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“Shavianism or “Butakeism””: A Comparative Reading of Female Identities in George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan* and Bole Butake’s *and Palm Wine Will Flow*”

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Abstract:

This article entitled “Shavianism or “Butakeism””: A Comparative Reading of Female Identities in George Bernard Shaw’s Saint Joan and Bole Butake’s And Palm Wine Will Flow” examines the strength and power of the woman in the plays of the English playwright, George Bernard Shaw and the Anglophone Cameroonian playwright, Bole Butake. In other words, the article undertakes a comparative analysis of the vision of both authors especially as far as the plight of the woman is concerned in their respective societies. Based on the assumption that, Shavian and “Butakean” dramas are platforms for revolutionary ideas aimed at a subtle but sometimes cataclysmic transformation of consciousness towards the power structures that demean and debase women, the article posits that Shaw and Butake are two dramatic iconoclasts whose plays redefine the female identity and distorts all institutions that cripple women in all domains of life. Seen from the perspective of Marxist feminism, the article studies both playwrights as revolutionists who believe in the power of the woman and seek to redefine misguided opinion about the female sex in their different societies. In spite of the fact that they hail from vastly different planes of realities and that they wrote in different eras, the study underscores the fact that the thematic concerns of the two playwrights are both identical and contemporary. The traditional mores that plague the societies of both authors are examined in this article in a bid to indicate that for Shaw and for Butake, all traditional and cultural norms that do not lead to the progress of mankind should be dismantled.

The story of female marginalization and discrimination is one that has been told in every part of the world and in every epoch. Throughout history, women have been weighed down with certain disadvantages that have greatly disfavoured both their personal and professional lives. History is full of evidence of such despised women who continue to undertake an intimate struggle to discover personal meaning and identity in the midst of predominant patriarchal structures that seek to maintain disproportionate power arrangements. In most parts of the world, the image of the woman is seen as feminine, which in turn, negatively implies that she must be acceptable, docile, passive, submissive, and inferior in many ways. Considered as second-class citizens, even the most advanced democracies in the world still struggle and grapple with issues relating to gender balance in the society. In spite of this unfortunate situation of global concern, significant efforts have been made especially from the 19th century to ensure a proper understanding and acceptance of the feminine voice. In this light, Audre Lorde states that “women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs” cited in Trinh, 1989 (p. 85).

The plays of Shaw and Butake certainly speak directly to this subject of female subjugation and domestic incarceration and this article seeks to reveal the powerful female characters in the plays of the authors that survive and exert their presence in their respective societies in different ways. The article therefore examines the skills of the authors under study in exploring powerful women, both in their individual spheres and in relation to the people around them.

As highlighted above, the purpose of this study is therefore to examine how Shaw and Butake empower the women in their plays to transform any existing status quo that hinders human progress. In other words, the paper demonstrates that for Shaw and Butake, life is not a compounding of prescriptions and that the golden rule of life is that “there are no golden rules”. According to the authors, some traditions and cultures are a serious hindrance to the talents and abilities of the individual whose personal insight into some problems of man can help both himself and his society. The study seeks to justify that in the plays of the authors, the world is in motion; old values and previous conceptions are adrift. The movement shakes up the life of the individual and jeopardizes the established social order. Here, we see how the process has a psychological as well as a conceptual and social aspect. Yet what starts the whole process is the need for change, something springing forth from the individual's volition. By presenting Shaw and Butake as precursors of change from a world of conventional practices to a freer and flexible world where both the woman and the man can impact each in his or her own way, the paper considers the playwrights as revolutionists with a positive agenda for humanity.

According to the article, the unfortunate situation of the woman has been a major concern for Shaw and for Butake for a very long time. The Victorian society and even the Cameroonian society reduced the woman to being nothing more than a daughter, a wife, a

mother and both playwrights developed a sharp curiosity to change this order of things. Both authors consider their different societies as chauvinistic with the woman assigned permanent traditional and stereotypical roles – chastity, purity, obedience, and frugality. A woman's respect is measured by her submissiveness to her husband, father, brother or any other male in the society.

