

Nostalgic Reflections and Women's Political Trajectories in Irene Salami-Agunloye's *More Than Dancing*

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Abstract

The paper examines nostalgic reflections as a catalyst for the actualization of women's political aspirations in Salami-Agunloye's *More Than Dancing*. It specifically examines the concept of nostalgia in literature, the triggers, the influence of nostalgic reflections on women's political trajectories and the aftermaths of past heroines' achievements in contemporary society. The historical play reveals a post-independence nation where women are secluded, perpetually marginalized and deprived of political positions even though they have the resources, leadership capability and social mobilization skills. They draw on nostalgic reflections of foremothers and legendary figures like Queens Idia of Benin Kingdom, Moremi of Ife, Amina of Zazzau and Emotan of Benin, Madam Tinubu of Lagos, Inipki of Igalaland and Kambassa of Bonny, among others, who offered priceless sacrifices to actualize their dreams during colonial era. Apart from the foregoing, the exposure of modern women to western education and international conferences does not only empower them academically but also activates their political consciousness to attain enviable leadership position in the country. The study concludes by encouraging women to continue to plan, strategize and aspire for the highest elective offices through collaborative effort with their male counterparts. The repeat of the chronicled events and legendary characters can be done through determination, self-sacrifices and a result-oriented spirit.

Keywords: Nostalgia, drama, liberation, politics, womenfolk

Introduction

The clamours for a better Nigeria championed by our nationalists like Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo Amadu Bello, Anthony Enahoro, and so on, were complemented by some notable women whose contributions cannot be quantified. The female legendary figures in their various capacities, confronted bad governments that were bent on inflicting hardships, pains and sorrows on women and Nigerians in general. They include Queens Idia of Benin Kingdom, Moremi of Ife, Amina of Zazzau and Emotan of Benin, Madam Tinubu of Lagos, Inipki of Igalaland and Kambassa of Bonny, among others, who offered priceless sacrifices to eliminate all forms of injustice, exploitation and suppression from their societies during colonial era. A research carried out by Abdul, *et al* (2011:5) affirms that "the pre-colonial and colonial eras revealed active participation of women in activities aimed to better their lot. The intervention of women in social and political landscape helped to improve their status at the national and regional levels." The above assertion is corroborated by Dagunduro and Adenugba (2020) who state that "the emergence of women's activism in Nigeria can be traced to the demands of women to improve the second-rate status of women, and to remove or reduce those factors that deprive women of enjoying their full human rights as Nigerians. Nigerian women have faced a wide range of problems in getting past the numerous hindrances that have confronted them in religious, cultural and economic aspects" (25). Though studies have been done previously on the roles of the past famous Nigerian women, this paper will deviate by examining how nostalgic reflections on these national heroines influence the

psyche of women for political leadership and good governance in post-independence Nigeria as portrayed in Salami-Agunloye's *More Than Dancing*.

Like most countries in the world today, Nigeria practises democracy which is a system of government that ideally should favour both men and women in terms of equity and justice. Findings have shown that the idea of democracy is traceable to Athens in ancient Greece. According to Ober (2007:4), "the Greek word *demokratia* conjoins *kratos*, a term for power, and *demos*, a term for 'the people.' Thus, Greek democracy is typically and rightly seen as differing from most modern forms of democracy in its emphasis on the relevance of the direct participation of ordinary people in collective self-government." This is supposedly a type of government where the majority elect their representatives into government with the interest of the minority also protected. However, a major flaw of this political system in developing countries especially Nigeria is the deliberate and calculated attempts made by the male dominant political leaders to suppress, marginalize and push-around the womenfolk. Women are often mobilized for state congresses, national conventions and electioneering campaigns in favour of party men. They are expected to be loyal even though some of them have what it takes to attain every elective position in the country. Ingyoroko, Sugh and Alakali (2017) interrogate the abnormalities of democracy, thus:

An ideal democracy is related primarily to equality, rational discourse, and freedom of participation and self-determination of all members of a society. Invariably, a society where an atmosphere of repression and discrimination against a major stakeholder in the democratic process prevails, where only one segment of the society is involved in governance and enjoys unlimited political freedom, such a society cannot be said to be democratic (2).

