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Shifting Vigour: Deconstructing Dichotomies In Anne Tanyi Tang's Dramaturgy

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Abstract: Colonialism did not limit itself to the physical annexation of other lands, it was also characterized by the exportation to her colonies of the British culture and ideologies. The consequence of this was the exportation of her patriarchal culture to her colonies. Many of the regions which they colonized were themselves patriarchal .This implies that indigenous patriarchy was rather consolidated with the advent of British colonization. This confirms the fact that the colonized woman was doubly colonized. Her feminine status which had subjugated her was further subjugated under colonial rule. While the situation of the European woman was different partly because she was struggling against the patriarchal nature of their society alone, for the colonized woman, she struggled first against patriarchy and secondly against colonial domination. In the colonial days, subjects that were taught to the girls were different to those that were taught to the boys. The boys were trained to, in future, occupy lower positions in the administration and the girls were trained to be essentially good wives and mothers. Their continuous domination, disenfranchisement and oppression are in varied ways similar to the domination of the colonized by the colonizer. However, this trend has changed over time. Women have also become aware and conscious of their position and have therefore engineered a shift in the perception of things thus bridging the gap that had hitherto pushed them to the margin. This is the bone of contention in this paper. The feminist postcolonial theory will be employed in this analysis.

Key words: Gender, deconstruction, dichotomies, empowerment, margin.

Introduction

Colonialism was at its peak during the Victorian period in England and this was marked particularly by the domestication of the woman. She was expected to withdraw from public life. Her space was



thus the domestic and her career was limited to the confines of this space. Talking about the place of the woman, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (1994:2) argue that “in patriarchal societies the domestic was the place of women, while the public realm of culture, politics, and the economy was seen as the sphere for the men.” This implies that great limitations were placed on the woman. As indicated earlier, colonialism did not limit itself to the physical annexation of other lands. It was also characterized by the exportation to her colonies of the British culture and ideologies. The consequence of this was the exportation of her patriarchal stance to her colonies. Many of the regions which they colonized were themselves patriarchal. This would mean that with the advent of British colonization, indigenous patriarchy was rather consolidated. This confirms the fact that the colonized woman was actually doubly colonized, mistreated and under looked. In line with this, Spender Dale and Kramarae Chris (2004:190), underscore that:

The condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manner of nations. Among rude people the women are generally degraded, among civilized people they are exalted...Relations between men and women in the colonized countries were considered symptomatic of degeneration. Colonized men were said to be brutal to women. (Spender and Kramarae 190)

There was therefore a collusion of forces (colonial and patriarchal) to dominate the woman. In the colonial days, the girls received a different educational orientation as opposed to the boys. The boys were trained to in future occupy lower positions in the administration and the girls were trained to be essentially good wives and mothers. Their continuous domination, disenfranchisement and oppression are in varied ways similar to the domination of the colonized by the colonizer. These women seem to constitute the colonies of the men. This explains why feminist discourse is more and more occupying an important position in postcolonial criticism. In connection to this, Bill Ashcroft et al (2005:233) underline that:

In many different societies, women, like colonized subjects, have been relegated to the position of “other”, ‘colonized’ by various forms of patriarchal domination. They thus share with colonized races and culture an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression. It is not surprising therefore that the history and concerns of feminist theory



have paralleled developments in postcolonial theory .Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant. (Ashcroft et al 233)

This paper seeks to demonstrate the ways patriarchy has colluded with colonialism in the suppression and oppression of the women and how they have seriously engaged in a struggle to reconstruct their identity in a way to deconstruct the dichotomies or the gap that exists between them. It further establishes a universal canvas of patriarchy, in order to show how this problem is a historical stumbling block to women's progress in most cultures, while justifying the war which women wage against this menace. However, this study argues that the success of women's struggle against patriarchy will be possible if women take the initiative and explore specific strategies to empower themselves socially, politically and economically.