For purposes of clarity, it is important to define terms “Shavian” and “Butakean” which are very central to the issues raised in the study. According to the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1981:348) the word Shavian is an adjective “of, relating to, or in the manner of the Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw or his works or ideas”. It further explains that the word originates from the Latin word Shavius and is related to studying George Bernard Shaw or his works. The word is therefore used in this research to refer to the drama written by Shaw. It is important to mention that Shaw is one of the very few dramatists who have had an adjective named after him. In fact, Shakespeare and Chekhov are the only other playwrights whose adjectives are recognized by Microsoft Word. This honour not only suggests that his name sounds good when placed before a noun (as in, “a Shavian wit”), but also that his literary style is quite distinct.

On its part, the word “Butakean” is a personal term derived from the name Butake and it is used in this paper to refer and relate to the manner of the Cameroonian dramatist Bole Butake or his works or ideas. It is therefore, an adjective that originates from the name Butake and it is used here to refer to the drama written by the playwright of Cameroonian origin, Bole Butake.

Bringing the English Shaw and the Cameroonian Butake together in this article is therefore justified in the sense that, although the two authors differ in the tone and mode of their works, there are many similarities between the two dramatists. Although both authors refused to see themselves as feminists in the modern sense of the term, they try to break the confining chain which limits the freedom of women and they also advocate the eradication of gender distinction within society. Their plays betray a conscious desire to valorise women and to raise awareness on the strength of the female folk. Their women characters outshine their male counterparts by winning the hearts of both readers and audiences, by demonstrating great courage in times of crisis, and in face of adversity. The strong women characters in the plays of the authors are marked with great devotion towards their ideals and enormous resolution in pursuit of individual freedom and existence. They are actually bold, revolutionary women warriors with independent and intelligent psychology and aspiration for spiritual emancipation. They endure great pains to defend dignity and rights as human beings rather than subservient to the male dominated society.

Although the two authors write from the backdrop of different societies, both societies have almost the same characteristics. In both societies, a female individual is assigned with all her duties and obligations directed by the patriarchy. Men dominate over the “male-centric” world, while women have to be obedient and subservient. They are usually bound in matrimony, functioning as either toys or tools to serve others. In serving this, obligation is embedded in their social and female identity while their identity as human beings with the right to happiness and freedom is almost completely sacrificed. In such a patriarchal social framework, they are represented by a set of self-sacrificing and subservient attributes and those who break away from this norm are considered deviant, rebellious, or even demonic. Most of the women of the playwrights suffer from this labeling as victims of the male dominated society for their rebellious spirit. By the end of each of the plays under study, we realize that the rebellious heroines of the authors seem to have gone through a spiritual pilgrimage in their persistent pursuit of emancipation, freedom, and bitter struggle to regain their identity and power as human beings.

It is important to note that *And Palm Wine Will Flow* was written against the backdrop of conventional, aggressive and inhumane oppressors of the marginalized masses of the fictionalized communities of the North-West Province of Cameroon. The same situation is true for *Saint Joan* and both plays treat among other issues the themes of corruption, tyranny, female subjugation, nationalism and the rampant abuse of power. These themes are not new in English and African literature, but what is significant is that Shaw and Butake give the responsibility to fight for political and spiritual liberation to women. The silent suffering masses come to rely solely on the women who take the leading responsibility for their liberation. This situation becomes quite amazing and fascinating especially when the authors imbue the heroines in their different plays with the fervent zeal and required strength and foresight to lead men in war and to dismantle and destabilize fruitless religious institutions and traditional hierarchy in *Saint Joan* and *And Palm Wine Will Flow* respectively.

In *Saint Joan*, Joan's courage and optimism is not easy to come by in her society. Her determination to act like a man and challenge religious institutions could be seen today with less surprise as was the case in the Victorian society when the play was written. In a society where the woman was considered a sub-human, passive, fragile, and dependent on a man in any crisis, it needed a Shavian hero with an inherent Life Force to dress in men's dresses and lead a war to success. Joan's heroic efforts affect a society that has been constructed to seal a woman to her kitchen and child-bearing.

Throughout the play, Joan demonstrates that the inner voices that speak to her outrank all other authority. She has an extraordinary faithfulness to reason that seems to win the reader to her side. Joan's major successes in the play including her defeat of the English, her coronation of King Charles and her successful reversal of the wind's direction in River Loire are quite significant. The audience is not only made to throw its lot behind Joan but also to understand that Shaw is an advocate of individual judgement or conscience as opposed to constituted or conventional authority. Joan faces stiff resistance from the men and the church authorities who consider her a heretic but her belief and determination push her into soldiering. She is confident of herself and tells Dunois that “I will lead and your men will follow. That is all I can do. But I must do it: you shall not stop me” (91). Joan therefore, sounds unstoppable and her courage is further seen when she tells Dunois that “you soldiers do not know how to use the big guns. You think you can win battle with a great noise and smoke” (91).

