

Research Article

Straightening Through The Curly Hairs: Objectifying Mandatory Mythos In Emma Dabiri's "Don't Touch My Hair" And "Twisted: The Tangled History Of Black Hair Culture"

Dr. A. Karthika Unnithan

Guest Lecturer

Department Of English

Sree Vivekananda College,

Thrissur, Kerala, India

Abstract

From The Irish-Nigerian Author Emma Dabiri's Works Don't Touch My Hair And Twisted: The Tangled History Of Black Hair Culture, This Study Examines Textual Narrativity With Regard To Symbolic Representation Of Hair As A Cue To Portrayal Of Potential Self In The World Of African People. The Article Investigates How The Narrator In Both These Works Reasons The Importance Of Hair Among Blacks As An Introspection To Decolonization From Pre-Colonial Africa, Through The Harlem Renaissance, Black Power And Into Today's Natural Hair Movement, The Cultural Appropriation Wars And Beyond. In The Narration, The Narrator Delineates The Scope Of Black Hairstyling That Ranges From Pop Culture To Cosmology, From Prehistoric Times To The Futuristic. Through Her Narration, Emma Dabiri Uncovers Classy Native Practices In Black Hair Styles Conjunction With Styles That Aided Enslaved Africans To Freedom. Don't Touch My Hair Is A Textual Accumulation Of Visual Symbolism That Proves Black Hair As An Allegory For Black Oppression And Ultimately Liberation Through A Stream Of Consciousness Technique Reflecting The Frame Of Mind Of The Character, Memories, Aspirations, Dreams, And Fears, Working In Ways Comparable To Paratactic Accumulation In Narration.

In Twisted: The Tangled History Of Black Hair Culture Dabiri Takes Us To A Historical And Cultural Investigation Of The Global Past Of Racism As Well As Her Own Unique Perspective Of Self-Love And Affirmation Through The Prism Of Hair Texture. Profoundly Documented And Deeply Distinctive, Twisted Shows That Black Hairstyling Culture Can Be Interpreted As A Metaphor Of Institutionalized Racism. Finally, These Sample Texts Taken As Examples Combine The Modes Of Narration And Cultural Experience To Comment On Existing Schematization Of Hair Politics In Blacks And Invite Reconsideration Of Conventional Structures. While Most Scholarly Work On Literature Concentrates On Popular Culture Like Mass Media, This Study Aims To Create A Theory Of Hair Politics Through Individual Texts As That Of Dabiri That Qualifies Sampling Of Texts Based On Their Narratological Qualities. Whether Such Books Pose Philosophical Challenges Or Are Meant As Pure Entertainment For Literary World Make Up The Complex Web Of Hair Dynamics In Its Social And Political Context.

This Paper Also Explores The Relations Between Narrativity And Experience In Dabiri's Works Specifically Aspects Of Narrativity That Describe Reliability And Performative Aspects Of Narrativity On The Ethnographic Spaces.

Keywords: - Pictorial Narrativity, African Hair, Cultural Symbolism, Racial Beauty, Gender Power, Body Identity

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Emblazoned Out From Guardian Columnist And Prevalent BBC Ethnic Reporter Emma Dabiri's *Don't Touch My Hair* (2019) And *Twisted: The Tangled History Of Black Hair Culture* (2020) Explore The Ways In Which Black Hair Has Been Allocated And Marginalized Across The Whole Of Collective Memory With Contemplations On Physique Ideology, Nationality, Celebrity Culture And Dabiri's Own Sojourn To Cherishing Her Hair. Emma Dabiri Remembers The First Occasion She Straightened Her Hair Artificially. She Recalls The Scent, The Salon's Ambience, And Her Deep Concerns As She Watched Her Typically Kinky Hair Fall Over Her Shoulders. Emma's Hair Was A Source Of Discomfort, Embarrassment And Prejudice From Acquaintances And Relatives For As Far As She Can Recall.

Notwithstanding Liberal Perspectives, Afro Natural Hair Keeps On Being Eradicated, Appropriated And Demonized To The Mark Of Untouchable. Through Her Own Recorded Documents, Dabiri Gathers Experiences In Which Prejudice Is Coded In The Public Eye's View Of Afro Hair—And How It Is Regularly Utilized As A Road For Segregation. Profoundly Investigated And Intensely Resounding, Her Select Works (Which Are Identically Same With Different Tiles) Demonstrate That A Long Way From Being Just Hair, Afro Hairstyling Society Can Be Perceived As A Purposeful Anecdote For African Persecution And Eventually Freedom.