In spite of the resources, energy and effort deployed by women to achieve resounding victories for their political parties, their appointments are not always commensurate to their hardwork and sacrifices. They are forbidden from aspiring to presidential or gubernatorial position in their respective political parties. Based on this, the feminist movement must be rekindled which affirms the submission by Abdul, *et. al* (2011:6) that "feminism in Nigeria emerged out of the demands of women to improve women's status and eliminate debilitating factors that deprived women of enjoying their full human rights." This paper examines the influence of nostalgic reflections on actualization of political trajectories as portrayed in Irene Salami's *More Than Dancing*. It will shift from the perspective of struggles for justice and equality for women and society to the historic icons and actions as psycho-stimulant for actualization of political pursuits. It will specifically achieve the following objectives: (i) to examine the concept of nostalgia in literature, (ii) nostalgic reflections and the psychological effects on women's political careers, (iii) the aftermaths of foremothers' struggles in Nigeria, and (iv) misconception about women in politics.

This study, therefore, attempts to promote women's political trajectories in contemporary society through reflection on past experiences, characters and actions.

Literature Review

The concept of nostalgia can be viewed from different perspectives but our main focus shall be on its relationship with our subject of discourse. According to Routledge, *et al.* (2013:808), "Historically, nostalgia has been viewed as a disease of the brain or the mind. However, in recent years, nostalgia has received a conceptual rehabilitation due to a revival of scholarly

interest accompanied by the use of contemporary empirical methods.” The focus of the above study is on medical intervention but there shall be a deviation to exploration of nostalgic memories and how they influence the psyche of modern female characters in their political careers. To the above scholars, “nostalgia, unlike homesickness, is largely a positive emotional experience” (810). In the opinion of Gabriel (1993:207), “nostalgia enables a person to escape present mediocrity by resorting to a splendid past.” This view adds value to the current study as it corroborates one of the objectives that explore how past legendary figures and events can inspire women to actualize their political ambitions and make significant changes in Nigerian politics. On a separate note, Sedikides, Wildschut and Baden (2004:202) describe nostalgia as “yearning for aspects of one’s past, a yearning that may include but is not limited to one’s homeland. This yearning may pertain, for example, to events, persons, or sights.” The scholars further maintain that “nostalgia alleviates these existential fears by reinforcing the value of cultural traditions and rituals of which one was once a part” (207). This view is similar to that of Routledge, et al (2013:810) that sees nostalgia as “an experience common to wider range of individuals and refers to a broader assortment of objects (e.g., persons, places, events). This assertion gives insight into the current work that examines the influence of the nostalgic memories of past characters and actions on modern women in politics. Moreso, the study carried out by Sedikides and Wildschut (2018) reveals that:

as nostalgia brings the past into the present focus, it has existential implications. Nostalgia helps people find meaning in their lives, and it does so primarily by increasing social connectedness (a sense of belongingness and acceptance), and secondarily by augmenting self-continuity (a sense of connection between one’s past and one’s present). Also, nostalgia-elicited meaning facilitates the pursuit of one’s important goals. Moreover, nostalgia acts as a buffer against existential threats (48).

Also, an opinion shared by Kleiner (1977) reveals that “Nostalgia increases one’s ability to deal with the present and restores self-worth perhaps by resorting, at least momentarily, to an idealized past” (cited in Sedikides, Wildschut and Baden, 2004:206). The foregoing view will deepen the understanding of this study that focuses on how nostalgic memories influence the political trajectories of women as presented in the dramatic performance.