In *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, the male sacred society, the Kibarako, is deprived of its judicial powers, unmasked, and sent into exile. The males regain their posture only after the female leader Kwengong calls a general assembly and declares a revolution against the Fon. She declares, “He cannot be Fon. The women have decided. No more Fons in the land” and that “Only the people will decide

(who) the Fon will be and for how long. And the affairs of the land shall be decided by all the people in the market" (111). She, in effect, declares the overthrow of the dictatorship and the institution of a genuine democracy. Kwengong's declarations above bring to mind Joan's slogan in *Saint Joan* that "France for the French, England for the English, Italy for the Italians, Spain for the Spanish, and so forth". If the Maid has her way, then the common people will begin to pay their allegiance to nations rather than yield to the universal church. Once allegiance is split, then, the church loses much of its power. Joan's freedom of thought seems to be the threat that she poses to the mighty structures of catholic Christendom. The two heroines therefore, take the destiny of their different societies into their hands and armed with what Shaw calls the "Life Force", they go ahead to challenge men and effect meaningful change.

Throughout their plays, Shaw and Butake tend to suggest that, in reality, women are born with exceptional powers which have simply been suppressed by the male-oriented and chauvinistic society. The plays of the authors are therefore eye openers to the people who have usually assigned the business of political liberation only to men.

When we meet Joan in *Saint Joan*, we realise that she is not the everyday Victorian woman who must not violate societal mores. Unlike the typical Victorian woman who would not dare to challenge a man or rise against the church, Joan is projected as a confident lady who believes in herself and is convinced that she must accomplish her assignments from God. Driven by the Life Force, she is courageous and the first three scenes give us a series of vivid narrative pictures of her early triumphs. In the first scene, her faith and confidence in her mission force the blustering nobleman Robert de Beaudricourt to send her with a small escort to the Dauphin's court at Chinon. The mood of the scene is realistic, with touches of broad comedy. In the second scene, she penetrates into the court, identifies Charles the Dauphin though a courtier tries to deceive her by impersonating him, and persuades Charles to give her command of the army. What is important to note here is the fact that Joan stands completely alone in her fight. However, she is not discouraged. Rather, she goes ahead, wears men's dresses, leads the army and defeats the English. Equally, amidst serious tension and opposition, she successfully crowns the Dauphin at Rheims and raises the siege of Orleans.

It should be noted that although Butake imbues Kwengong with the same courage and audacity like Shaw does for Joan, Kwengong has her female group behind her as opposed to Joan who stands alone. Shaw's individualism is therefore opposed to Butake's group action but what is more important, is the fact that on each camp, there is an iron clad institution to face. However, Shaw does not attempt to draw an individual historical character or an individual historical event; Shaw's supermen, superwomen or saints represent exceptional individuals who, because of their superhuman qualities, are far ahead of their time and get necessarily into conflict with the established conservative forces of society which condemn everything new and try to preserve the status quo.

Equally interesting is the fact that while Joan in *Saint Joan* defies the female dressing code in the medieval period and dresses like a man, the women in *And Palm Wine Will Flow* defy dressing codes not by wearing a man's dress but by going naked. The potency of woman's naked body in eliciting male compliance is heightened by the syncretic fusion of terse realistic images and African ritual. While the activities of Kwengong and the women's society are reminiscent of the solidarity march of the Anlu and the group disrobing of the Ta'kembeng, Kwengong is imbued with strong ritualistic powers that enable her to perform her role of liberating Ewawa from tyrannical leadership. This symbolic difference in dressing code between the two plays suggests that although the heroines of the two plays have almost the same mission to accomplish, Shaw's technique is different from Butake's. But what is most significant here is the transformation of consciousness that takes place on the side of both women. They get out of their shells and use every means at their disposal to desecrate traditional practices in order to bring much needed change.

