

GENDER AND DIASPORIC CHALLENGE IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL PROGRESS ASPIRATION IN AFRICAN DRAMA: AN EXEGESIS OF IRENE ISOKEN ORONSAYE-SALAMI'S *SWEET REVENGE*

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Abstract : Irene Isoken Oronsaye-Salami's *Sweet Revenge* is a far-sighted literary piece which exposes critical contemporary issues such as misuse of power, female empowerment, nationalism, diasporic challenges, experience of motherhood, to mention but a few. This study displays most women's disappointment in African societies, while they are expecting their men's return from abroad as an end to their miserable condition. Therefore, the article presents the illusion and deceit as strong moving forces which can help a woman rewrite her life story, turn the situation around, and make society change its stereotypical image of female human beings. Female solidarity is according to the author, another important tool that can help women of all races to be emancipated. Furthermore, to make exploit and become a model to follow in society, this work invites people to stick to morality. In this perspective, the Postcolonial criticism and the Womanist critical approach are used as lenses through which the article examines the craftsmanship of Oronsaye-Salami and her vision of a society where men of power remain responsible, imbued with morality and wisdom. The article also underscores the importance of women's empowerment and gender complementarity, as imperative keys to social development.

Key words: diaspora, gender, morality, power, sisterhood.

Résumé : *Sweet Revenge* d'Irene Isoken Oronsaye-Salami est une œuvre littéraire qui expose des problèmes contemporains cruciaux tels que l'abus de pouvoir, l'autonomisation des femmes, le nationalisme, les défis de la diaspora, l'expérience de la maternité, pour n'en citer que ceux-là. Cette étude montre la déception de la plupart des femmes qui attendent et considèrent le retour de leurs hommes de l'étranger comme la fin de leur misère. Par conséquent, l'article présente l'illusion et la déception comme de puissantes forces motrices qui peuvent aider une femme à réécrire son histoire de vie, à renverser la situation et à faire changer dans la société l'image stéréotypée que porte la gent féminine. La solidarité féminine est, par ailleurs, selon l'auteure, un autre outil important qui aiderait toutes les femmes de toutes les races à s'émanciper. Pour faire des exploits et devenir un modèle à suivre en société, ce travail invite, par ailleurs, tout le monde à s'attacher aux valeurs morales. Dans cette perspective, la critique post-colonialiste et l'approche critique nommé 'Womanism' sont des théories à travers lesquelles l'article examine le savoir-faire d'Oronsaye-Salami et sa vision d'une société où les hommes de pouvoir restent responsables, imbus de morale et de sagesse. L'article souligne également l'importance de l'autonomisation des femmes et la complémentarité des genres comme clés impératives du développement social.

Mots-clés : diaspora, genre, moralité, pouvoir, solidarité féminine.

Introduction

Social and cultural conceptions are transmitted from generation to generation in Africa and have a great impact on the education of boys and girls, regardless of their level of education or their encounter with other cultures through their travels. This is what justifies the originality and the topicality of the subjects related to gender, because the problem has still not found solutions for some researchers. For others the change is taking place but slowly; and it is this second option that motivates this study, because even in the first works of the African writers, the woman was passive, invisible with minor roles, but the decisions and conceptions have changed with time and, many male and female authors such as Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Femi Osofisan in *Morountodun*, Ola Rotimi in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Buchi Emecheta in *Head Above Water*, Ama Ata Aidoo in *Changes* to name but a few, have decided to contribute through their writings to the change of the status of women and push them to the forefront.

In some novels like Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, for instance, the writer portrays the story of most African men and women who migrate to Europe for job sake, but, once they are there, become either pimps or prostitutes to be able to survive. Thus, the similarities here with *Sweet Revenge*, are based on the fact that characters are sharing the same settings, that is Europe and the same background Africa, which forcibly have an impact, may it be positive or negative, on their' lives; then, the deliberate attitude of men to completely change into 'liars' or 'female exploiters', leading to women's sufferings. However, the dissemblances lie in the prior objective of the male protagonist Sota's travel to England: for studies, which happened successfully, but instead of coming back home, he falls in the trap of pleasure forgetting his family. This has finally prompted his sad note at the end of the narrative, while his wife gets a rewarding and happy note, with success, as a crown of courage and endeavor of heroines.

However, the goal is far from being achieved, given that the writer does not write ex-nihilo, this work, focusing on *Sweet Revenge* of Oronsaye-Salami draws much attention to the current events that occur in African societies and often reduces the dreams of women to dust.