Triggers of nostalgia are numerous and interwoven in society. They include old familiar songs, symbolic environment, ancient photographs, replica of old friends or relations, certain books, movies, creative works and arts, to mention a few. All these can trigger mixed reactions (negative or positive) among individuals by conjuring up visual images of places, objects, people and environment. Interestingly, there are two major types of nostalgia experienced by individuals in society. They are reflective and restorative nostalgias. The former refers to the nostalgic condition whereby individuals focus on conscious awareness of events, objects, and people that will stimulate their emotions and psychic alertness. The latter implies the form of nostalgic memory where people wish to return to their past because of the pleasant experiences that characterized the phenomenon. The above forms of nostalgia will be the focus of this study because the major female character, Prof Nona is expected to reflect on the achievements and constructive approach of the legendary mothers and women in their quest for justice, peace and development. The ability of the women in present society to retrospect into the pleasant memories of the past will inspire their dreams for political leadership.

Nostalgia in Literature

Nostalgic reflections may emanate from all literary works because they can activate past and recent memories of events, people, objects, and so on, whether pleasant or unpleasant. The creative works of African writers, for instance, are illuminating texts that can trigger mixed emotions and reactions of individuals in the physical world. The themes, characters, subject matter and even the topics are capable of evoking past experiences of people. The creative works of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, Tenure Ojaide, Niyi Osundare, Isidore Okpewho, Chimamanda Adichie, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Ben Okri, Ahmed Yerima, Helon Habila and so on, can trigger nostalgic memories in readers once certain elements experienced in the past are seen into the literary texts. For instance, John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo's "Agbor Dancer", "Night Rain", "Casualties", "Abiku", "Fulani Cattle" and "Streamside Exchange"; Wole Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation", "Abiku" and "Animistic Spell"; Niyi Osundare's "They Too Are The Earth", "A Song for Ajegunle" and "Sule Chase"; and Tenure Ojaide's "An Owl Wakes Us", and so on, are poems that conjure up memories of past and present experiences in readers and the poets as well.

In fiction, Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart*, Isidore Okpewho's *The Victims*, Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*, Ben Okri's *Farmished Road*, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time*, and so on, remind readers of socio-cultural or political events that can influence lives of individuals positively in contemporary society. Dramatic works also throw-up nostalgic memories when the readers are very much abreast with the subject matter, settings, and characters being presented. Some illuminating examples of dramatic performances include Ahmed Yerima's *Odenigbo*, *Attahiru*, *the Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*, *the Sick People*; Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, *Trial of Brother Jero*, *Death and the King's Horseman*; John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo's *The Wives Revolt*, *Ozidi Saga*, *All for Oil*, *Song of a Goat*; Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile*; Micere Mugo and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*; Ola Rotimi's *Gods Are Not To Blame*, and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*; Niyi Osundare's *The State Visit*, to mention a few, are also significant like the other genres stated above.

Though there are various types of drama in literature, our focus in this paper will be on the historical dramatic work of Irene Salami-Agunloye, *More Than Dancing* which presents women's political trajectories and the influence of their nostalgic reflections on their success in Nigeria. According to Dasyuva (2004:2), "dramatic literature as a field of study serves as an arbiter of taste, and a veritable stimulant that, of necessity, catalyzes the creative sensibilities." In advancing his view, the scholar states that it "pushes further the frontiers of knowledge, particularly, of the past and contemporary dramatic trends and practice in the world drama" (2). In corroborating the foregoing, Omoko (2013:77) posits that historical dramatic works are reflections of past experiences. As in the historical novel where "characters and events are drawn from history" but fictionalized, historical drama must contain "a mixture of facts and fiction and it is usually set in the past." The knowledge acquired from historical works, whether drama or fiction should be deployed into activities that will reshape lives and bring meaningful development to society.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned with the feminist theory which focuses on the struggle for equal rights and opportunities for both men and women basically in socio-economic, religious, political and other human institutions. Ibeku (2015:427) defines feminism as "women-oriented and concentrates on issues that concerns women. It is a literary movement that tends to bring