It is also worthy to point out that in *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, Kwengong succeeds in ousting the tyrannical Fon but relinquishes control of the land to a new council of elders headed by Shey Ngong. Thus, another male leadership takes over and women's involvement in it is conveniently shadowed. With this paternalistic norm of female withdrawal and/or eviction from the exercise of state power, Butake's plays offer little hope to modern Cameroonian women battling with the inequalities that continue to characterize their participation within executive, legislative and judicial bodies of power. This same feeling looms around *Saint Joan*. After Joan's seeming success in her mission, Shaw uses the very men that represent the institutions she collides with to judge her and burn her in the stakes. Although her heart refuses to burn which is an indication that her ideas stay alive, she gets out of the scene not in the heroic manner one would have expected. This frustration is seen in her last words "O God that maddest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"

Whether it is Joan or Kwengong, they are both trapped in a society filled with gender roles, where every action in one way or another is related to gender. The gender roles hinder their independence and cause them to be subordinates to their husbands and the society. However, at the end, they both get freedom. Though Joan is burnt, she still escapes from the pragmatic society associated with traditions and genders.

It is therefore, clear that Shaw and Butake have both used Joan and Kwengong to represent the image of a "New Woman" who is brave and unflinching and who is imbued with some kind confidence that can no longer restrict her to the margins of society

These conflicts in the plays of the authors may be understood as representations of the Shaw's and Butake's fight against the aesthetic and moral norms of their times. *Saint Joan* and *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, then, implicitly tells us something about the function of art with regard to society: it has to take a critical stance, has to fight obsolete thought patterns, petrified value systems and hypocritical moral norms and conventions, and has to further new modes of thinking which in the present already anticipate the future, thus advancing both individual and society at one and the same time.

The two dramatists are not merely entertainers. They discard traditional sentimental theatrical forms as they chronicle the strengths and weaknesses of ordinary people confronting difficult social problems, like the restrictive conventions under which women suffer. Their plays are intended to change and develop the social relations between people in the world. Encountering Shaw and Butake is to encounter large minds well aware of what is going on in the world and determined to take part in it. They are some of the most

'engaged' dramatists in the world and they always want to make their dramas responsive to what is going on around them in the larger world, in the other arts, in politics, in economics, and so on.

Shaw and Butake therefore have a vision not only for the Victorian and Cameroonian societies but for the whole world since the issues handled in their dramatic works cut across boundaries and are still relevant to contemporary society. According to both authors, life should not depend on rules and society should evolve with time. The theory of evolution is therefore central for both authors, and their faith that man is capable of infinite improvement plays an important role in their works. By writing the way they do, Shaw and Butake want their audiences to understand that their obsolete theories of life, sham institutions, and traditional morals cruelly hinder them from becoming what they can become.

A careful examination of the nature of conflicts in the plays of the authors and the eventual manifestation of courage, commitment and capacity by the heroines of these playwrights suggest that, in reality, women are born with extra-ordinary powers which have simply been submerged and suppressed by the male-oriented society that has conspired to relegate them to the background. While Kwengong's pursuits in *And Palm Wine Will Flow* represent a signal and an indicator that political liberation is not an exclusive prerequisite of the male, Joan's accomplishments in *Saint Joan* can be seen as an eye opener to the fact that warfare is not only a masculine assignment. In fact, the women reveal the truth that they can do even better what men can do and also that they can succeed where men have failed. And looking at the history of failed governments and revolutions in the continents of Europe and Africa, Shaw and Butake may be sending out a coded message to their compatriots to give women a chance in the struggle for liberation from dictatorship, corruption, tyranny, and the nepotism that have come to be the mainstay of especially African governments. Butake's projection of the woman as liberator is reminiscent of Ngugi wa Thiong'o in East Africa. Both of them attempt to uplift the female from their traditional domain of household chores and sex objects to a higher plane of political activism and change. The contributions of these authors including Shaw are particularly significant given the fact that the traditional Victorian and African societies in which the authors wrote are predominantly patriarchal societies in which the woman has little or no voice in the domain of politics and decisions that affect the entire community.

Faced with the socio-political and cultural challenges of their different societies, Shaw and Butake, each in his own manner, imbues their women with the necessary skills and modus operandi required to whitewash and conquer every institution that undermines and denigrates the womenfolk. Such skills combined with some divine inspiration and intervention help Joan in *Saint Joan* to defeat the English, to crown King Charles and to successfully reverse the wind's direction in River Loire all to the utter dismay of the male folk around her. As highlighted above, her slogan "France for the French, England for the English, Italy for the Italians, Spain for the Spanish, and so forth" reveal her nationalistic tendencies and leads to the serious clash between her and the religious institutions of her society. Imbued with the "life force", Joan defies and flouts the institutions and authorities that continue to seal women to the home and to the kitchen. She breaks the mores of the Victorian female closet when she decides to dress in male's attire and lead men to war. Singlehandedly, Joan imposes and enforces her voice before the authority of the church and undertakes assignments hitherto reserved for the masculine world.

