, "Until now I felt shame for only one thing, my mother old one. That shame is my breath which has no hope of survival. It persecutes me, chases after me, since the day that my mother old one laid me down underneath the banana tree so that I would be fulfilled at the hands of the clitoris snatcher" (12). Tanga's mother assumes a position of power (hegemony) in relation to her daughter (subaltern) by subjecting her to clitoridectomy at a very tender age. According to Tanga, the surgery renders her helpless and hopeless as she is traumatised by her mother's action. She intimates, "I didn't say a thing. I fell heir to the blood between my legs. To a hole between my thighs. All that I was left with was the law of oblivion" (12). Tanga's mother does not realise her daughter's state of being because all she wants from her is material benefits. The surgery, according to Tanga's mother is a value as it turns Tanga into a woman. She exclaims, "She has become a woman, she has become a woman! With that, ... she'll keep any man" (12). Nfah-Abbenyi in *Gender in African Women's Writings* comments on the implications of female circumcision for Tanga and her mother:

The practice of female circumcision is therefore not a simple cultural practice, but one that is as political as it is economically motivated. ... This ritual has economic implications for the mother for whom it is the culmination of her daughter's commercial servitude and , as she puts it, the old age insurance that she expects and demands of her daughter by forcing her into prostitution. The mother not only reinforces the ritual and cruelty to women and their bodies, but legitimizes her financial demands on her own (female) child. (87)

According to Tanga's mother, the female circumcision ritual is what defines her daughter's female identity and gives her a licence not only to start sleeping with men, but men will now lust over her and possess her body. Of course, the more men possess her body, the more money Tanga will make in order to save her mother from the realm of poverty.

Beyala depicts a society that is not only oppressive to women, but one in which women also act as oppressive agents towards other women, their own daughters. I read this intricate intra-gender relationship between Tanga and her mother as Beyala's appropriation and at the same time subversion of Freud's psychoanalytic emphasis on the pre-oedipal attachment to the mother. Freud's theory of the unconscious accounts for the tortuous path from infant bisexuality to adult gender identity and the central mechanism of this psychic process is the idea of castration that, according to Freud, makes the little girl develop like a scar, a sense of inferiority. Also, according to Freud, the mechanism that propels the girl child towards its social identity is the penis and the woman's inferior position within the social order is directly linked to her lack of that organ. This means that Freud's account of female identity construction process takes a one dimensional perspective – penis envy. But Beyala in *Your Name shall be Tanga*, inscribes female identity via the mother-daughter relationship that evolves within a ladder of power struggles in a precarious postcolonial patriarchal environment. Tanga does not go through Freud's tortuous path of infant development and does not experience the pre-oedipal attachment to the mother since she does not experience childhood. It is not the penis that defines the dis/connection between the mother and the daughter as Freud theorises, but social and economic conditions force the mother to use her daughter for financial benefits. Beyala therefore subverts Freud's mechanism of castration that banishes woman into what Jessie Bernard calls the position of nature to man's culture, matter to man's spirit, emotion to man's reason, and object to man's subject. The relationship between Tanga and her mother demonstrates that the girl child's inferior position to her mother is not because of penis envy. It stems from a wider context – the emotional, political, economic and symbolic structures of the family and society. Tanga is identified as a subaltern, marginalised and rendered without agency because she happens to be her mother's daughter. Beyala's inscription of the complex relationship between the mother and the daughter within patriarchy is her way of making women to see and recognise themselves without the blinders imposed by the traditional paternal order. Freud's theory insinuates that the woman's condition is biologically given and so is natural and she cannot do anything about it. But from the perspective in which Beyala presents the mother-daughter problematic relationship, it does not necessarily emanate from biological determinism, but from social and economic conditions and then she creates possibilities for strong women to construct and reconstruct identity.

In the analysis of the nervous conditioning, the intricacies and complexities of the relationship between the mother and the daughter in *Your Name shall be Tanga*, I see its influence on literary style and structure. Mary Carruthers has commented in "Imagining Women: Notes towards a Feminist Poetics" that, "Language is the medium in which we carry our past, determine our present, and condition our future" (281). But Lacan has accounted for women's marginalisation from the symbolic order and his theory releases women from Freud's realm of biology, only to lock them up into another form of linguistic determinism. Lacan theorises a symbolic order that enacts a one dimensional source of women's subordination, making their subordinate status look natural. According to Lacan, the process of constructing a social identity is the process whereby, language positions women in their expected spaces within the law of the

father. But looking at the enactment of the mother-daughter dyad in *Your Name shall be Tanga*, I see that Beyala sees Lacan's account of women's marginalisation from the symbolic order as limiting and she subverts the linguistic determinism by dialogising meaning. The significance of her representation of the mother-daughter relationship lies in the way she links the most private family structure to social, economic, and political structures, treating women's mothering as a "Social Structure that affects all other structures" (Lober et al. 501). Patriarchal, social, cultural and material factors have a role to play in Tanga's mother's objectification of her daughter and not only language. If Tanga acquires a subordinate status in her mother's house because language had already defined and positioned her in that place, then she would not have room for identity (re)construction.