The aim of this article is to show how Oronsaye-Salami uses her creative didactic expertise to promote moral values that a human being must keep even if he/she migrates to another continent, or get a higher social position. The work, in addition shows the playwright's craftsmanship to encourage women's endeavor, struggle, non-discouragement and self-fulfillment, through professional life on the one hand, and the importance of female solidarity or sisterhood on the other. The article also promotes gender complementarity as undoubtedly important avenue that lead to the blooming of both men and women and, accordingly social development.

The Postcolonial criticism and Womanist critical approach are the tools used in the analysis of this study. The Postcolonial criticism, according to Hans Bertens (2001, p.202) focuses on "issues of race and ethnicity, language, gender, identity, class and above all, power." My analysis of *Sweet Revenge* in the use of Postcolonial criticism will consider the issue of gender, identity, class and power, to the extent that, the play displays diasporic life and lays emphasis on men's stereotypical conception of women in general. The Womanist approach intervenes in the study, for it helps defend women's rights and condemns any form of discrimination and ill-treatment women undergo. At the same time, it encourages men and women to work together in a complementary spirit as Alice Walker, the prominent theorist who coined the word 'Womanism' in the year 1960's, Alice Walker, defends. Her perspective as Pewissi (2017, p.48) sums up is to help fight for "a profound change that deconstructs gender discrimination." In addition, Pewissi (2019, p.51) explains that "what matters for her (Walker) is the moral in the person and the complementarities between the color, the people" For Ataféi Pewissi (2017, p.26) "(...) womanism advocates gender synergy as a remedy for enhancing development." Thus, womanist critics suggest unity, mutual respect and understanding among people for the building of a developed society.

This work will first of all focus on the presentation of gender molded in the patriarchal system, then the challenges of African men abroad and finally display the vision of the playwright for womanhood and for the building of a fair and developed society where power does not mean ruling on others but cooperating with others in pure mutual-respect.

1. Female under Male Domination in *Sweet Revenge*

Gender issues have been at the center of discussions, writings, and have been subject matter of numerous conferences and colloquies for a long time. In this 21st century, gender should not normally be liable to discussions or writings, in a critical sight; but, given that we still notice injustice, oppression, discrimination and exploitation traits in society, it becomes a must for everybody to fight against such scourges. It is sad to notice that, even in these modern times, men are still down-rating women, or having a stereotypical image of the female human being. This part displays, on the one hand, women's bitter experience due to the fact that they submissively follow the dreams and aspirations of men, relegating their own in a second position and on the second hand, depicts men's chauvinist attitude, which can be considered as a poison in society.

1.1. *Snare of Illusion: Women's Sorrowful Experience*

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010, p. 747) illusion is "a false idea or belief, especially about sb or about a situation. "Sometimes, the dream of ensuring a brighter future for the family, leads men and women to define ideas. However, once decided, initially with consent, joy, hope, finally, this dream most often ends with sorrow and regret for women. These social facts or realities are displayed in books for didactic reasons, since writers are most often committed, as Kokou Amuzu (1997, p.5) states: they "refuse to ignore the evils of society." In Oronsaye-Salami's *Sweet Revenge*, the female character Aisosa, is an educated woman working as "a consultant gynaecologist"¹ (SR, p. 21) who has to resign and take good care of the children, at the behest of her husband; for she is supposed to be getting a reasonable amount of money from the latter called Sota who decides to travel to England for "a study-leave for a PHD in International Relations" (SR, p.2).

In fact, the first evidences of illusion of Aisosa transpire in the following extract:

Aisosa: ... You left here eight years ago for a PHD abroad, with the promise that you will send me money from your salary that was paid back home. Instead of four years, you ended up spending eight years

¹Subsequent references to *Sweet Revenge* will be abbreviated as SR, followed by the page number.

and instead of \$40,000 monthly allowances you promised us, all you made available to us was \$10,000 each month... (SR, p.20).

The above statement, reveals how trapped Aisosa is; in which sad situation she is lured into by her husband, by accepting to resign from her work and submit herself to all his requirements. For, according to her own details to Sota, she says: this money must “cater for four children, one house help, your sister, pay school fees for the children, maintain the house, care for your mother, pay doctor’s and other bills”(SR, p.20). Having all these responsibilities to shoulder with a small amount of money of \$10,000 per month, is the situation most African women are faced with when their husband travel abroad. They accept the situation while having the strong hope that their “lot will improve”(SR,p.23) with the return of their men. Unfortunately, the situation becomes worse for Aisosa when her husband comes back home.