Emma Dabiri Was Birthed In Ireland To Parents Of Irish And Nigerian Ethnicity. The Select Works Are Half Memoir And Half Historical Examination Of Black Hair Tradition. Dabiri Discusses Her Own Path To Accepting And Enjoying Her Hair -Raised From Her Experiences As A Mixed-Race Youngster In A White-Dominated Town. She Addresses Black Hair In A Wider Perspective, Reframing It Via Academic Lenses Like Ethnicity And Racialisation, Corporatism, Class And Labor Politics, And Space And Time Ideologies. One Of Her Transit Points Is That Material Things Are Laden With Connotations. The Focus In This Context Is Black Hair, As Seen Via Photos From Cultural Artifacts, The Variety Of Hairstyles, And Braided Designs Alongwith Her Own Hair. By Researching The Item In Situ, We May Investigate The Multiple Interpretations Attributed To The Item By Key Entities, As Well As Concepts Regarding Economy, Politics, And Authority.

"Hair Is A Material Used To Express Oneself, But Also To Comment Upon, Reflect Or Indeed Contest Society." (Dabiri *Don't Touch My Hair* 30). Dabiri Addresses A Variety Of Issues With Black Hair Because Black Hair Is Much More About Hair — It Is Psychological, Cultural, Social, And Aesthetic – The Work Is On Greater Than Simply Hair. Its Purpose Is Straightforward: To Decolonize The Ways In Which Imperialist Thinking Affects Black Life As Reflected Via Hair. She Leads Her Readers On A Trip To Understand Black Hair For What It Is Further Than The Strands. First, She Transports Us To 1980s Interior Dublin To Confront Her Childhood Self. She Was Born To Mixed-Race Parents – Irish And Yorùbá – And Is Endowed With Hair That Is Both Long And Curly "Presented As A Problem That Needed To Be Managed." (6) Dabiri Discusses Hair Texture Prejudice, Particularly For Mixed-Race Blacks, In The Opening Paragraph, As Well As How Society Anticipated Light-Skinned Africans To Possess Better Tolerable Hair.

Dabiri Guides Readers On A Wonderful Pictorial Journey Through Many Native Yorùbá Hairstyles, Which She Refers To By Their Yorùbá Labels, As She Demonstrates How They Were Closely Intertwined With Their Lifestyles. The Process Of Producing Hair Had Societal And Historical Implications.

It Is A Process That Brings People Together And Facilitates Intergenerational Bonding And Knowledge Transmission ... Braiding Operates As A Bridge Spanning The Distance Between The Past, Present And Future. It Creates A Tangible, Material Thread Connecting People Often Separated By Thousands Of Miles And Hundreds Of Years (*Don't Touch My Hair* 48)

Decades Of Watching And Thinking That Lengthy, Flat Hair Is The Ultimate Attractive Hair And The Cure To Their Own Difficult Hair Has Led Many Black Individuals To Accept The Arduous Procedure Of Putting Chemicals To Their Hair. She Encourages Her Readers To Recognize The Complexities Of The Links Between Identity And Black Hair, Particularly In Personal Interactions Among Colored Folks. Dabiri Focuses On The Prevalent Belief That Many Black Males Seek Women With The Perfect Hair Type, Despite The Fact That She Believes It Is A Sign Of Self-Hatred. She Uses Toni Morrison's *Song Of Solomon* To Illustrate Her Claim.

How Can He Not Love Your Hair? It Is The Same Hair That Grows Out Of His Armpits. The Same Hair That Crawls Up Out Of His Crotch On Up His Stomach. All Over His Chest. The

Very Same ... It's His Hair Too. He Got To Love It ... How Can He Love Himself And Hate Your Hair? (Morrison 149)

To Respond, She Relies On An Affluent African Past To Demonstrate How Various Sorts Of Haircuts Donned By Different Sorts Of Men Had Significant Meaning. For Instance, King's Couriers Of Òyó Kingdom Kept Their Hair Half-Shaved, Whilst Masai Men Had Their Longer Hair Well Groomed.

Dabiri Embraces Native African Expertise In Her Final Chapter Of Don't Touch My Hair While Bowing At The Altar Of African Spirituality. She Speaks About Africa As A Haven For Arithmetic, Architecture, And Artistry, All Of Which May Be Seen In The Complex Designs Of Traditional African Hairstyles. The Reverence For Black Heritage Radiates In Black Hair Towards The Final Scene. Dabiri Has Created An Elaborate Pattern By Weaving Black Hair With Black History Throughout, Demonstrating That If We Are To Advance As A Society, We Must Accept Our Whole Identity, Heritage, Hair, And Everything.