about a change in the society especially on how women are treated; it tries to discourage discrimination and humiliation on women; it focuses its attention on emancipation of women." Wilany (2017:115-116) acknowledges Hooks (2015) who posits that "feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. The movement is triggered by the awareness that the women have equal right with men (Hooks, 2015: xii). Women like their male counterparts ascend to any decision-making bodies in every society but the socio-cultural construct that portrays them as subordinates in the patriarchal structure particularly in Nigerian continues to serve as a clog on their wheel of progress. In affirming the foregoing, Abdul, *et al* (2011:6), states that "the culture of patriarchy, male chauvinism and anarchy has undermined the rights of women and the outcome of this is the exploitation and marginalization of women in the affairs of development both at the private and public spheres." Patriarchy cannot be completely dislodged from African families and society in general. However, women can only make effort to surmount their challenges by negotiating with the menfolk. This ancient socio-cultural tradition upholds male dominance and in the view of Aina (1998), it "has been used within post-1960s feminism to refer to the methodical coordination of male supremacy and female subordination. Women have always lived under the domination of men as a lower group and have endured marginalization. They were considered inferior to the male folks through a combination of gender-based culture and traditional practices in favour of men" (cited in Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2020: 23).

The cultural orientation of women functioning as appendage and passive characters has dominated several economic, religious and political fora that include the presence of men. However, a study carried out by Fwangyil (2011:262) reveals that in order to "liberate themselves from male oppression and dominance and also to better their lot in the society, women have tended to organize themselves into socio-political groups." The scholar further reveals that, "through this process, they strive towards emancipating themselves and ensuring the attainment of equal social status and access to opportunities with the men." Though there are daunting challenges in their effort to do great exploit, there is a remarkable improvement in their socio-economic and political conditions compared to decades ago when the movement for women liberation commenced. Besides, research has revealed that "the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically produced" (NOUN, 2014:261).

The alienation of women from central stage of policy formulation is gender based, not about their experience, capability and creative ingenuity. Some of these female characters can do greater exploits than the males if given the opportunities to showcase their charismatic leadership skills particularly in the political system. Mobolanle (2008:5-6) has asserted that, "whether as a theory, a social movement or a political movement, feminism focuses on women's experiences and highlights various forms of oppression which the female gender is subjected to in the society." Until the women break out or remove the clog hindering their wheel of progress, their dreams and aspirations to attain enviable height in the political terrain cannot manifest. Investigation has however revealed "the belief that men are superior to women has been used to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power" (NOUN, 2014:260-261). Since the quest of women for education has been increasing in the past decades, attention should now be shifted to the application of the acquired knowledge, skills and creative works in achieving their dreams and aspirations for the transformation of the entire society without discriminatory mindset. This theoretical framework has become relevant to this study because it gives insight into the

plights of the women who have been continually marginalized, exploited and deprived of opportunities to attain leadership positions in their respective political parties.

Methodology

This study is not a field investigation as it involves critical appraisal of a primary text chosen purposively based on its thematic relevance. Scholarly materials were consulted and employed to support the arguments and points raised in the discourse. The text was qualitatively analyzed using descriptive and analytical methods. The text presents historical facts that must be carefully analyzed in relation to present political issues affecting post-independence Nigeria. The analytical method therefore reveals the relationship between the nostalgic memories of characters and their achievements, and the present political ambitions of women in contemporary society. The descriptive approach gives insight into the opinions, feelings and actions of the women who are qualified but deprived of the opportunity of achieving their political goals.

Nostalgic Reflections in Salami-Agunloye's *More Than Dancing*

In Irene Salami-Agunloye's *More Than Dancing*, several nostalgic reflections are thrown up with a view to enhancing the actualization of the dreams and aspirations of the womenfolk. The play chronicles past events and legendary characters in colonial period and how to stimulate the capability, determination and goal of modern women to succeed in all their endeavours particularly in the area of political leadership. The playwright presents the attributes of the past heroines that serve as catalysts to spur the central character into actions. These include self-sacrifices, courage, result-oriented and the spirit of social mobilization. Salami-Agunloye employs this dramatic text to actually activate the latent contents of the female characters which have been suppressed by the patriarchal system in the past decades.