Another aspect of the issue is that women always pending the return of their diasporic husbands are full of joy and hope. They start imagining a paradise where they will be living with their children, until they notice that they were just dreaming. This is the plight of Aisosa and her children when their father Sota comes back. He complains of everything; starting from the children’s condition to the state of the house itself, the condition of the food, putting into question the culinary skills of his wife: “Aisosa, what is this? Do you call this horrible thing food?” (SR,p.19),the following extract displays more his complaints:

(...)Things are not right here. Look at how lean the children are; see the tattered clothes they are in. Yes look at the house too, bushy lawn, old shaky chairs, torn curtains, faded walls. I wonder how you live in here. This is nothing but a pig’s sty. (SR,p.20).

The contempt and insults that Aisosa receives from her husband puts her in a situation of enormous regret, for she is the one who convinces women of their area, by mobilizing them to vote for him, when he has to contest for senatorial position in his native country, Nigeria. Nosa, his friend has to reveal him the truth and reminds him the efforts of the women, particularly, his wife, to whom he should sincerely “organize a thanksgiving party to show (...) appreciation” (SR, p.24).

Most often some women whose husband travel abroad fall in adultery, but in *Sweet Revenge* Aisosa is well appreciated by the society, regarding her responsible behaviour and endeavour to survive, during the absence of her husband. Nosa, is a male character, quite responsible and different from Sota. He tries to reason his friend as he observes:

Nosa: Vote for you? ...they voted for Aisosa. Our people have deep respect for Aisosa. They admire the way she comported herself in your absence. Some other women would have abandoned their responsibility and ran off with another man. She has been a good wife and mother, to you and your children, made a lot of sacrifices and the women wanted to reward, encourage and honour her by coming out to vote for you hoping that her lot will improve from now on.

Sota: But my people asked me to return home to become a senator.

Nosa: (...)How many of them came out to vote on that day? My Friend, you must remain eternally grateful to Aisosa for this landslide victory (SR, pp.23-24).

Nosa is still trying through the above conversation to raise Aisosa to the higher position she merits, by mentioning the kind of virtuous wife she has been to his friend Sota. Apart from remaining faithful, she plays the role of doctor and caretaker of the children and Sota's mother. Finally, Sota abandons his wife, once he starts his work as a Senator, for, according to him Aisosa no longer "befit (his) new status" (SR,p.24).

Apart from Africa-based women, Europe-based women, also used to get trapped by some African men's bad attitudes. Cheryl, a white woman is an illustration of that case. She finds herself in that trap of illusion. She is the white lady Sota married off in England. Her disappointment appears when she discovers that, in fact, Sota is a married man with four children, as the following discussion testifies:

Ede: ...I hope you are aware that Dr. Sota is still legally married to Aisosa. They got married in Benin before he left for England...

Cheryl: You mean he drove her out on the street? Why would he do such a thing? ...

Ede: Are you telling me that you know nothing about this?

Cheryl: Absolutely nothing. I only heard about Aisosa today. I never even knew he had any child before.

Ede: He has four children by Aisosa, three boys and one girl. The oldest is twenty and the youngest is ten years (SR, p.62).

The archaic ideology which places women in an inferior position molded some men to the extent that they can manipulate women's minds and abuse them in a chain of lies. The whole empire of dreams Cheryl is having with Sota falls apart when she discovers the truth upon Sota's double life. She stands for all the white women, African men marry abroad, may be, just to regularize their situation or for self-pleasure.

The last group of women who also taste illusion and disappointment from a male character's bad attitude are the women who mobilize behind Aisosa for the election of Sota as senator. The following testimony of 'Power', one of the women, making report to the others of their misadventure, shows how deceitful these women have been:

Power: That was how the policeman came and arrested us charging us with disturbance of peace and trespass of private property. We sent for some politicians but they were not allowed to bail us. So my children sent us a lawyer who finally bailed us after much *wahala*. My women that was how we were detained in the cell for three days simply because we went to persuade Senator Sota Ojo to fulfill his promises to our people(SR,p.58).

The fact that Sota called them "good-for-nothing women" (SR,p.56), and even calls the police officers to take them to the cell like criminals is an evidence of most African political leaders, who most often forget the people who vote for them as well as their lofty campaign promises. Their definition of politics is quite different from what their people conceive. For Oluchi Joyce Igili (2011, p.39) "politics should serve as a forum for delegating honest and morally upright citizens to represent the electorate." However, it is just the opposite that is most often noticed by the people. This is therefore, another fight of womanist critical approach, which also disagrees and condemns any attitude that goes against moral values.

Women, no matter their race, most often fall in the trap of illusion, not because of naivety or total confidence they have in men, but for their dreams of having and offering better future to their families. And this is what happened to Aisosa and Cheryl. Aisosa's illusion of having a responsible husband abroad whose return will change her life and Cheryl's disgust of Sota when she learns the truth regarding the

marital status of Sota, are evidences of people who are snared in their own illusions. Furthermore, the women of Sota's place in Nigeria, are also victims of Sota's bad character, for they do not get the benefit of their votes.