Emma Dabiri Quotes Anglo-Ghanaian Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's Description About African Hairstyling As Thus, "Subtle Interplay Of The Sociological And The Aesthetic." (Twisted 11) She Further States That Hairstyling As A Profession Has A Bright Future And Offers Up Excitingly Culturally Assimilated Prospects For Clearer Grasp To The African Past And Shaping A Better Communal Future (11). While Dabiri Speaks About Socio-Legal Positive Transformation In Ireland, She Says That "Her Hair Was Difficult To Control." (12) Her Hair Was Always An Issue That Needed To Be Solved. The Highly Ingrained Notion Of "Controlling" Black Women's Hair Serves As A Potent Symbol For Social Control Over Their Bodies On Both The Regional And Global Level, Says Emma (12). Later She Speaks About A 2016 Case In Pretoria High School In South Africa. The Said Violence Happened Because Of School Girls Retaining Their Natural Hair Which The Authorities Considered As Messy. "The Administration Claimed That By Not Straightening Their Hair Black Female Students Were Not Conforming To The Rules Regarding "Appropriate" Presentation, And Protests Broke Out When Schoolgirls Simply Refused To Straighten Their Hair." (Twisted 13) She Has Presented The Above Case In The Book Alongwith Sharing Photographs Of The Girl (Who Faced The Situation) From Twitter.

Dabiri Wasn't Regarded Lovely Since She Was A Black Youngster With Firmly Braided Hair Living Along In An Exceedingly White, Homogenous, Socially Orthodox Ireland, But Things Began To Change In Her Mid-Twenties. Dabiri Was Not Tolerated For Her Hair And Hair Transformation Is Common In Most Black Communities, And Wearing Artificial Hair, Especially Wigs, Is Not Typically Condemned From The Same Manner It Does In Status Quo (To Quote Dabiri's Phrase) — "No, Let Me Dispense With Polite Euphemisms, I Mean "White"—Culture. (Twisted 14) Given The Wide Range Of Styles Accessible, It Is Worth Mentioning That, Apart From Maybe The Black Nationalist Era And The Subsequent Aftermath Only Some Featured Dealing With Afro Hair Texture Across The Twentieth Century So Until Lately.

Dabiri Had Her Own Time When "I Was Trying To Get As Far Away From My Own Texture As Possible." (14) But At Present Times, "I'm Much Freer And, Now That I've Embraced My Natural Texture, I'm Also Happy To Rock A Pink Body-Wave Wig, Although I'm More Likely Not To." (14) She Is Sharing Her Experiences With Hair Trials. While Dabiri Was In School, She Hid Her Natural Hair And "From Weaves, To Extensions, Jheri Curls, Curly Perms, Straight Perms, And Straighteners, My Hair Was Hidden, Misunderstood, Damaged, Broken, And Completely Unloved. It Is Hardly Surprising. I Never Saw Anybody With Hair Like Mine. Afro Hair Was— And In Many Places Still Is—Stigmatized To The Point Of Taboo." (14)

Dabiri Couldn't Articulate The Suffocating Experience During Her Erstwhile Years Of Having The Natural African Hair Which Was Stigmatized. In Twisted: The Tangled History Of Black Hair Culture, She Represents Herself As A Kind Of Experiment, "A Sideshow Freak", And Got To The Point Of Paranoia And Uncomfortable With People Looking Her As A Spectacle (15). When She Considers About What She Is Taught As The Constitution Of Attractive Hair, The Traits Of Afro Hair Stand Out Solely By Their Lack.

Straight, Shiny, Glossy, Smooth, Flowing . . . That's Certainly Not My Hair. What's My Hair Like Again? Oh Yes, Of Course. Coarse. Dry. Tough. Hard. Nappy. Frizzy. Wild. The English Language Has Bequeathed Us This List Of Pejoratives, Which Are Perceived As Adequate To Describe Afro-Textured Hair In Its Entirety. Now Don't Get Me Wrong, I Know Caucasian Hair Can Be Described As Greasy, Lank,

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Or Thin, But It Is Not Routinely Described Thus—And Can You Imagine The Horror If I Casually Referred To A White Woman's Hair In This Way, To Her Face! (Twisted 16)

Dabiri Explains That There Is A Lack Of Words To Describe The Texture Or Other Qualities Like Strength, Beauty And Versatility That Can Be Judged As A Reflection Of Afro Hair. She Also Brings A Topic Of Pivotal Importance While Explaining About Advertisement Labels On African Natural Hair Products Which She Says As A Mode Of Thinking. This Is Illustrated With Examples – “We Are Assaulted By Words Like “Defiant,” “Wild,” “Unruly,” “Unmanageable,” And “Coarse.” We Might Manage To Squeeze Out A “Cool” Or A “Funky,” But Our Hair Is Never Just “Normal.” (16) She Explains That Afro Hair Is Excluded From The Beauty Standards That Unfulfill The Criteria When Compared With Its Western Counterparts.