Certainly, Lacan's account of women's marginalisation from the symbolic order, consciously or unconsciously, has offered Beyala an insight into the sense of women's alienation from language and culture. But she appropriates and brings this insight to her consideration of language while she subverts Lacan's linguistic determinism. The mother-daughter dis/connection depicted in Beyala's novel is discernable in her innovative style and it starts from the discursive act of naming encountered first thing in the title *Your Name shall be Tanga* and which further takes many dimensions in the text. Tanga names Anna-Claude as Tanga in order to immortalize her grotesque mother/daughter story. Then, through lexical items, she takes the authority to name the problem and set the rules of the fight for female identity and that of her self-individualization from her mother's control. Reading through *Your Name Shall be Tanga*, one encounters in almost all the pages the words that help to name the stakes of the story, words spoken in absolute frankness as Tanga tries to assert her identity: woman, sex, prostitution, rape, maternity, lovers, man, male domination, exclusion, maternal breasts, pitiful breasts, buttocks, thighs, genitals, birth canal, no feelings, no sensations, inaudible desires, penis, arousing groans of pleasure, loveable vices, clitoris, sexual organ, sexual level. These lexis are naming in plain terms the parts of the body that serve as the root cause and the effect of the unhappiness that surrounds Tanga in her relations with her mother. It should be remembered that language to Lacan, signifies the paternal (phallic) authority. So women can never identify with its authority and are always alienated from its order of meaning – the symbolic order. But as Carruthers has defined the feminist poetics as that which uses language as the medium through which women carry their past, determine their present and condition their future, Tanga names the unhappiness that ruptures her relationship with her mother as "... hatred. A blind and ferocious hatred determined to destroy me with the force that belongs to feelings which know nothing other than the concern for a single being" (13). Tanga refers here to her mother who is too self centred to understand that she, Tanga, has her own life to live.

Tanga also takes the authority of naming the rules of the fight to free herself, to assert herself from her mother's grip. In this process she describes what she intends to do, how she intends to do it and who it will affect. Tanga through her story is determined to "rob unhappiness" (1); to "assassinate that silence" (6-7); to "Kill the emptiness of silence" (7); to "assassinate desire" (10); to "stride over unhappiness and step on board the train of of my becoming" (20); to "take the spectacle of my past slough, slide towards it... rub its clitoris, set fire to pleasure, erase the flight of the black bird from my life, send my legs flying in the direction of the frontier ; only then will I have access to the confiscated regions of happiness" (20). Tanga ponders on possibilities that will make her to sever the links with human suffering imposed upon her being by her own mother. She meditates that she will, "Plough the paths of what's possible, of all possibilities. From now on, I'll arm myself against unhappiness" (21); that

she will “stay ahead of misfortune, grip it with its claws, her teeth, put it underneath a bale of straw, sprinkle it with petrol and burn it” (26); that she will “invent the three dreams that diminish human suffering” (28) and “draw the curtain over ugliness” (30). Tanga names in exact terms who and what she intends to put behind her and construct her identity. She intends to “put them all to sleep forever – mother old one, unhappiness, everything together – so I can be as happy as I wish to be. To eat and drink happiness” (35); to “rend the heavens so as to destroy unhappiness” (38); to “pulverise ugliness, kill madness.” (69); to “Dive deep into happiness ... Promise unhappiness, it won’t be forgotten. ... From now on, I shall be happy. I’m holding happiness hostage” (73) and “To Kill unhappiness. To violate it. To steal it. To capture the shade without weakening it and subject it to the torch of the seasons, the one that holds pigments – all made possible by laughter (74). The end result for Tanga, as she says at the beginning and at the end of the narrative, is to “attain peace” (1) and “To tune the violins of love” (74). Tanga’s story, which becomes Anna-Claude’s and the one that the reader is reading, becomes the fruits of that force, that authority to destroy unhappiness brought by the lack of love between her mother and herself and to implant wellbeing and goodness in her being, hence self assertion. The rage has been contained for too long, such that it does not only explode, but the rules of its explosion are named and are accomplished with authority by the victim, Tanga, as she searches to individuate herself from her mother who is completely devouring her personhood for material benefits. Thus to understand the language of Beyala’s text is as Culler would say, to recognise the world to which it refers.