1.2. *Male Chauvinism: a Poisoning Social Vice*

Male chauvinism is a vice noticed in *Sweet Revenge*. It is, according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010, p.900) "the belief held by some men that men are more important, intelligent, etc. than women" and simply put male chauvinism is the belief, by certain men that men are inherently superior to women. That superiority is not only conceived in their physical appearance or material possession, but in their mind. It is a question of mentality. In fact, Sota is able to manipulate both Aisosa and Cheryl for eight years, and play with their lives, just because he considers himself as the most intelligent person, who can flout women's rights as he pleases.

The first evidence of male chauvinism is the resignation of their wives from their jobs. This is the fact Nosa is displaying in the following quotation: "Sota, remember, this woman was a consultant gynaecologist when you asked her to resign her job and stay home to care for your children, she would have become the Chief Medical Director of that hospital by now... That is very cruel. Very very cruel, Sota. You better reconsider your stand." (SR,p.26). Such men, sensitive to women's ill-treatment, are evidences that some men totally condemn such irresponsible behaviours of their peers, which delay female progress. For, the attitude of Sota is nourished and guided by the patriarchal system and its upbringing which mold his life and mentality, as Baydallaye Kane (2008, p.14) confirms in the following statement: "(...) patriarchal system ... marginalizes women by placing them outside of social, economic, and political structures... making believe that the role of the latter is to serve as caregivers (wives or mothers) staying away from public affairs."

Women abuse is another articulation of male chauvinism. In the development of the plot, Sota shows his chauvinistic manner with the women who mobilize their sisters to vote for him. He is capable of insulting these elders as "good-for-nothing

women'' (SR, p.56), as mentioned earlier. One of the female characters called Power replies:

Sota, have you lost your mind? Even if you have no respect for us because we are women, won't you respect the grey hair on our heads? Don't forget you represent our interest at the National Assembly'' (SR,p.56).

In the reply of Power, it is obvious that, men do not usually have respect for women, because they consider themselves as superior to the latter, but the women are only requesting for respect regarding their old age. Apart from being chauvinistic, he does not also have any deference to elders, which is a very important virtue in African environment.

Another illustration of male chauvinism is man's excessive pride. This occurs when he does wrong and refuses to acknowledge his misdeed. He does harm to women and refuses to apologize out of overestimation of himself. In phallogocentric societies men are believed to be stronger and higher than women. So, a man should not ask for forgiveness in his social dealing with a woman. In the corpus, this is the true character of Sota. In fact, when, Cheryl discovers the existence of Aisosa, the legal wife of Sota, she confronts the latter. The fact that he does not apologize and tries to justify his misdeed saying that: "I am an African. My father married six wives. Every father prays for his child to perform better than himself. Polygamy is no crime in Africa'' (SR,p.68), is a proof that some men are egocentric to the extent that they do not measure the degree of suffering they inflict on women with their lies or double life. Sota plays with the mentality of both a black and a white woman, because all these men who think they are superior to women are self-centered, egocentric and irresponsible persons. For, they forget that it is the rule of gender complementarity which works and enhances development as womanist approach, on the analysis of Pewissi (2017, p.26), invites people to consider "gender synergy as a remedy for enhancing development'' meaning that for appropriate development, men and women must work together and consider each other as true partners of progress.

2. Life 'Beyond the Horizon' and its Implications: an illustration in *Sweet Revenge*

The ambition of every human being is to have a better life. In this quest for the best, most African people find themselves in foreign continents, or foreign countries, either to further studies or to look directly for jobs. Fortunately for some, the dream becomes reality. For others, it is pure regrets. Oronsaye-Salami approaches the issue of immigration in a different angle where some African men, though the objective of their travel is clearly drawn, finally fall in temptation trap which diverts their preconceived motives or directives of migration. This part is dealing with the duplicity of some African male immigrants and the challenges they meet regarding their homecoming.

2.1. *The Duplicity of some African Male Immigrants*

Every human being aspires to happiness and bright future. This vision for better future urge some of African men to go to Europe. This kind of migration is not bad in itself for it is a general belief that Bathie Samb (2006, p.121) raises: "Happiness and the quest for it are so central in man's life that, as a rule, no aspiration whatsoever can be stronger in the individual than a yearning for a blissful life." However, once this blissful life is gained, it must be shared among the family members, with the first on the list: the wife and children.