There Has Been An Increased Recognition That More Attention Needs To Be Paid To The Area Of Various Symbols That Are Often Alluringly Embedded In Everything From Fairy Tales To Advertising, Films, And Live Shows. This Has Become An Issue Of Great Importance Recently Due To The Surrounding Environment Which Contributes To A Compelling Story About Hair And Femininity. This Technique Has Opened Up New Challenges In The Field Where Womanhood Is Intimately Linked Up In Hair For Teenagers And Women. It Is Well-Known That For A While, Lengthy, Flowing Hair Was Considered Among The Foremost Compelling Symbols Of Femininity. However, Afro Hair Does Not Develop In This Manner; Rather, It Shoots Upward. Since Femininity Is A Cultural Endeavour, It Was Not Constructed With Black Women's Physiology In Consideration. Yet, This Is A Known Concern With The Community, Africans Are Required To Fulfil These Criteria And They Are Chastised If They Fail To Do So.

This Drive To Adhere To European Beauty Standards Is Considerably Well-Documented Problem. In The Pretoria High School Case, These Young Ladies Were Informed They Cannot Attend School Dressed Like Themselves Since They Ought To Look Tidy. Weeks Thereafter, A US Federal Jury Decided That It Was Acceptable To Terminate A Female Employee For Sporting “Unprofessional” Dreadlocks. This Is One Of The Known Challenges In This Ideology. But The Adjectives "Tidy" And "Professional" Are Indeed Extremely Manufactured, And To Label Black People's Hair As Neither Clean Nor Highly Qualified As It Comes Organically Out Our Skulls Is Immensely Exposing.

This Continues To Be An Open Problem That Affects Other Areas Of Language And Power. Emma Dabiri Explains The Political Operation Of Language In Public Sphere. These Issues Are Well Documented In Twisted By Dabiri,

“Unruly,” “Defiant,” “Unmanageable,” “Coarse.” Consider These Terms In The Context Of The Regulatory Nature Of Policies Around Our Hair. Language That Is Now Culturally Unacceptable—The Language Of The Colony Or The Plantation, The Language Once Employed To Describe Black People—Has Not Vanished; It Has Simply Shifted To Head Height. (Twisted 17)

All These Problems Are Usually Overcome By Hair-Straightening By Africans Who Have A Legacy Of Traumatic History Since Slave Trade. But Dabiri Achieves This Problem Primarily Through The Statement That “Our Hair Is The Physical Marker That Distinguishes Us From All Other Racial Groups.” (17) In Order To Deprive Africans Their Personhood, Describes Dabiri, The Hair That Emerges From Their Scalp Was Compared To Animal Wool Or Fur Rather Than Fine Natural Hair Of Europeans.

One Of The Several Modern Era's Persisting Difficulties And The True Rationale Behind Racism Persists Seems To Be That People Maintain To Propagate Conceptions Of Black Identity, That Were Established Throughout The Psychotic Time Of Western Colonial Conquest. Emma Dabiri Similarly Suggests That Our Present Knowledge About African Race Dates Back To The Ingrained Information That Western People Spread During Colonial Times. These Were Confirmed Using An Idea That The Blacks Were Culturally Inferior To Whites (From 18th Century) Developed Into Logical Prejudice (In 19th Century) Through Scientific Facts Used As Arguments To Prove “Africans” Were A Completely Unique Race. An Important Parameter To Take Into Account Is The Explanation Given By Harvard Sociologist Orlando Patterson About The Relevance Of Hair Texture As One Of The Key Traits In Defining "Blackness" And Which Is At Times Underestimated.