In the play, INIKPI has this to say about her legendary struggle in life: "Mama Nigeria, greetings to you. I dance in celebration of my victory years ago. I remember today how I offered to lay down my life so that my people would be delivered from the menace of the Jukuns. My life meant nothing to me in the face of all the challenges that confronted my father and my people. I am happy I had the courage to do it, difficult though it was" (p.17). Amina on her part states thus, "I, Queen Amina of Zazzau became famous for establishing the only Hausa empire in the sixteenth century; I founded cities, led migrations and conquered kingdoms. My territories expanded as far as River Niger, Idah, the land of Nupe to the south, Bauchi, Jukun-Kwarafa empires and Kano to the north" (p.17). Apart from being a great conqueror, Queen Amina was able to introduce viable commerce and trade that opened up the north and also brought money and fame to her domain: "I received tributes from powerful chiefs. I introduced kola nuts to Northern Nigeria. I was a formidable woman who feared nothing but God... I was so engrossed in my work that I had no time to start a family of my own" (p.17). The nostalgic pictures being portrayed by the playwright using the above characters is that of self-sacrifice in times of struggle for emancipation and so women in Nigerian political space should reflect nostalgically on these women to build their careers.

This historical play also reveals Idia of Benin Kingdom that was a powerful queen mother of Oba Esigie who had strong influence. According to the heroine, "I was crowned the first Iyoba of Benin Kingdom with my palace at lower Uselu. I was a very strong spirited woman who was known to mobilize both men and women within a short notice for any national duty. I, Queen Idia personally mobilized warriors at the dying minute to fight the Igalas. That's why the battle is called Idia's battle" (p.18). This queen demonstrated her prowess in battles by singlehandedly mobilizing Benin warriors while her son, the Oba was carried away by the

new religion brought by the Portuguese traders. She led the warriors to defend the Benin kingdom from invasion. Moremi of Ife on her part disclosed her strategy in defeating the Igbos in a historic battle. According to her testimony; "Mama, I am here to dance in celebration of how I rescued my people from the persistent Igbo raid. I remember how I allowed myself to be captured by the Igbos, I discovered their secrets while living in their midst. As I escape, I let out this secret to my people. My people defeated them in their next raid at the cost of my son, my precious son Oluorogbo's life" (p.19). Again, these women have demonstrated strategies and courage to rescue their people from external aggression. The playwright therefore believes that this historical fact will be among the motivating factors that can spur the present generation of Nigerian women to much greater height in their political careers. Nostalgic memories help individuals to direct political actors on how to make their trajectories result-oriented.

In advancing the struggle of women during the colonial period, Salami-Agunloye presents Kambassa of Bonny who trained a formidable army which she "personally led against the Opuoko, and razed down the city, bringing home heads of enemies" she slain in the battlefield. The "house of skull" which she instituted in Bonny attests to the power this warrior queen asserted over neighbouring kingdoms (p.20). Madam Tinubu of Lagos was another legendary heroine who "was strong enough to confront the indulgent African elites, the arrogant colonial authorities and the traditional rulers who became puppets in the hands of the colonial masters." The greatest achievement of this famous Nigerian as recorded in this play is that she "resisted the British rule and fought for justice in the enthronement of Oba Dosumu of Lagos" (p.21). Emotan as a courageous woman was able "to bring justice and fair play to bear in the fifteenth century Benin" in spite of being "a widow and a market woman" (p.22). According to the authorial voice, "I had confidence in myself as a woman. I did not sleep till I had raised an army to fight and bring Oba Ewuare to the throne. A throne his younger brother had usurped. When the oracle proclaimed that the task would cost me my life, I didn't care because all I wanted was for justice to be enthroned in the Kingdom of Benin" (p.22). The historical circumstances that surrounded the achievements of the foregoing legendary women in the view of the playwright are to inspire modern women to double their efforts in their political trajectories.