In the process of depicting mother-daughter dis/connection in postcolonial Africa, Beyala does not only subvert the Freudian theory of castration that naturally gives little girls a sense of inferiority and the Post-Freudian one dimensional linguistic determinism, rather, the height of her subversion of psycho-analytic emphasis can be seen in the way she subverts Western feminist psycho-emphasis on the symbiotic bond that psychologically trails mothers and daughters. Beyala challenges some of the psychoanalytic views of some Western feminists who have in their various ways also appropriated and challenged Freudian and Lacanian ideas. Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva are five most significant psychoanalytic feminists whose approaches on the relationship between the mother and daughter are appropriated and at the same time subverted by Beyala. Although their approaches to the topic of mother/daughter relationships differ, all the five theorists place emphasis on the symbiotic bond and attachment that naturally exists between the mother and daughter.

Cixous’s excursus in ‘feminine’ writing emphasizes the mother-daughter bond. Her medium is white ink, or mother’s milk, and in every woman, Cixous insist, “there is always more or less of the mother” who repairs and sustains and resists separation, a force that won’t be severed (172). Beyala represents the mother who is all too materialistic and greedy that she hardly thinks of repairing connections with her daughter because it is natural for her as a mother to do so. When she sustains or resists separation from her daughter, it is because she is afraid to lose her social insurance, what the social system demands that her daughter should be to her. Tanga narrates her blackmailing attitude in these words:

When I say to her: ‘Ma, it is time for me to look after myself’, whatever the place – be it in the kitchen or in the living-room – the face of mother old one changes and turns. Her eyes pop out. Her body becomes a suffering wreck, with foam coming from the corners of her mouth. She says she is ill, that she’s going to die; she puts a hand on her thigh, her arm and

finally on her heart ... For several days she lets herself go, she no longer moves, she no longer eats, she loses weight. ... She says she is waiting for death. (33)

Tanga's mother resists Tanga's separation from her, not because of that natural bond that Cixous describes and that Rich has also described as essential to human nature, "there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two alike bodies, one of which has lain in amiotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other" (225). Tanga's mother's problem is the fear to lose her old-age-insurance. However, because of that fact that mother is gold in the African society as Remi Akujobi in "Motherhood in African Literature and culture" insists, Tanga takes pity on her mother and reconsiders her position as she narrates, "I am worried; I go on the street and slip my body into caresses. I go to the market-place, I choose a *pagne* – a very brightly coloured Wax – and take it to her room. ... 'Look what I brought for you' ... Her lips open wide. 'May be I'd better wait for death standing up.' (34). This is a mother who wants to keep connected to her daughter not because she loves her daughter the way Cixous and Rich think is natural for a mother to do, but because she wants her daughter to prostitute and take care of her now and at her old age.

Also, the images which form the basis of Irigaray's essay "And the one doesn't stir without the other" are subverted by Beyala. Irigaray describes the mother as constituting paradoxically, both "the feeder" and "the food" of the daughter, with the effect of emotional suffocation, paralysis and loss of identity boundaries in which it results. The daughter tells the mother, "You put yourself in my mouth, and I suffocate" (61). Another image Irigaray uses is the representation of mother and daughter as two "Living mirrors", each reflecting the other. She also uses the depiction of the mother "haemorrhaging blood", introduced to describe the syndrome of maternal self-sacrifice. In Beyala's narrative, there is hardly a time when the mother sacrifices for the daughter. Rather, Tanga sacrifices her childhood, her girlhood, her education and her personhood for the mother's materialistic benefits. The parasitic dependence of the mother on Tanga is described in the following words: "But I know, I the girlchild-woman, dutiful in the fulfilment of the rites of child-parent to her parents, since its fitting that I sell my flesh to feed them, to feed them always because of the breath of life they gave me" (18) and "My parents had devoured my life, driven nails into its shroud" (30). The devouring of Tanga by her parents is not only metaphorical, it is also physical. The mother subjects her into a severing of her clitoris for commercial purposes and her father rapes, impregnates her and turns around to kill the product of that rape. And in all of these, Tanga's mother pretends as Tanga ponders, "This woman my mother, who caughed discrededly into her skirts when she saw me give birth to the child her man had sired; the woman my mother ... to avert malediction and shame, hoodwinked everybody with the eternal tale of the child that had come from lord knows where and of the depraved girl" (30-31). Beyala subverts the symbiotic bond accentuated by Western feminist psychoanalysts and proposes but the mother-daughter rupture that stems from the daughter's struggle to assert the self and create space for herself, These bring out new images of girlhood, intricacies and complexities that arise from new interests and dilemmas in the post-colonial African society.