Hair Type Rapidly Became The Real Symbolic Badge Of Slavery, Although Like

Many Powerful Symbols, It Was Disguised—In This Case By The Linguistic Device Of Using The Term “Black”—Which Nominally Threw The Emphasis To Color. No One Who Has Grown Up In A Multiracial Society, However, Is Unaware Of The Fact That Hair Difference Is What Carries The Real Symbolic Potency. (Patterson 61)

Patterson Claims That During Slavery, Africans Were Classified As Inferior Based On Their Hair Type Rather Than Their Skin Tone. Consider This: An African Albino Is Indeed Mistaken For A Black Person Owing To Their Hair Features. Patterson's Findings Concerning Hair Are Echoed By Ayana Byrd And Lori Tharps, Who Argue That “Essentially The Hair Acted As The True Test Of Blackness.” (Byrd 17) They Explain About Black Churches To Which Participation Was Directed Through Hair Surface. In Order To Qualify For The Same, A String Was Attached To The Entrance Of The Church So That Brush Could Easily Pass Through The Hair. “If Successful, You May Proceed, Pass Go, Collect \$200 On Your Way. If, On The Other Hand, The Comb Snagged, You Needed To Get The Hell Gone; The Good Lord Jesus Didn't Want To See You Or Your Nappy Head In This Exclusive House Of Prayer.” (Dabiri Twisted 21)

Dabiri Also Mentions Examples From The Dominican Republic To Demonstrate The Fact That In Non-English-Speaking Countries Different Terms Exist That Recognize The Role That Hair Texture And Phenotype Play In Proximity To Whiteness. She Quotes Ginetta Candelario, Who In Her Work “Hair Race-Ing: Dominican Beauty Culture And Identity Production,” Examines The Role Of Hair Texture In Racial Identity On The Caribbean Island. In Dominican Culture, Looks And Hair Texture Define Admittance Into Whites And Accompanying “Benefits” Far More Than The Skin Tone. Hair Is The Primary Physiological Indicator Of Race Among Dominicans. She Also Mentions With Diagrams About Different Types Of African And Asian Hair Which Makes Them Qualify The Criteria Of Their Race.

An Important Parameter To Take Into Account Is The Use Of Hair Braiding Utilized As A Form Of Mapping. Braided Maps Functioned As A Sort Of Subterranean Railway, Although The Focus Was On To Be Remained Hidden. This Represents Purely The Effect Of Women Who Would Convert Crucial Information Into Their Hair Patterns As A Kind Of Communication For The Captives, Allowing Them To Discuss Strategies And Finally Work Their Way To Emancipation And Independence In The Palenque. During The Spanish Conquest Of Palenque, “The Hairstyle “The Mother” Is Described As An “Unequivocal Sign That Everything Was Planned” (Twist 243)

This Effect Is Ten Times Larger Than That Of A Contemporary Case That Dabiri Mentions Regarding Blue Ivy, The Famous American Child Singer Born To Popular American Musicians Of African Heritage. She Was Accused Of Not Having Her Parent's Straight Hair And A Public Petition Raised Up Called “Comb Her Hair” (The Evidence Of Hatred In 6000 More Signatories In The Petition). The Effect Was More Pronounced At Typing Blue Ivy's Name Into Search Engines Which Showed “Blue Ivy Ugly” As A Top Result (27). Rather Than Encouraging A Child Artist's Talent (9-Year-Old Grammy Award Winner), The World Accuses Her Of Her Natural Afro Hair.

As Explicit In Dabiri's Select Works, Having Natural Hair Should Not Exclude People In Involving From Public Spheres; In Addition, Natural Hair May Need Less Upkeep And May Contribute To Repertoire Of Healthy Practices. Hair Identity May Be A Genuine Obstacle To Life For Certain People, Especially When Time And Money Are Limited. Though Challenging, It May Be Necessary To Meaningfully Integrate Various Views On Hair Politics And Racial Identity, As Well As Examine The Consequences For Interventions Aimed At Black People.

A Multitude Of Evaluations Underline The Crucial Importance Of Investigating How Beliefs Important To The Person Connect To Hair Politics Correlates; However, Few Approaches Have Merged Information On How Sociocultural Attitudes And Ideologies Influence Racial Identity For Africans. If Hair Politics Is To Be

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Revolutionary In Changing Racial Identity, Culturally Competent Tactics That Address These Issues Must Be Devised.

There Is Still A Lot To Learn About How Culture And Psychological Ideas About Hair, Attractiveness, And Overall Body Image Influence Identity Of Africans. Studying Changeable Variables And The Connections Between Attitudes And Behaviour Offers A Substantial Chance To Uncover Motives For Beginning And Maintaining Hair Political Practices. Hair Political Activities Include Multilevel Techniques And Treatments That Are Deeply Relevant To The Personal Experiences Of Racial Identity. This Review Gives Some Insight Into The Link Between Hair And African Identity And Advises That Further Focus Is Needed To Address Perceptions About Beauty Norms And Hairstyle As A Barrier To Fitness. Future Study Should Look At Neglected Ways For Developing Models That Empower And Motivate People To Overcome These Obstacles.

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