The play further reveals Nigerian women who were resistant to obnoxious laws, injustice and oppression from the colonial period till date especially in the Eastern region. However, the dramatist presents Nwanyeruwa to represent the heroines of the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. These women protesters rejected the payment of taxes levied upon them by the colonial masters. They called for "self-sacrifice and mobilization of all resources and energy towards a positive goal" in the entire Eastern Nigeria (p.23). In corroborating the foregoing struggle, the playwright activates the consciousness of readers about the role of yet another heroine, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who headed an advocacy group even as "a school teacher and proprietress" on the right of women to vote and to stand for election" (p. 24-25). History reveals that this human rights activist was able to achieve this through her political party known as the N. C. N. C., Nigerian Women's Union and Abeokuta Women's Union. Another woman who also distinguished herself in the struggle for the betterment of mankind in Nigeria as chronicled in the play, is Gambo Sawaba of NEPU. This heroine like most fore-mothers stood her ground in the party and never allowed the party leadership predominantly controlled by men to intimidate her even though she did not attain higher education. According to her testimony, "I had so many challenges but I surmounted all of them. I was arrested several times because of my strong belief in my principles. I was harassed and molested. I lost my family because of my involvement in politics but I never gave up" (p.25-26). The playwright presents the struggles and humiliations

of the past heroines as a strategy to activate the mental consciousness of women in contemporary Nigeria to demonstrate the spirit of determination and self-sacrifice. This historical re-enactment is not to investigate female protests per se but to create a sense of moral meditation and self-assertion among female political actors and the society at large.

Aftermaths of Foremothers' Struggles in Nigeria

The dramatist presents the struggles of past heroines and their achievements to inspire modern Nigerian women to wake up from their slumber and mobilize themselves to actualize their political dreams for the betterment of women and Nigerians in general. Like the foremothers, women in our society today are educated, determined and financially committed to the growth of society. The play captures the real pictures of life and existence in contemporary society after the exit of the foremothers. However, a glimpse of the lifestyle of the youths in recent times portends a bleak future that demands an urgent redemptive move. In the dramatic text, MAMA NIGERIA addresses Madam Tinubu thus; "your Lagos is now a haven of area boys. The girls are out trading on the streets instead of remaining in school. They have become carriers of loads in various markets in Lagos; deprived of bright future" (p.28). The situation in Queen Kambassa's domain that represents the oil-rich Niger Delta area is quite different from the one described above. MAMA NIGERIA regrettably inform Kambassa thus: "your youths have become warriors fighting to make money from the oil wealth instead of going to school. Are there no better ways of making their demands known rather than fighting, killing themselves and denying themselves of a better tomorrow by staying out of school?" (p.28) The disgruntlement of the above youths indicates a society that has degenerated compared to the pre-independence period when youths embraced education. Idris, *et al.* (2012:144) describe education as;

the key to move in the world, seek better jobs and ultimately succeed in life. Education is the best in investment for the people because well educated people have more opportunities to get a job which gives them satisfaction. Educated individuals enjoy respect among their colleagues and they can effectively contribute to the development of their country and society by inventing new devices and discoveries.

Education which Nigerian youths of today have neglected is a golden opportunity for them to acquire knowledge and skills with a view to "solving the real problems in our society" (Idris, *et al.*, 2012:144). MAMA NIGERIA concludes by challenging women to rise up to their expectations as their foremothers did in the past. She implores all women to develop the capacity to make significant changes by reflecting on past heroines. She reminds the foremothers of the present situation of Nigerian women thus: "So, you see, my women there are still some challenges for us to confront. Dance no more. Your dancing time is over. The curtain has been drawn on you... You rejoice for your achievements. What are your children doing today? What plans did you leave for continued performance? Success without a successor is failure" (28-29). The pursuits for better political leadership should be continuous and every past achievements must be consolidated by the successive generations. This is a pointer to the main thrust of this study which is to explore how women can utilize the knowledge acquired from the nostalgic reflections on past characters and experiences to advance their political elevation.