Theoretical Base and Patriarchal Stance

The idea of female domination and empowerment continues to be a burning issue in the postcolonial world. Cultural taboos and societal constructs continue to perpetuate the identification and degradation of the female gender. This study therefore dwells on how women are continuously oppressed by their male or female counterpart and more especially on the strategies they have put in place to reconstruct their identity in Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa and Other Plays*. These plays throw a critique on the issue of female roles which have been mortgaged by societal discourses as well as cultural biases which have left them at the unpleasant side of the societal fence. Tang blends simple day to day communal life in the Bayang community to expose incessant predicaments which some women go through because of their gender as women rather than what they can give. However, even what they attempt to give becomes an offence not because it cannot be understood as 'good' or 'normal', but because society has refused to understand it as such. Informed by post-colonial and feminist theories, this paper as announced earlier harbours not only a reading of this text with regards to politics of domination and empowerment but also to re-examine and if possible re-validate a feminist critical spectrum in Tang's dramaturgy.

In *Ewa*, Tang informs us of the difficulty which the young protagonist encounters in the house where she lives with her mother and her grandmother Granny. The playwright exposes the struggle which opposes both daughter and mother. This is perceived in Ewa's words thus:



Pepper in my eyes and in my ears. Pepper everywhere. Pepper all over my body. Granny, please open the door. Granny, can I get out of this room? Granny, give me water. The pepper is too hot. Just a glass of water will help. Granny, the pepper is killing me. I can't open my eyes. Granny, please help, I will die. (7)

This excerpt, presents a scene in which Ewa, the protagonist, has been locked up in a room. She has been imprisoned by her own mother. The way in which she cries for help, shows the extent to which she is in agony and anguish. She is pleading with her grandmother to be liberated. Paradoxically, Ewa's mother is responsible for her imprisonment. This has been done without any pity or mercy the reason being that she has grudges against her biological father. Female domination within the play could partly be blamed on the fact that the grandmother has failed in her duty as a mother and this has been emulated negatively by her daughter. Granny is unable to prevent Nyango from locking up Ewa. Instead, she tries to save her out of the room with much difficulty and sincere cowardice. This is presented thus:

Granny: Your mum has locked the door and has taken the keys away.

Ewa: Please Granny, do something. I am dying.

Granny: Can you come out through the window?

Ewa: I can't open my eyes. The pepper is too hot. (7)

Granny's intention here is to help her granddaughter out of the inferno in which she finds herself, but her advanced age does not permit her to do what she might have done if she were younger. This is reminiscent of the fact that most women at an advanced age certainly due to their biological composition cannot carryout tasks which they used to carry on in their youthful ages. It is for this reason that their authority is questioned by their daughters who used to fear, respect and obey them. From a similar perspective, in *Ewa*, the idea of female domination is also seen in Nyango's behaviour towards her mother, Granny for whom she has no respect. He considers her as a house help. Granny's authority towards her daughter is plagued with doubt and fear. Her responses to her daughter's demands and orders are presented thus:

Nyango: The idiot has stopped crying. She will learn a lesson today. From now on, she will learn to eat only after my children have eaten to their satisfaction (...). What are you staring



at? Have you peeled the cocoyams? (No response). I am asking you. Have you peeled the cocoyams?

Granny: No

Nyango: Why not? Do you want my children to starve? Tell the fool to throw away the dirt and to pluck cocoyam leaves to wrap the ekpang. I am thirsty. I will be back soon. (8)

Nyango has no respect for her mother. She treats her like an outcast. This is realized when she more often questions her without any filial concern. She gives her instructions and gives her assignments with the most awkward behaviour which a daughter should in normal circumstances not put in the face of her mother. Nyango's presence epitomises female domination. Her method of imposing her dominance and authority on both her daughter and mother is by shouting and physical brutality. Her presence is always characterised by scolding and the infliction of pain. The hostile encounter between mother, daughter and grandmother is noted thus:

Nyango: (Shouting at the top of her voice). Ewa, Ewa. Where is the idiot? Ewa.