However, in *Sweet Revenge*, the playwright exposes the story of confusion of a male character Sota. Though, he is a married man with children in his country, decides to travel to London for four years to further his studies and get a "PHD in International Relations" (SR, p.2). But, the confusion of every reader or audience lies where he does not fly back to his country when he finally graduates, and settles abroad for four more years, getting married to another woman, to whom he hides his true matrimonial status. His immoral mentality and behaviour, made him a culprit before his people, for he recognizes consciously his misdeed: "I have fabricated tales after tales each day to explain my prolonged stay here in England. Now I have taken up a job and settled down comfortably in London. Comfortably, yes, comfortably" (SR, p.2). Sota is the typical African men who forget about their families once abroad and forge to

themselves another life. They enjoy with other partners who are also victims just like their traditional wives in Africa. He mentions the word 'comfortably' meaning that he has a very blissful life, while his family (wife, children, mother) are in total suffering and destitution, though he assures his wife and makes the following promise: "You stay back to take care of our children while I go in search of the Golden Fleece" (SR, p.2).

Sota reflects all the African men who become liars and change once they are go abroad, far from their families. Therefore, no matter the reason of their change, their wives or children should not suffer from it.

2.2. *The Challenges of Homecoming*

Coming home after many years spent abroad always has impacts and implications on the life of the person who traveled and those around them. In *Sweet Revenge*, Sota embarks in a fixed-term trip; for four years of study. But, later he takes pleasure to stay in England; which is never the plan initially made with his wife. Therefore, the first challenge he meets is not even the duty to come back to see his family, but rather the appeal from his local government, to contest for senatorial position, as they clearly state in the following quotation:

The Senatorial seat has been zoned to our local government. You are our choice for this position, the best suited for it. You have always written to us about the need for good governance... return home to us immediately. You belong here. (SR, p.3)

Having accepted to carry this heavy political responsibility, he faces a second challenge which consists in leaving his white wife Cheryl whom he married in London, as the following conversation testifies:

Cheryl: What? Invited you home to contest for a political position? ...

Sota: It is not an issue.

Cheryl: Yes, for you it isn't. But for me it is a real big issue. Our coming together was based on the fact that you promised never to return to your country but to make Britain your home.

Sota: I have not changed my mind about that at all. ... The senatorial position is at least a four-year tenure, but can extend to eight years or more if they desire.

Cheryl: Yes, eight short years. Time flies you know. You think I will be here waiting for you? (SR, pp.5-6).

Cheryl considers his husband's travel to his country as a very big issue, for he promises to never go back again to his people, what is quite absurd to believe.

Knowing that "a good politician must first be a good husband and father". (SR, p.18), Cheryl she insists that Sota should assist the birth of their baby, for she is pregnant, Sota finds himself in a big dilemma, but finally he travels to Nigeria and responds to his patriotic call. This is where the diasporic challenge lies.

Diapora is according to Mamadou Kandji (2008, p.182) "l'ensemble des fils d'Afrique qui ont quitté l'Afrique-mère et qui continuent d'en garder une certaine mémoire." / All of the sons of Africa who left the Africa-mother and who continue to keep a certain memory of her². This definition shows the image of a mother and a son, meaning that, it is quite impossible to forget one's roots or origin. It is the spirit that inhabits Sota, who has to respond to his people's appeal.

Once in Nigeria, unlike any other person who, after eight years must be happy to meet his family members, Sota is in pure disgust before the plight of his wife and children. Instead of apologizing for his irresponsible life, he rather considers this situation as a big challenge, and leaves the house. The illustration of his complaints about the house, food, children, is revealed in the following quotation:

Aisosa: Since you arrived all you do around here is to condemn and complain about virtually everything. It has become so difficult for anybody to please you. You are a different person from the Sota who left here some eight years ago. You are not satisfied with anything, no matter how hard we try. Please show some appreciation for our efforts. Your attitude scares the children away from you. SR,p.19).

Given that Sota has a pre-conceived idea about his relationship with Aisosa, he is just finding ways to leave the house. He does not make any effort to change his family's condition. He stands for the typical African men who completely change and forget as Bathie Samb (2006, p.137) posits, that "reciprocal support is necessary for a relation to

²My own translation

be fertile. "A relation cannot have a happy end if both partners do not support each other morally, materially and financially.

The biggest challenge of some politicians is how to keep their promises. Sota is one of them, who lacks good strategies of leadership to handle the people who vote for him; most of whom are women. Just like many African men, who do not value female potentials, he falls in the trap of arrogance, which led to his defeat. His lack of humility and respect make his homecoming a big challenge ended by a painful replacement, for the people suggest his wife Aisosa to replace him at the senate.