In order to replicate the achievements of past heroines in contemporary society, Prof Nona resolves to be determined. She meditates on her revelation about the struggle of the foremothers: "So you mean these women had to go through all these just for our nation? Women gave up their comfort, their lives, their honour, their families and their names all for national unity,

peace and stability? Yet, none has ever had the advantage of being near the highest seat. Now is the time. We will continue from where they stopped" (p.68). At this juncture, the decision of the women being represented by Nona to repeat the achievements of their foremothers during the colonial period affirms the view that "the growth of feminism began in Europe and America in the nineteenth century" but today women have become "conscious of their oppression and marginalization and took steps to redress this oppression" (Mobolanle, 2008:2-3). In actualizing their purposeful and result-oriented goals, the mindset of the female characters including Ebele must be deconstructed. Prof. Nona has this to say to her:

My sister Ebele, you see, one of the reasons the plight of women has been such a difficult issue to tackle is that it's not easy to change a man's mind about a woman's place in the world. The idea that this is a man's world is very deeply entrenched in our society. Even though legislation might be passed, or public policy changed, you cannot change a man's mindset about women (10).

For women to emerge victorious at any political contest, they have to be sensitized, mobilized, and all antagonistic behavioural patterns must be addressed amicably. In the play, therefore, Madam Bisi makes effort to convince Ejura and Minika who never believe completely in the women's chance of clinching political power from the men. According to her, "as a woman, you have equal potential as men; we are the ones who must fight for our rights. Men will not fight our battles for us. After all, we are good campaigners, organizers and support-mobilizers, yet we always shy away from elective posts" (p.48). In affirming the foregoing assertion, Kolawole (1997:13) posits that; "African world-view is predominantly family-oriented...some radical feminists further advocate an overturn of patriarchy and patriarchal symbols. Many African women recognize the way patriarchy has been manipulated to put them down and they are struggling against these forms of subjugation and intimidation wherever they exist." The upturning of the disadvantaged position of women as stated above can easily be achieved when they speak with one voice. It is against this backdrop that Madam Bisi further sensitizes the womenfolk by stating that; "Elective positions will not fall from the sky; we have to work to get them. We need a re-orientation. We need to develop our self-esteem and accept political challenge in whatever manner they appear. We must have confidence in our fellow women and stand by them both at meetings and at the polls" (p.48). The women should earnestly and persistently strategize and collaborate with the men and youths to become achievers like the nationalist mothers during the colonial period.

Through the character of Mama Nigeria, Salami-Agunloye decries the flaws in our nation and implores women to strive towards the attainment of greatness and development. She laments the failures of women in present day Nigeria who could not consolidate on the achievements of the legendary women. She addresses the foremothers; "Look around you, strong memorable characters of your time. Where are your successors? Where are the Emotans; the Idias; the Aminas; the Kambassas; the Moremis; the Fumilayo Kutis; the Gambos; and the Madam Tinubus? Where are they? Where are those you prepared to step into your shoes? (p.29). The playwright draws heavily on historical facts by alluding to the above characters with a view to inspiring the women who have ventured into politics.