Ewa: Mami, i am coming.

Nyango: Where were you when i was shouting at the top of my voice?

Ewa: You ask me to throw away the dirt and harvest cocoyam leaves for ekpang

Nyango: And how long was that supposed to take? (Ewa remains quiet) answer the question, idiot (she picks up a piece of wood from the fire and throws it at Ewa. The wood misses Ewa's eye. Ewa sits behind the house and sobs). Fool. No wonder my husband hated you so profoundly... (9)

As evident above, there is no place for love in this relationship between daughter and mother. Nyango's oppressive nature is exposed here. She insults Ewa and even threatens her life with logs of wood. The domineering attitudes that are meted on Ewa are not only done verbally but the physical assaults push Ewa regretting and agonising the predicaments that have befallen her. This treatment has become a pertinent issue to the extent that Nyango justifies her reason for her oppressive attitude towards Ewa. This was developed when she got pregnant. She even notes that even before giving birth, she had nurtured hatred for her unborn baby, under the influence of her husband. This is recounted thus:



Nyango: Fool.No wonder my husband hated you son profoundly. He abandoned me throughout the pregnancy and went out for merrymaking trip with my mate when I was in labour. I almost died in childbirth. Even in his sick bed, he chased you like a cat chasing a rat, and advised that you should not be given education beyond primary school level. In order to win back his love, I had to send you home to my mother. I hate you. (9)

Nyango's behaviour is influenced by the patriarchal consideration in some traditional African settings that believe that the birth of a girl child within the household is a curse rather than a blessing to the family. This falls in line with Abhinandan Malas's view in "Gender Politics and Women: A Reading of Alexander Pope's The Rape of the Lock" that:

it is obvious that women along with their frivolities are more highlighted than the men thus becoming an uneven victim of soft, though serious, gender politics, and social ethics and norms play a huge role in motivating this discourse against these aristocratic women. (Mishra 92)

This explains why Ewa is maltreated and humiliated. Granny notes that Nyango treats Ewa like an Orphan. Her attitude may have contributed to the deterioration of moral codes and the degeneration of her mother's behaviour. This is further compounded by the fact that Nyango's hatred for her child is influenced by the negative consideration her late husband had for Ewa. Ewa is treated in the most dehumanising way. This is further sustained by Rosalyn Mutia (2009:154) in "Because of Men: A feminist interpretation of Dipoko's *Because of Women*" when she underlines that:"Woman because of the lack of education and therefore of the lack of an individualised means of subsistence, totally depends on the men of her region for existence". The fact that Ewa is not only refused access to education but is equally refused any filial love from her own parents shows the extent to which she has been degraded and fragmented. Pertaining to Nyango's behaviour,one is tempted to ask two questions: why should Nyango be influenced by her late husband to oppress and subjugate her own daughter?. Is female behaviour in our contemporary society influenced by patriarchal taboos to the extent of maintaining posthumous taboos?

Furthermore, in *Ewa and Other Plays*, the creation myths are biased and male in the sense that the woman has undergone domination even in allegorical settings. Granny affirms this thus:

Granny: Alright... once upon a time, there lived a pregnant woman who went to the forest to pick mangoes. While in the forest,... she gave birth to twins; boy and girl. Are you listening?

Ewa: I am all ears

Granny: In those days, twins were not accepted in the community. Thus, the woman had to choose between the boy and the girl. The twins were mysterious, so they could speak. The boy told the mother that the girl belongs to another family because when she reaches puberty, she will marry and that will be the end. He advised the mother to take him... in the end; the mother chose the boy and left the girl in the forest. The girl lamented. A hawk which had been watching the scene took the girl and brought her up in a fairy land. (11)