Joan's unorthodoxy is also seen in her dressing. She wears trousers instead of skirts, carries an amour and prefers men's hair do. In fact, she stands against all the rules that disfavour the woman and she appears to be responding to Rosalind Miles who once said that "women are weak where men are strong, fearful where men are brave and stupid where men are intelligent" (29). Like Kwengong who defies male authority and takes up the task of liberating her society with strength and vigour, Joan refutes Miles statement when she leads men to a successful war. Shaw enlightens us better on Joan's unorthodox attitude when in the preface he says:

- At eighteen Joan's pretensions are beyond those of the proudest pope or the haughtiest emperor. She claimed to be the ambassador and plenipotentiary of God, and to be, in effect, a member of the church Triumphant whilst still in the flesh on earth. She patronised her own king, and summoned the English king to repentance and obedience to her commands. She lectured, talked down and overruled statesmen and prelates. She pooh-poohed the plans of generals, leading their troops to victory on plans of her own. She had an unbounded and quite unconcealed contempt for official opinion, judgement and authority.... (1-2)

Nothing would save Joan from the crime and accusation of heresy, considering the doctrines of the Christian orthodox church of the time. However, this creates no impression on Joan nor does it stop her from saying or doing all that has been mentioned. She intends to stop at nothing to accomplish her mission and in a very authoritative manner, she tells captain Robert that "Good morning captain squire. Captain you are to give me a horse and amour and some soldiers, and send me to the Dauphin. Those are your orders from my lord" (60). It was unorthodox for a woman to speak in such a manner to a man in the fifteenth century and even to hold an amour.

Joan's firm commitment to her mission and her belief in the divine origin of her voices provide her with the courage she needs to go against such conventional rules however ignorantly. Joan's aspirations and her attitude can therefore be considered as secessionist attempts from the society that harbours her. Her society is one full of rules that consider the woman as a sub-human whose duties are to take care of a man and children. According to Malgorzata Bielecka (2006:91) in *G. B. Shaw's Unconventional Hero in Three Plays for Puritans*, Joan's decision to go to war against the English is considered a war against the society. She is therefore faced with a war on two fronts-the war with her society and the war with the English. Contrary to the conformist woman, she refuses to accept that a woman's fate lies in the hands of her husband. She declares that "I will never take a husband . . . I am a soldier. I do not want to be thought of as a woman. I will not dress as a woman. I do not care for things women care for. They dream of lovers and money. I dream of leading a charge and placing big guns".

It is therefore clear that Joan's belief in the mission she intends to accomplish has no place for romance. Joan sees no place for love or marriage in soldiering. Unlike Kwengong, she has little or no attachment to the Biblical prescription that puts the woman under the man and that requires her to "Go ye in to the world and multiply" (3). Joan here may not be seen as an enemy of progeny but as a

realist who knows that soldiering has no place for romance and marriage.

Unlike Joan and other Shavian heroines, Butake's women often do not operate as isolated, mystical priestesses imbued with cultural or spiritual powers or as women who only use their hidden powers when men have failed. They constitute a force, an entire group, with powers enough to bring about profound and lasting socio-political changes in the set-up of an entire community, and by extension a nation. Their men are not only confused, but they are completely emasculated and powerless. Furthermore, unlike Joan in Shaw's *Saint Joan*, Butake's heroine, Kwengong, is faithful to the institution of marriage and child-rearing and all other responsibilities attached to their gender. However, like Joan, she is both inspired and motivated by her nationalistic impulses to confiscate and snatch the power that has been denied women before. Kwengong combines both purpose and becomes the first woman to challenge the Fon who represents the highest authority in her chauvinistic society. The following dialogue between Kwengong and the Fon announces a major revolution and transformation of social consciousness in the society.

Fon: Watch your tongue, woman Earth-goddess indeed!

Your wretched husband, the self-made priest of nonexistent gods and sower of bad words against our royal person, is still smart from the venom of my power and you dare to insult our royal presence by profanely pronouncing our sacred name?