Misconception about Women in Politics

The playwright reveals several misconceptions and social constructs about the womenfolk especially in political leadership. The men perceive their women counterparts as appendages and second class citizens who are unserious in their political pursuits. MADU is a prototype of

such people in our society and he has this to say about women: "You see, all women are good for is to dance at party rallies, not to rule! They have no place in politics! Not in African politics or decision-making process! We will fight them with our last drop of blood" (p.30). This affirms the observation of Ingyoroko, Sugh and Alakali (2017) that "women in Nigeria have always played politically crucial roles but with an overwhelming majority of them at the periphery of politics in modern Nigeria." On the disunity among women in Nigeria, SANI reacts to JETA's call for caution: "They are up to nothing. Give them two weeks, they will scatter and be at one another's throat" (p.31). Nevertheless, a good number of men see the academic qualifications and exposure of women as threat to their positions in government. In the past decades, women have become more active in politics and their exposure through various workshops and international conferences overseas has deepened their political consciousness and so they strive for the office of the president, governors, senate president, and so on. In the drama, Madam Bisi advises women to partake in politics, "You must realize that it is your fundamental human right to participate in governance. This is a democratic dispensation. Democracy is for all. It is for women as much as it is for men. Women are equal partners with men in governance" (p.2). In spite of Madam Bisi's effort to convince the women to remain focused, there are still some who have no faith in the struggle. According to MINIKA; "See the posts we are planning to vie for-local government chairpersons, senators, House of Representatives, governors, and presidents, are they not too big for us? Let us? Let us take one step at a time. If we can campaign for men, they will give us some positions" (p.48). The foregoing can be achieved if the women are united and visionary in their leadership pursuits. In fact, they must strategize like the legendary mothers of the past to join the mainstream of policy formulators and decision makers in Nigeria.

In the dramatic text, the women have garnered the support of men for their political ambitions. For instance, Hakeem advocates for a collaborative effort with the women who stand the chance of emerging victorious at the poll. His words: "Why are we so adamant and set in our ways? We must be realistic and move with the trend of events. If we don't work hand in hand with the women, they will move ahead and push us out of the center of action and we will become mere spectators" (p.74). The stand of Hakeem in Salami-Agunloye's dramatic work affirms the submission of Kolawole (1997) who stated that in diverse ways, African women have emerged from "silence" transcending the many limiting borders imposed on them by patriarchal-traditional or post-colonial structures, and have taken positions as the mouthpiece for their gender even from various polar ideological stances. They are dealing with African women's questions in different ways but there is room for each in the collective 'compound' (p.6). The foremothers set the pace during the colonial period and it is now the responsibility of women in contemporary society to nostalgically reflect on the past characters and their achievements to advance their political careers.

Conclusion

The study has shown that Nigerian women in the past contributed immensely towards the betterment of Nigeria alongside their male counterparts like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Anthony Enahoro, Herbert Macaulay, and so on, who history has chronicled as Nigerian nationalists. It established that nostalgic reflections can conjure up past experiences, people, event and objects, which are capable of influencing the dreams and aspirations of individuals. In Salami-Agunloye's *More Than Dancing*, Prof Nona recollected the struggles, sacrifices and achievements of foremothers of Nigeria during the colonial period which activate her emotions and spur her into actions. The central character sees the past heroines that include Moremi of Ife, Amina of Zazzau, Idia of Benin Kingdom, Emotan of Benin, Funmilayo

Ransome-Kuti, Madam Tinubu of Lagos and Kambassa of Bonny, to mention a few, as role models. Their past heroic exploits can trigger nostalgic memories of readers and Nigerian women in general to remain determined, courageous and result-oriented in their political careers.

Recommendations

It has been found that Salami-Agunloye's drama text provides Nigerian women nostalgic memories of foremothers which are instrumental to the actualization of their political ambitions in contemporary society. Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made.

- i. Nigerians particularly the womenfolk should reflect on past historical events and also characters to stimulate their psyche for the growth and development of society.
- ii. This work has revealed through the play that our foremothers were dogged fighters and they made great self-sacrifices to eliminate all forms of colonial oppression, exploitation and subjugation. So, women in postcolonial Nigeria should be encouraged to contribute their quota towards the transformation of society politically and economically.
- iii. Nigerians should not undermine the capability and courage of women in nation building. They should be allowed to aspire politically like the men.
- iv. Historical plays should be taught in schools in order to foreground memories of past events and people which women and Nigerians in general can draw on to actualize their economic and political ambitions.

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