The story recounted by Granny is reminiscent of the fact that even the most important traditional and African myths are nurtured with societal and patriarchal discourses which relegate the female gender. When Granny makes use of the phrase in those days we might be tempted to look at the allegory as one which has stopped being practised in our contemporary societies. This is still farfetched because the presences of girl children continue to be evaluated from the perspective of gender roles they play in society. It is noted here that the only thing capable of giving respect to the girl children in the story is the hawk, which decides to take care of her after she is rejected by her mother. The hawk's role here, it could be said, is evil. The hawk will definitely harm the child. Considerably, Ewa's predicament becomes an issue of mockery from her mates who incessantly mock at her but retreat their mockery and instead direct their scorn to Nyango who maltreats her. This is seen in the discussion between Mary, Alice and Mariana. This is underscored thus:

Mary: Poor Ewa, she is very ill but the mother takes no notice of her illness.

Alice: She will be delighted if Ewa drops dead.

Mariana: No, she won't be delighted because she will have to look for another slave. (15)

The dialogue between the girls affirms the fact that Ewa is not only treated poorly but dehumanised. Her physical composition is described as frail due to the excess human labour which she carries on like a slave. As compared to other girls who go to the stream once daily to fetch water, Ewa goes to the stream twice a day. It is with regards to this that she is nicknamed Morah, a slave.

Alice: Morah, where are you?



Mariana: The slave has already been to the stream twice to fetch water. (15)

Ewa's domination is re-enforced by her mother Nyango who has succeeded in nicknaming her Ewa. She accuses Ewa of being responsible for accepting such a name, completely refuting the idea that she, Nyango is the cause of all these. She rather inflicts more pain on Ewa. To further reveal her oppressive attitude, Nyango exposes her nagging attitude thus:

Nyango: (Meets Ewa who is washing dishes and pots behind the kitchen). Follow me to my bedroom now. (She has a long cane in her hand. Ewa follows her bedroom). Sit on the floor. Now tell me everything. Don't hide anything from me. Since when did the girls start calling you Morah, slave?

Ewa: long time ago I can't remember when.

Nyango: You can't remember when? You are a fool. (Beats her with the cane). (18)

Here, more accusation and pain is inflicted on Ewa because she has been called Morah, (slave) by the other girls. Nyango expects that Ewa should defend herself by not accepting such a nickname from her mates because she understands that the insults are directed to her. Nyango's ambivalent attitude here equates her ignorance towards what she actually wants. She treats Ewa unfairly and wants the community to keep a deaf ear and a blind eye on her atrocities. Nyango's attempt to report the matter to the chief instead belittles and humiliates her more.

Nyango: My daughter is not Morah and she is not a slave

Chief: Then treat her well and the girls will stop calling her Morah, slave.

Nyango: You have taken sides.

Chief: I haven't. Have you seen any woman in this village who treats her child in the same way as you treat Ewa? If you don't want to disgrace yourself, leave this place before you attract a crowd. (5)

Nyango's complaint to the chief is meaningless as she is made to understand that she is the only person to be blamed on the consideration and pejorative appellations thrown upon Ewa. This is paradoxical for this is reaffirmed with the fact that the chief is beforehand aware of the ill-treatment Ewa is facing in the claws of her mother. But the authority of the chief is questionable and to a greater extent ambivalent in the sense that he is aware of the dehumanising treatment and the



oppressive nature Ewa is subjugated to. He however does nothing to stop this although he is the highest authority in the community. It could be concluded that it is the chief's patriarchal status which cannot allow him to take a firm decision on Ewa's fate. He is the custodian of tradition. It is understood that their tradition is a patriarchal one and so he does nothing about Ewa's problem but dismisses Nyango on the claim that he does not want her to attract the crowd. Such an escapist attitude is predominant in the contemporary society.