The problem of most 'been-to', those who have gone abroad, is first of all the quest for a better life, once they reach such a comfortable ceiling of life, some totally forget about the fundamental moral values. This is where the postcolonial theory intervenes with the issue of identity, for African people have a particular stand for moral values, which is part of their identity.

3. The vision of Oronsaye-Salami for Social Progress

The vision of Oronsaye-Salami is similar to most African writers' new consideration of female potentials. Like Ola Rotimi in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, the former, has suggested female leadership or female participation in decision making positions, not as peripheral or assistants but leaders. What these ideologies boil down to, is to invite society to reconsider women in other aspects of life, apart from the archetypical framework in which they are. Female empowerment, solidarity and morality promotion are the main focus of this part of the study.

3.1. Female Empowerment and the Aesthetics of Sisterhood in *Sweet Revenge*

Living in a male-centered society where women are always parked in the peripheral margin, is a big challenge for not only women but also men. It is in this context that the President of France chaired a meeting in Paris on 1st July, 2021, during which a major emphasis was laid on ways to achieve 'gender equality and all women

and girls' human rights." (*Togo-presse*, N° 11073, 2021, p.14). This means that female promotion is a current and original matter which is still looking for tangible solutions.

In this same vein, Oronsaye-Salami, in *Sweet Revenge*, is promoting female empowerment through the role given to female characters. They have reversed their situation at the end of the narrative. In fact Aisosa is the female protagonist who made it. From a housewife, who abandons her professional work to take care of her family, the latter, finally resumes her work and becomes a "Senate President a second time in Nigeria", which is "a great achievement" (SR,p.96). At the same time, she makes good performance in her medical career regarding the research of a drug on HIV mother to child transmission, and the top of her exploit is that " the drug will be called Aisosaprin" (SR,p.96), bearing somehow her name. This is where Ede, uses the title of the play, which much fit Aisosa's life, saying "yes, this is sweet revenge" (SR, p.) over her husband, who maltreated her.

It is important to underscore that nowadays, some women know their prerogatives and some of the conventions protecting women's rights. Cheryl, on her side, proves her empowerment first by revealing her knowledge of regulations on women's rights to Sota, when she discovers his duplicity. According to her, he violates the CEDAW Convention to which his country is signatory: " (...) you've violated the CEDAW convention" (SR,p.68). CEDAW is "

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (which) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It entered into force as an international treaty on 3rd September 1981.
(<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>, retrieved on July 28, 2021 at 5pm).

The playwright through Cheryl, is encouraging girls' formal education, and mastery of conventions and laws concerning the defense of women's rights. She is able to free herself from poisonous marital life where the man is hiding under "the cloak of culture" (SR, p.68) to cheat on two women.

The ideology of the playwright is not to down-rate men, but to let society know that women are human beings with desires, expectations and cognitive potentials like men. To shed their thoughts, writers try to permeate society through the creation of

strong, dynamic, intellectual and economically independent women. They are not only in novels and films, but in real societies. Thus, the role of feminists, as Koutchoukalo Tchassim (2018, p.46) has so well underscored, is “faire progresser les femmes dans leurs contexte social, politique et économique, mais également dans la perception qu’elles ont d’elles-memes” /to let women make progress in their social, political and economic context, but also in their perception of themselves³. Women should see themselves as humans with much competence like men to make exploit in every sphere of life.

On another side, Florence Abena Dolphyne (1991, p.44) prescribes two avenues that can facilitate women’s empowerment: “Education and professional training on the one hand, and economic prosperity on the other,” for, education opens doors to jobs and offers economic independence, which makes of a woman an emancipated and fulfilled person.

Sisterhood is a very important attitude noticed in the play under study. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2010, p.1388), sisterhood is “the close loyal relationship between women who share ideas and aims.” The sisterhood aspect in this study transpires when the playwright allows Aisosa to accept to keep the child of Cheryl (the white wife of Sota), for she is conscious of the fact that Sota plays with both of them. The following conversation illustrates it:

Cheryl: I have a two and a half year old daughter, Rieme; I would appreciate it if you can take care of her for me. I want to move with my life without any memory of Sota and his deceit. (SR,p.64)

Suggesting to give her money, Aisosa demonstrates, for a second time, her pure heart of fraternity and ‘loyal relationship’ and rejects the offer saying: “Thanks, Cheryl.... I have just got a job at the medical Research Institute. I have a handsome grant; our overseas donor and the government pay me. That is more than enough to take care of the children and me, including your daughter” (*Ibid.*).