Chodorow's construct and contrast of masculinity and femininity in her object relations theory, illustrates the asymmetrical childcare arrangements in contemporary society. It points out that the mother, while treating her son as an autonomous individual from a relatively early age, tends to cultivate a symbiotic bond with her daughter since she seeks unconsciously to re-create the intimate bond she enjoyed with her own mother. The consequence, she illustrates, is that boys grow up possessing a strong sense of autonomy, whereas girls are likely to feel a greater

sense of interdependence and connection with other people. Beyala appropriates this debate but subverts the symbiotic bond between mother and daughter by presenting instead a parasitic bond between Tanga and her mother. The parasite is the mother who lives off her daughter. She exerts parental control on her daughter. She forces her daughter into prostitution but Tanga at some point discovers herself and wants to stop prostitution. She explains her encounter with mother and the resulting rupture between them, “Slowly, I turn my head towards mother old one with all the violent force now inside me. ‘Don’t count on me to see that horror again.’” (37). But the mother insists to her that prostitution is the only way out in life for her. Tanga is quick to discern the mothers blackmailing attitude on her and she resists. She explains her mother’s methods of blackmail, “I know that her crawny body is going towards an encounter with tears in order to drown out my desires. I watch her sow the seeds of blackmail and water them. It’s growing all around me, forming a hedge to imprison me inside her garden of brambles” (37). But at this point Tanga knows just too well that she needs her me-ness if she must disconnect from her mother’s plans of making her work for her mother all her life. She takes her stand in these words:

But as for me, tonight I have decided to live. I fight back. I rend the heavens so as to destroy unhappiness. From now on, I’ll put myself before everything. Before the world, Me; after the world, Me; always Me. I’ve decided to contemplate my navel as long as possible, right up to the limit, go beyond it and come back to my navel. Mother old one doesn’t look at it with the same eye. (37-38)

Tanga’s mother cannot imagine a life without the social security from Tanga. Chinyere Grace Okafor in “Rewriting Popular Myths of Female Subordination” recognizes the spiritual power of women especially as mothers (81) and Tanga’s mother is quick to exploit this traditional custom to her advantage. She knows that as an African mother, she has the powers to curse her daughter and she quickly resorts to a curse as Tanga narrates, “ ‘I curse you’, she says to me in a hoarse voice. ‘You’ll die in shit and piss. I curse you . . . And these words I speak today will come true – as true as the fact that I carried you in my belly for nine moons.’ She spits on the ground three times, claps her hands. I felt the curse fire into my guts” (40). But Tanga has clearly demarcated borders and the rupture stands as she maintains, “My heart is beating hard. My spirit becomes activated. I’m deconstructing my mother! It’s an act of birth. It’s madness to believe that the blood bond is indestructible! Foolishness to think that the act of existing within a clan implies quaranteed quality!”(39) Akujobi has commented on the ability of African women writers’ and critics’ insistence on the fact that African women should cultivate the habit of making choices for themselves. Tanga decides to make choices that will make her live her me-ness. Like Elizabeth Ogini who wants the woman to throw away the yoke of discomfort and oppression and preoccupy herself with freedom, comfort, prosperity and dignity (18), Tanga widens her universe and annihilates the world at her feet. Since her state cause the world in which blood bonds exist to overturn and a world in which they don’t exist to emerge, Beyala makes her take the stand that resembles the one Nana Wilson-Tagoe has insisted that woman must take, that women must contest and revise misconceptions and narrow representations (12). Also like O. Austen-Peters who maintains that it is time for the woman to reject negative images, Tanga tears the veil of oppression which if not torn, will mask her identity, muffle her voice and distort her vision.

Conclusion

This article has sought to prove that Beyala in *Your Name shall be Tanga* appropriates psychoanalytic emphasis but because her narrative is informed by the precarious postcolonial conditions, her appropriation becomes a revision. It has proven that mother-daughter relationship

as represented by a Cameroonian woman writer Beyala stems from a wider emotional, political, economic and symbolic contexts of family and society. The mother-daughter relationship helps to distinguish the individuality of the girl child and the role she has to assume in relation to other social determinants. Beyala's project is that of dismantling the sameness and unity of the symbolic order that has excluded women. She creates a discourse of plurality that depends on a redefinition of the individual subject who must be seen not as unified, integrated, whole, and autonomous, but as multiple, continuous and fluid, or as Kristeva calls it 'in process'. Therefore to talk of the maternal and daughterhood in Africa and in Cameroon in particular, in the absence of that historical and social specificity is limiting.

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