Moreover, female domination is further heightened when parents have to choose husbands for their girl children. This reveals that the rights of the children have been trampled upon. Ewa's marriage is imposed by her stepfather and her mother. She is quite brilliant but her father does nothing to send her to secondary school. Granny's intention is to send Ewa to school but the decision depends on Tiku and Ewa's stepfather. This is underscored in the following dialogue thus:

Tiku: Everyone knows that Ewa is a very intelligent girl. But, it's Nyango and I who know what is best for her. We have decided that she should marry. We have already chosen a husband for her. We are merely waiting for her to reach puberty. Have I answered your question? (17-18)

Tiku's conservative patriarchal ideology is evaluated here. Commenting about this issue of Patriarchy, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (1994:1), concur that

The social map of patriarchy created 'ground rules' for the behaviour of men and women, and that the gender roles and relations of patriarchy constructed some spaces as "feminine" and others as "masculine" and thus allocated certain kinds of (gendered) activities to certain (gendered spaces).

This explains why Tiku is against the view that Ewa should be sent to a typing school. Even though he is not the person to sponsor Ewa, he is totally against Granny's wish. He still holds strong to the patriarchal idea that the domestic is the place of the woman while the public sphere is meant for the men. He rather prefers that Ewa should be sent to a marital home instead of going to school. Tiku's role here helps to strengthen the idea of domination over Ewa which before now had been initiated by Nyango. It is for this reason that Nyango equally opposes the idea. She says "Granny has terrible ideas. Who asked her to sponsor Ewa in the typing school? There is something wrong with



her” (19). The patriarchal domination perpetuated on the woman is also linked to the fact that the women themselves are consciously not fighting against their male counterparts, this to their own detriment and to the benefit of the male. Simone de Beauvoir (1949:3) “One is Not Born a Woman” underlines that:

all human beings , regardless of biological differences, are born free and must struggle to en-gender their liberty; all human beings must rebel against traps and lures, as well as oppressive social conditions, to become all that they have potential to be in the world.

If Nyango is able to understand that the consideration she has internalised vis-a-vis her daughter is detrimental to her, then she will be able to know that she too is the cause of female domination that has almost become popular culture. There is no reason why Nyango should put up a stiff fight against Ewa. To further dominate and subjugate her, Nyango denies Ewa the right to education. Of course, he is aware that this is the weapon that she will eventually use to empower herself. Nyango is bent on the fact that she won't send Ewa to school. He declares thus:

Ewa: I don't know whether I will be sent to secondary school.

Nyango: Sent to secondary school. Have you worked and saved money for your education? Even if you were a boy, I won't send you to secondary school. Secondary school is for your sisters and step brothers. Is that clear?

Ewa: Yes, it is clear. (19)

Nyango, just like Tiku, has no zeal of sending Ewa to school. She torments Ewa and even threatens Granny on the issue. Nyango informs Ewa that she is not worth having the meanest facilities or advantages from either her or her husband, Tiku. It is to this effect that her forceful marriage is arranged with Ajoh against her wish. It is noted thus:

Chief: Normally, Ewa has to say whether she likes this man or not.

Nyango: Are you suggesting that we should find out from her whether she likes this man?

Chief: Exactly.

Tiku: We are talking about my daughter. She will marry the man we have chosen, irrespective of what she thinks about him. (21)

The choice of a husband is influenced by patriarchal norms. Tiku's decision is simply confirmed by

Nyango. They forget to know that everyone is born free and so is free to make his/her choice. In fact Ewa has no choice or voice on whether to give her point of view on the matter or not. The Chief's ambivalent role is questionable once more. He tries to play the role of a mediator but lacks the authority over Ewa's plight. He is unable to distort societal considerations with regard to forceful marriages. The Chief has rather played a passive role within the community but the questions I may be asking could be as follows: is it not pretence which characterises the Chief's behaviour? Or is it that he is unable to take fair decisions and resolutions?

It should also be emphasized that the issue of bride price also contributes to the oppression of the women in their marital homes. The heavy burden of the bride price has become a matter of insult and complete disobedience of the woman towards the man. This is because for the past decades, families have conditioned their daughters' marriages with prelude to heavy sums of money in the name of bride price. Other men have indebted themselves heavily just because they want to get married to their loved ones. However, such debts and sacrifices do not just go gratuitously for many men resort to holding their wives as solely responsible for their impoverishment. At another level, the young people cannot meet up with their obligations which sometimes lead to an atmosphere of tension and gloom. This is reminiscent of Ewa when she gets married to Ajoh. This is noted thus:

Ewa: This dress is a bit tight. Please can you purchase material?...