³*My own translation*

In addition, it is important to note that having a job, has contributed to Aisosa's self-assertion. The playwright is stressing, then, the relevance of ladies' education as underscored so far, which could in the future help them to get jobs that will allow them to be self-fulfilled and autonomous, in the sense that they can in turn propose their help to those in need, beginning with their peers, for, as Tchassim (2018, p.159) opines: "Les femmes ... doivent se soutenir"/Women ... must support each other⁴. This is the reason why Buchi Emecheta is advising during an interview conducted by Adeola James (1990,p.44) "the African girls... (to) make sure they have a university education before they get married", for, education is "the key to everything" according to Ama Ata Aidoo in the same interview of Adeola James (1990,p.11). These feminists are committed for women's progress and social development as Oronsaye-Salami, though they are from different generations.

Furthermore, the literary craftsmanship of the playwright's diction is worth to be considered. She lets her female characters call each other "sisters" (SR,p.66) and "sister" (SR, p.71), to show that human relations should transcend races, ethnic groups or religion boundaries. The mother-in-law of Aisosa who can back up his son Sota in every situation, even if her son mishaves as most mothers could do, continue to preserve a strong relationship with Aisosa, as Sota himself confirms: "My mother? my mother and Aisosa are best of friends.... She spends most of her time with Aisosa" (SR, p. 91). The important point to note here concerns the fact that, women do not show their sisterhood or solidarity for the sake of female solidarity; they are rather focused on righteousness.

Women's solidarity and synergy of action are revealed during the election of Sota at the senatorial position. This sisterhood mindset is testified in the following conversation:

Nosa: (...) Aisosa and Ede mobilized the entire women of our senatorial zone and they responded in solidarity.

Sota: That's true. I was overwhelmed when I saw these women come out in their thousands to vote for me...

Nosa: Vote for you? No they didn't vote for you, they voted for Aisosa. (SR, p.23)

⁴*My own translation*

The entire women of their zone vote for Sota, for the sake of the sisterly relationship that exist between them and Aisosa, Sota's wife. This is a proof of their unity and understanding of sisterhood, a way to put an end to the miserable life of their sister.

In view of the suffering and disillusionment of female characters like Aisosa and Cheryl, they could not have overcome and found back their joy without the support and sisterhood of other women. It is in this perspective that Daouda Loum (2008, p.135) declares: "like motherhood, friendship, sisterhood and solidarity make life bearable for the women... Moreover, they prevent the frustrated women from bursting out their anger or from taking inopportune decisions." It is very important to note that, without human support and understanding, an individual can really go psychologically adrift and lose all confidence in his or her potentials.

In the progression of the narrative, the same women led by Power and Show Dem, both female characters have decided to convince Aisosa to take up the place of Sota at the senate, when he misbehaved. Show dem says: " We know, dis time na woman we want. So make you go prepare o" (SR, p.81). This choice is not made at random. The playwright is promoting female leadership by making the women and their party members, being convinced of Aisosa's capabilities to represent her people's interest as stressed in the following message addressed to Aisosa:

Show Dem: (...) You see we have no other person who is competent enough to represent us at the Senate. You are the most appropriate person. See all your recent achievements, with such feats, when you talk on the floor of the Senate men are bound to stop and listen... (SR, pp.80-81).

Women are now conscious of their own potentials that can make them have a room in men's world. According to the narrative, it is obvious that nobody can value women if they do not support and promote themselves first.

3.2. *Morality, Unquestionable Tool for Progress in Sweet Revenge*

Every human society places morality at the center of its way of life, for it guides people on the good and bad and shows the right and wrong as far as behaviour and

choices are concerned. It is in this same perspective that Eldred Ibidem Green (2008, p.273) quotes David Little and Summer B.Twiss who assume that

morality "functions" to guide the conduct of persons and human groups ... for regulating behavior'. ... having to do, in an important sense with relational action, that is, with the mutually interacting and impinging conduct of persons and groups.

The main goal of morality is to keep a better relationship with people. In this study, the Playwright's creation of a male character, who graduates from abroad, and becomes a senator, with a sad note is a very important lesson to note.