*Kwengong: The only husband Earth-goddess honors Chila Kintasi
Is the whole of Ewawa.*

Here [urine] are the wares the women commanded deliverance to their Fon.

.....
May they make you call another feast before the sun goes to sleep.

Fon: Urine! Urine! What is the meaning of this abomination?

*Kwengong: Not urine, Cila Kintasi,
But the savvoury juice from
The vaginas of those upon whom
You wield power, Fon
Drink the liquor from the vaginas
And feel the power of power*

Fon: I will die first.

*Kwengong: Then you will die indeed, Chila Kintasi.
Your own mouth pronounced judgement.
Die and deliver the land from the
Abominations of drunkenness and gluttony!
Die ! Chila Kintasi, die!
And save the land from merry-making!
Die, Fon! So that we may think!
The people need your death to think!
Die! Die! Die! (109-110)*

The above exchange signals a reawakening and a renaissance for the female plight in Butake's society. Kwengong's confrontation with the Fon, however only verbal, marks a turning point in a society where women are considered inferior and treated as playthings. Kwengong and her followers have come out of the "doll's house" and have taken their destinies into their hands. In order to achieve full liberation and freedom, the Fon has to die. According to the women, the Fon is the source of their troubles and tribulations and they see his death as a way of cleansing the land from the abominations of "drunkenness and gluttony" and mental stagnation. It should be noted that before Kwengong in the play, no man has had the courage to confront their Fon. The men have either complained about him in his absence, or they simply "adulate him" (102), because the men who attempt to oppose him "disappear;" that is, "they are taken to Ekpang. And killed" (103). The fear of Ekpang (the modern equivalence of the political prison in Kondegue, Yaounde) has reduced the men to cowards and puppets of the tyrannical and corrupt Fon (President) who has pushed aside the council of elders (the National Assembly) to rule the people according to his whims and caprices.

In the same vein, Kwengong declares the overthrow of a dictatorship, an autocracy, saying "The (women) have decided. No more Fons in the land!" And to Tapper's question, "so what will happen?" her response is emphatic and definitive: "The people will rule through the council of elders led by Shey, here. The day he takes the wrong decision, that same day, the people shall meet in the market place and put another at the head of the Council of elders" (113). It is at this point that the men become galvanized to join the victory chorus. Shey Ngong comes out of hiding to declare this triumph of democracy over dictatorship:

- We must break clean from the past. Take the sacred gong of Nyombom and let it resound in all the nooks and corners of the land. From today, this bugle will stay here in the sacred grove, a living symbol of our enslavement by the Fon and his

notables. Take the sacred gong to the people and let its sound vibrate through their very souls, a symbol of their liberation. (114)

Kwengong's leadership ambition and aspiration as seen above are reminiscent of Joan's case in *Saint Joan*. Joan faces stiff resistance from the church authorities who consider her a heretic but her belief and determination push her into soldiering. She is confident of herself and tells Dunois that "I will lead and your men will follow. That is all I can do. But I must do it: you shall not stop me" (91). Joan therefore, sounds unstoppable and her courage is further seen when she tells Dunois that "you soldiers do not know how to use the big guns. You think you can win battle with a great noise and smoke" (91).

We realise therefore, that like Nkwengong, Joan is filled with the courage that she needs to realise her goals. Her intentions are seemingly genuine but the effects on the dogmatic Christian religion at the time were unacceptable by the society. Her belief that she must execute her mission from God is heightened by her courage to lead men to battle. She even encourages the Dauphin when he feels weak and incapable en route to war. She tells him, "I shall put courage into thee." Here, Shaw's heroine is seen as the "manly woman" that we find in Butake's play. By leading men to war, Joan innocently challenges the inferiority that the Victorian society associated to women. Her war tactics are quite challenging as she advises Dunois by saying that "you should always attack; and if you only hold enough, the enemy will stop first" (114-115).

It is therefore clear from the above analysis that Shaw and Butake establish the significance of the woman amidst the derogatory image reserved for her in the Victorian and Cameroonian societies. The article has illustrated that, for Shaw and Butake, the woman like the man, possesses talents that can lead to human progress. The claim that the woman is inferior to the man is satirised. Both writers portray women that emerge into self-assertive individuals and stop at nothing in establishing the personality of the woman.