Ajoh: Purchase material for you? You are a fool... your family refused to educate you; instead, your parents quickly gave you for marriage. Feeding you is not enough, you want clothes. Your family was solely interested in the bride price? (...) I thought that by marrying you, I would enrich myself, instead, I have impoverished myself. (22)

A marriage relationship which was supposed to be buttered by love and harmony is roughened by quarrels and personal interests. Ajoh overtly insults Ewa because of the grudges he has for the bride price that was given to her family before getting married to her. Ewa has now been reduced to a slave who must work for him so as to reimburse his long saved earnings which he used to pay for her bride price. The behaviour which Ajoh puts on shows that he rather bought a slave for his house chores rather than a wife that he loves. In total frustration, Ewa remarks thus:



Ewa: From slavery to prisoner. If this is what marriage is, I hate it. What shall I do? I can't return to slavery. At least he gives me food and has never beaten me. Besides I must obey him. I don't want him to hurt my baby. My baby is the only precious gift from God. (23)

Evidently, Ewa understands that she has no choice but to keep tight to Ajoh's commands in order for her and her unborn baby to survive peacefully. To portray that women are generally maltreated by men, Mutia (2009:164), further emphasizes that:

Because of men, women are commodified into mere objects of sexual pleasure... This commodification conforms to the gender-based stereotyping which stipulates that women's lives are narrow in scope and depth indicating that the category of woman is nothing but a body in its largest ramification and nothing more than a sex organ in its strictest sense. The focus on the woman as a 'body' shows how in patriarchal socialization, the woman's body has been valued over her intellectual capabilities. (Mutia 164)

Ewa compares Nyango's house to Ajoh's and sees that there is no margin. She is mistreated in both contexts. Women are therefore at the threshold of effacement. In commenting on this issue, Anwadha Sharma (2001:17) in "Female Consciousness in the Postcolonial Indian English Literature" quoting Eswari has noted that: "Woman from the postcolonial world face double effacement of race and gender. Their lives are shaped not only by the western hegemonic discourse but also by the patriarchal discourse". It should be noted however, that the ideas of domination, mistreatment and brutality are very close to power and power was in the hands of men in the past. The spread of education gave rise to the individual awareness and monetary freedom to the true individuality of women (Anwadha 17). Except for the fact that she is able to have a meal in Ajoh's house and is also capable of avoiding the physical brutality which Nyango inflicts on her. However, when matters get worst, Ajoh sends her out of the house to fend for herself and her baby. This explains why postcolonial feminist criticism has come in to make an attempt at shaping female identity. It should be noted that it is not reclaiming history but looking ahead to achieve a position to stand upon. Women have generally undergone unfair criticism in literature and in the public spheres too. Their trepidations and troubles are relegated to the periphery.



Shifting Paradigms and the Struggle for Space

Women have come to understand that they have to take major decisions to improve on their livelihood. This falls within the feminist standpoint. David Macey (2000:122) notes that:

Although feminism, which became one of the most important forces in twentieth-century politics and thought, can take many different forms, its common core is the thesis that the relationship between the sexes is one of inequality or oppression. All forms of feminism seek to identify the causes of that inequality and remedy it. (Macey 122)

This again falls in line with Simone de Beauvoir's opinion in "One is Not Born a Woman" wherein she intimates that:

all human beings, regardless of biological differences, are born free and must struggle to en-gender their liberty; all human beings must rebel against traps and lures, as well as oppressive social conditions, to become all that they have potential to be in the world. (3)