Sota, furthermore, fails to show appreciation to the other human beings who propel him to a higher position, and is able to even characterize them as "good-for-nothing" (SR, p.56) people. It is in this vein that Ataféï Pewissi instructs his readership to abide to peace and mutual consideration notions in his book *Mon projet de PAIX en 100 maximes*, when he says: " Si mon style de vie n' est pas source de chagrin pour autrui, je suis bâtisseur de paix" (2021, p.39) /If my lifestyle is not a source of sorrow to others, I am a builder of peace⁵,for, the builders of peace are people who sow joy in their surroundings, who consider the smallest person of their community, who shares the little they have and who do not frustrate their neighborhood. Sota, in his attitude, does not only hurt his wife and children, but his entourage and electorate as well. This is what prompted his replacement at the National Assembly as soon as possible. He ignores that one cannot build anything alone and must value every person in society, as Pewissi (2021, p.41) reminds so well:

Savoir que je ne peux pas tout faire tout seul et donc que je suis un maillon de la chaîne sociétale valorise l'autre en matière de mise en commun des talents constitue une preuve que nous cultivons la paix. /

Knowing that I cannot do everything alone and therefore, that I am a link in the societal chain, enhances the other in terms of pooling talents and constitutes a proof that we cultivate peace. ⁶

The notion of morality comprises mutual respect, humility and the living together norms. The evidence lies in the motivation of people to vote Sota, not because they

⁵My own translation

⁶My own translation

need a representative at the senate only, but they have also appreciated the behaviour of Aisosa, as Nosa recalls:

Our people have deep respect for Aisosa. They admire the way she comported herself in your absence. Some other women would have abandoned their responsibility and ran off with another man, She ... made a lot of sacrifices and the women wanted to reward, encourage and honour her by coming out to vote for you hoping that her lot will improve from now on (SR, p.23).

Though Sota has been abroad for eight years, society keeps an eye on his wife's moral life, meaning that, morality means a lot in the African context.

It is important to note that people do not only trust and vote for candidates in politics basing on their intellectual abilities and competences, but, they value much the moralistic aspect of the candidate life. This is the reason why Sota is dismissed by his party members when he fails to show respect to his electorate and starts enjoying life without considering his people's interest as the female character named Power recalls :“(...) we have a constitutional right to recall anyone we feel is not representing our concern at the National Assembly. Politicians just have to learn that their job is to represent their people's interest and not to go there and represent their personal interest” (SR, p.82). The playwright in this extract, through Power is condemning those who go to politics for self-enrichment and in the following quotation, Tchassim (2008, p.88) stands for morality in society when she considers the fact of caring for others and being generous as the golden rule of morality: “(...) s'intresser à autrui et se dévouer à lui est la règle idéale de la moralité” /to be interested in others and to devote oneself to them is the ideal rule of morality.⁷

Balancing power and humility is a powerful weapon for success. In the play under study, Sota gets a sad note because of his pride and self-centered attitude. Even after having lost everything, and being in a pathetic situation, he still finds it difficult to get rid of his arrogance and ask for forgiveness from his wife Aisosa in order to resume their relationship and get help. On the advice of his friends, he says: (...) Me?

⁷*My own translation*

To beg a woman to accept me back? God forbid" (SR, p.92). He even adds later: "I will rather die than accept assistance from Aisosa" (SR, p.93). Morality is also synonym of humility. Unfortunately, pride hinders many men to ask for women's assistance, for society has molded them to always be providers, winners and leaders.

The success of Aisosa is an evidence that morality is a powerful tool that any human being must wear like a jewel. It propels an individual to a position where his/her competence or potentialities only cannot help. Power without moral life does not build an equitable, prosperous and lasting society.

Conclusion

This study has shown Irene Isoken Oronsaye-Salami's creative craftsmanship to display some societal issues related to gender, like the fate of most African women who always find themselves in pure illusion and deceit while expecting the return of their husbands who travel abroad. It also displays the reasons of women's plights which most of the time have their source in patriarchal system, leading some men's lives. Another important aspect of the work lies in the challenges of home coming of most people who migrate; for it reveals the true nature of their lives; and for those who aspire to politics, their social vision.

To have a well-balanced society, this work calls upon gender complementarity that is of a paramount importance, for it establishes a perfect harmony of progress in the society. This study condemns all the men who forget about their families (wife, children, mother, etc.) once they travel abroad and the worst, founds another family, with new dreams and ambitions.

This article also succeeds in revealing that women should fight for their destiny and must be economically independent. Women must revitalize their self-esteem and should not abandon their desires, dreams and visions for the sake of pleasing a man. For, society needs their full participation for its better construction. In this perspective Dolphyne (1991, p. 43) stresses: "Marriage and child-bearing do not mean an interruption in a woman's career." As an intellectual woman, she posits that nothing

should hinder women's self-fulfillment or emancipation. Women should learn how to reconcile marital and professional life for the sake of their families.

Oronsaye-Salami is prescribing the sense of sisterhood/female solidarity in this modern time, for it is a channel that boosts the female protagonist, Aisosa,'s morale to resume her work, and furthermore have access to the post of senator, and be elected two times. The work promotes, on top of what is mentioned in the above, morality of power, meaning that any person who occupies a leadership position should stick to moral values for his own good and ensure social progress.

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