Although accomplished in different ways, the main female characters from each play decide to take their life choices in their own hands and step outside of the box society has made for them. Shaw's choice and the timing of the 19th century feminist movement caused his plays to become associated with being supportive of feminism. Like Kwengong in Butake's *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, Joan in Shaw's *Saint Joan* could be seen as a victim in a situation caused by the men around her. As a result, many critics have argued that the characters are Shaw's and Butake's way of advocating feminism. The two authors never confirmed this, but many critics feel that others focus too much on the gender of the main characters and the plays are actually representations of realism. If one looks past the gender labels applied to each character one will realize that there is more to each character's story than being a woman that is "stuck" in a situation. The audience's interpretation of the women was affected by the prominent issues of the time, and the stories do reflect the thoughts of some middle-class women at the time both authors wrote.

The plight of Joan and Kwengong is reminiscent of Rose Terry Cooke's (1986:470) *How Celia Changed Her Mind and Selected Stories*. In this story, it is suggested that a married woman is nothing more than someone who is obligated to fulfil domestic responsibilities and duties. Mrs. Celia begins to understand and realize that the image she has of marriage being an equal partnership between the two parties is very uncommon, as illustrated in the following lines: "...she discovered how few among [women] were more than household drudges, the servants of their families, worked to the verge of exhaustion, and neither thanked or rewarded for their pains" (Cooke 472). A marriage, in Mrs. Celia's opinion, calls for a woman to devote herself completely to domestic endeavours. The problem of female victimisation is therefore not limited to Joan nor to Kwengong but it a universal phenomenon that attracts attention.

In the two plays of the authors under study, Joan and Kwengong do not only behave and speak as equals to men; they admonish them, teach them and, finally, see themselves as saviour-figures. Joan alienates herself from her community (the family and the village), enters the patriarchal public sphere of the state and the church and constructs her discourse of power ignorant of the consequences. On her part, Kwengong unites with the women of her community and their refusal to restrict themselves to the roles assigned to the woman is significant in three ways. The actions of Joan and Kwengong can be seen as a call for both men and women to realise that a woman can also teach and lead men as much as men can do.

Equally, Joan's actions champion the idea that an individual can act on his or her inspiration without necessarily subjecting his or her ideas to the will of the laws governing the society. Also, by teaching men, Joan and Kwengong seem to be cancelling certain biblical prescriptions which, according to them, no longer stand the taste of time. In his letter to Timothy in the bible, Paul writes: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (1 Timothy 2, 12). Joan and Kwengong not only refuse to be silent, but they also treat others as if they were ignorant in the matters of religion and leadership. By so doing, the heroines destabilize the core of Victorian and Cameroonian customs with regard to women. Their actions signal the beginning of a new era for the woman and indicate that societal mores are destructible. In spite of the sanctions she receives for her actions, Joan like a typical Shavian heroine does not suffer from despondency but forges ahead.

Butake like Shaw, break with conventional belief in constituted authority and imbue their heroines with the necessary strength and tactics they need to face the iron clad institutions of the society and the church. The dramatic art of both Butake and Shaw, without their glorious rebellion against every authoritative institution, against every social and moral lie, against every vestige of bondage, is inconceivable. Their art could lose human significance, should their love of truth and freedom be lacking. Their proud defiance, their enthusiastic daring, their utter indifference to consequences, is their message, heralding a new dawn and the birth of a new race.

It is therefore clear that the ideological power embodied through gender relationships in *Saint Joan* and *And Palm Wine Will Flow* helps people reflect on the stereotyping of both men and women in literary works and have a new and rational perception of the gender roles in our modern world. The power struggle dramatized in the two plays initiate people to have a practical look on the implications of male dominance. It should be noted that the nature of the Fon's dominance in *And Palm Wine Will Flow* is traditional as it is required by the society for him to maintain his dignity as a man and as a Fon as well as his traditional status. However, the

shattering of men's illusion of their ideological power over women brings about disaster to their physical and mental health and leads to their downfall. In the plays of both authors, masculine power is lost as a result of female's ideological awakening. This suggests a new structure of society, and the message of equality between gender and race is also suggested.

Unfortunately, the tussle for power between men and women will continue in the contemporary society but it is necessary for men to have a correct conception of women in various aspects of life. Without the right and sensitive conception, it would be difficult for men to avoid the tragic embarrassment induced from the exercise of masculine power.

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