In line with the above argument, women have become conscious of their situation and are struggling to disentangle themselves. The idea of empowerment has become necessary because Ewa has undergone some kind of double oppression. Firstly at Nyango's house and the secondly in her marital home with Ajoh. Her struggle to resist this domination is in vein because she is continuously oppressed upon. She has to prepare herself for eventual challenges imposed on her by her patriarchal society and this can only be done through empowerment, which is, going beyond the patriarchal roles imposed on her by the society. This is part of the feminist scholarship. In talking about feminism, Macey further reveals that "Women are indeed supposed to be interdependent in the war against male domination" (1223). To concur this idea, Audre Lorde (2003:26) in her article entitled "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" notes that:

Interdependence between women is the only way to freedom which allows the 'I' and 'be', not in order to be used, but in order to be creative. This is a difference between the passive 'be' and the active 'being'. Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must not merely be tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. (Lorde 26)



Ngong in line with this view decides to help her because she has become aware of her sufferings and domination and is ready to fight. In a conversation between them (Ngong and Ewa) Ngong decides to assist her. This is made clear in the following dialogue:

Ngong: Don't cry. Do something else.

Ewa: Like what?

Ngong: Learning a trade

Ewa: That will be after I have put to birth

Ngong: Are you expecting?

Ewa: Yes, in a few months. (24)

Ewa's plight is understood by Ngong who offers to assist her after she must have given birth. The author is in one way intervening here to show the importance of education which can help sensitise the masses in taking rational decisions which will go beyond ascribed taboos. Ewa's promise is to take on a business after she gives birth. This is because she has understood that the only way to assert and empower herself is by gaining financial independence. It should be underscored that Ajoh's intention of keeping his grip over Ewa is seen as he prevents her from going to her village meeting because he does not want her to be aware of how other girls of her age have been coping. It is thanks to this that she gets acquainted with Tua the social worker who decides to help her start a business. Still in support of this initiative, Lorde (2000:28) further quotes Simone de Beauvoir as having said:

It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting. Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and this time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears .Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices. (Lorde 28)

This is part of the awareness that has led to the deconstruction of the dichotomy between the male and female in the new dispensation as demonstrated by Tang. To make Ewa more aware of her status and what she could embark on to improve on her living conditions, Tua in a conversation



tells her:

Tua: Don't depend solely on your husband for financial support. Do something. In this way you will be able to provide food for yourself and for your baby.

Ewa: How?

Tua: Start a small business. A woman should not rely on her husband for everything

Ewa: I don't have money

Tua: How much will you need?

Ewa: Two thousand francs

Tua: What will you do with two thousand francs?

Ewa: I will sell puff-puff and beans. (27)

Tua's role as a social worker is exposed as she tries as much as possible to empower Ewa. She gives Ewa ten thousand francs to start up a business, but this business which has to give Ewa financial independence, is opposed by Ajoh who wants to maintain his domination over his wife. This is the act that, if taken, will illuminate Ewa and by extension the women folk. In reinforcing this idea Adrienne Rich(2003:32) in 'Notes towards a Politics of Location' has emphasized that:

Wherever people are struggling against subjection, the specific subjection of women, through our location in female body, from now on has to be addressed. The necessity to go on speaking of it, refusing to let the discussion go on as before, speaking where silence has been advised and enforced, not just about our subjection, but about our active presence and practice as women. We believed that the liberation of women is wedge driven into all other radical thought, can open out the structures of resistance, unbind the imagination, and connect what's been dangerously disconnected. Let us pay attention now, we said, to women: let men and women make a conscious act of attention when women speak; let us insist on kinds of process which allow more women to speak; let us get back to earth-not as paradigm for 'women', but as place of location. (Rich 32)

Women should definitely seek to move from the margin to the centre. This is what men do not want to understand. This is what Ajoh fails to understand. He thinks that his authority is dangling given that Ewa will become less dependent on him and his money. He decides to frustrate her way



towards empowerment and independence. This is underscored thus:

Ewa: Every day, you ask for money. The landlord has been here several times. I have been paying rents, feeding you and providing provisions ever since I started this small business...

Ajoh: I don't want to see any puff-puff and beans in this house. Have you understood? Give me the five thousand frs.(Snatches a five thousand note from Ewa).

Ewa: Back to square one. No single franc. I thought I have become financially independent. I have returned to financial dependency. Lord Jesus, what is my offense? (Sobs 29)

The idea of becoming independent is halted by Ajoh. He is against the fact that his wife should do petit commerce. Again, he does everything to seize her small savings and even warns her against selling puff-puff and beans in his house. He tries as much as possible to maintain his authority over her. Ajoh's act is a characteristic of a patriarchal society which seeks to avoid female emancipation amongst other things through self and financial independence.

Ewa's quest for self independence is further exposed as she has to free herself from the bondage of marriage and the claws of Ajoh. Ewa can equate the fact that her presence in Ajoh's house is not different from that of Nyango. This shows that she has moved from a difficult situation to a more difficult one but the distinction here is that Ewa is able to demarcate herself from patriarchal bondage.

Ewa: (To herself) what shall I do? Will I die with my baby? I can't return to slavery. Perhaps, I should go to Granny. (Ponders). I will go to Auntie Angoh. She might help. She is a kind woman. Ngong who was very dull in primary school is already in form two. (Kissing previous). If I have a bit of money, I will be selling food in the morning and attending classes in the evenings. If I succeed in the GCE Ordinary Level, our life style will change. (31)

Ewa here is re-echoing the playwright's vision on the importance of the girl child being empowered by educating herself rather than depending on a man for finances or clothing. In the monologue above, she is aware of the situation she has been facing because of male dominance. Still, she has been unable to attain fulfilment in her husband's house which makes her to take a firm decision of



going back to school. But contrary to much expectation, Ewa's quest for selfhood is questioned again by Ajoh who wants his bride price to be returned. This is noted thus:

Ajoh: What are you doing here? You have not returned the bride price I paid, have you?
(Tries to hit Ewa) if you don't want to see me in this vicinity quite often, return the bride price. I want the money before the end of the month.

Monica: (To Ewa) Does he give financial support?

Ewa: No

Monica: After returning the bride price, will he have any claims over the child?

Ewa: He will. The child is his.

Monica: Bride price should be abolished. It serves no purpose

Ewa: We are living in a man's world. Forget about him and the bride price... (34)

From the above, it is noticed that Ajoh continues to threaten Ewa for his bride price as if she were the person who took his money. Instead of holding her family responsible, she is the one to suffer for a crime she did not commit. Monica who is aware of the bias pertaining to bride price condemns it vehemently saying that it gives room for psychological and physical imprisonment as it impedes female emancipation and empowerment. Thus, Ewa's decision to go back to school and become a learned person helps her free herself from her husband's domination. Her struggles and hardship are blessed with success during the GCE results reading.

2nd customer: We gave her moral support

1st customer: Silence. They are approaching our centre. Listen-passed in five papers five two...passed in four papers-seven... passed in three papers-ten...Tiku Ewa.

22nd speaker: Anyih, celebrate

Anyih: Ewa, what will you do with your GCE Advanced Level?

Ewa: I will enrol in a university. (37)

Ewa's success is celebrated by the customers in the restaurant. They believe that Ewa's success is general success to all those who have undergone domination and have succeeded in isolating themselves from male bondage and patriarchy. Still, Ewa becomes more determined and engages to go to university because she believes that education is her second husband which will not be able to dominate her or oppose her and also because she knows that complete emancipation must certainly



come when she would have broadened her scope more through education.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, this paper has endeavoured to depict female domination and emancipation in Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa*. It identified and examined the ways in which female gender or the girl child is dehumanised and animalised by the patriarchal society and paradoxically supported by some women who are unable to go out of the web of archaic taboos. Informed by feminist and postcolonial theories, this study has underscored the need for isolating and completely eradicating constructs of oppression and female domination. This paper has above all espoused, argued and emphasized that female empowerment could be possible if women take the initiative and explore specific strategies to empower themselves socially, economically and politically.

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