

Review

Leadership, language of power, and womanhood

Iyabode Omolara Daniel, PhD

Department of English, National Open University of Nigeria, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria.

Email: omolaradan@yahoo.com, laradan1@yahoo.com Tel: +234-8035984870

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Leadership has usually been seen as the ability to control others. Women leaders are thus usually portrayed as tyrants that wish to oppress others due to one social maladjustment or the other. Literature had been mostly used to stereotypically present women as either too weak or too masculine in terms of their leadership ability. This paper thus investigates the language employed by the lead female character, Captain Sharp, in Stella 'Dia Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-chested*. The lexical choices made by Captain Sharp and other rhetorical devices like repetitions, affirmatives and face threatening acts were isolated and critiqued. It was found that through these linguistic choices, Captain Sharp is able to exert a great deal of power on the women and cause them to succeed in their revolutionary intentions. The playwright was able to portray the lead character thus as a very successful leader. The paper however concludes that being a successful leader requires more than being able to control others through linguistic power-play. A responsible leader is expected to be eventually accountable, both to those they lead and the moral mores of the society.

Keywords: Drama, Female revolt, Leadership, Linguistic control, Lexical choices, Rhetorical devices.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership could be an innate quality possessed by some persons, while others acquire it, and some others have it thrust upon them due to circumstances in which they find themselves. Whatever way it gets attained, it obviously connotes an expression or demonstration of power and/or authority.

Clark (2010), quoting Northouse (2007: 3) asserts that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of people to achieve a common goal. It has also been described as an expression of social influence (Chemmers, 2002 in Wikipedia, 2010). Doyle and Smith (2001) see leadership traits being best brought to the fore in crisis situations in which particular people exhibit some obvious actions which become pivotal in such situations and thus encourage people around such people to give their loyalty to such individuals. To these authors, leadership involves being able to think and do creative things in non-routine situations. In essence, to them, leaders become visible when "an innovative response is needed" (par. 4). What could be garnered from all these diverse definitions is that leadership involves exercising social influence on others. The issue then is whether it could be negative or positive. Before we could go on further into this question, let us consider a paradoxical situation of gender biased leadership.

Interestingly, it may be found paradoxical that there

could be a powerless leader. This seems to be the expectation of many when they see women in a position of authority. Some even consider it an aberration. 'Just like a rope does not befit a fowl's neck, a position of authority does not befit a woman. It mars her femininity' (Oyedepo, 2002: 32). Considering that women are expected to be second class citizens in the society due to the organizational structure of the patriarchal system (Emecheta, 1974; Lakoff, 1972; Spender, 1985), a woman is not expected to aspire to a leadership position let alone her attaining it. The woman is usually regarded as a mere usurper when she fills a position of power in the society (See Emecheta, 1974 for a full description of the consequences of such an attainment).

However, this very attitude is what feminism seeks to upstage. It queries a system that makes women powerless in the face of disadvantageous social order which causes 'opportunities for equality postponed, and in effect, rights rescinded' (O'Connell, 1996:30). This factor of powerlessness and inability to determine one's own fate makes the woman vulnerable and perpetually dominated (Daniel, 2009). Feminists have made attempts to try to turn the tables in the favour of women through various means. One of the ways that they have tried to do this is essentially through literature, specifically, the feminist theatre.

Feminism and Literature

Tobrise (1998: 1) describes the feminist ideology as a protestant ideology 'opposed to the hemlining of women, but desirous of their emancipation in all spheres of life.' Therefore, 'through their writing, women erase the namby pamby women from their drama by elevating the female character's consciousness and tempering their portrayal with some ideology, power and radicalism.' Women writers of literature, of dramatic pieces, thus create women that are given positive image in their presentations. These women are given enormous power and authority, which smacks of radicalism and extremism in its exercise. This power, which they wield, is also used with the force of a sledgehammer. Examples of such female characters that easily come to mind are Captain Sharp of the BCM in Stella 'Dia Oyedepo's *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-chested* and Wazobia in Tess Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia*.

Scholars have variously queried this sort of character archetype of the tyrannical female. It has been speculated if such women could be regarded as realistic characterization of womanhood (See: Kolawole, 1992; Acholonu, 1995; Ejinkoye, 1997; Eko, 1989; Ojo-Ade, 1989; Daniel, 2001; Adegbite and Kehinde, 2003). However, it is pertinent to find out the character type Captain Sharp actually presents as a leader in *The Rebellion of the Bumpy-chested*.

Accountability in Leadership

To be accountable is to be responsible, giving account of one's actions or conduct (*Chambers Study Dictionary*, 2002). It thus connotes defending one's activities and making it subject to higher rules. These rules are usually an agreed convention among a group of people to be guided by. It thus implies giving an accepted kind of leadership, and not an imposed type, which results from the consent of those being led. Moreover, it also means being responsible to those being led and allowing them to choose a different course at any given time (Jennings, 1959). But more importantly, it suggests that those who have given their mandate to be led can be allowed to make decisions which may not be in agreement with the leader's particular inclination at a point in time. To us, it also connotes being respected at all times by those who had been mandated to lead. Accountability is thus a great deal of responsibility for the leader. Obviously, the distinctive leadership provided by Captain Sharp in the text shows that a leader that leads by example holds the ace. Moreover, her effective use of some linguistic devices greatly helped her ideological control of the women. That Nigerians will be good followers if they get a good leader is an open secret. Unfortunately, most Nigerian leaders have proved themselves unworthy of the appellation, leader. A responsible leader goes beyond

mere talk to living by example. Even though, we find Captain Sharp very much an effective leader that Nigeria could learn from, the issue of accountability in her leadership is examined further below.

Language and Leadership

Language has been variously described as a vehicle of human thoughts, concepts, ideas and even a people's culture. It is also regarded as an instrument that shapes cultural worldview and a means of subduing the environment, especially others that live within one's

relational purview (Adler and Towne, 1993). 'Communication researchers have identified a number of language patterns that add to or detract from a speaker's ability to influence others, as well as reflecting how a speaker feels about his or her degree of control over a situation' (Adler and Towne, p. 181). They went further to add that speakers who use powerless speech, that is speech devoid of control and revealing helplessness, are less persuasive and believable than those who use powerful speech. This suggests that a leader with powerless speech will have lower credibility due to less ability to influence. This becomes relevant when one looks at Michael Kord's description of a leader as presented in Seyler (1994: 43), taken from his article 'How to be a Leader'. He writes:

A leader rides the waves, moves with the tides, understands the deepest yearnings of his (her) people...His (Her) task is to focus the people's energy and desires, to define them in simple terms, to inspire, to make what people want seem attainable, important, within their grasp...dignify our desires, convince us that we are taking part in the making of great history, give us a sense of glory about ourselves. A leader must stir our blood...A good leader must have...infectious optimism, the ability to convince us that all is not lost even when we're afraid it is...putting into words our own dreams and hopes, transforming our needs and fears into coherent policies and programs.

To Seyler, a leader is that person that can use words to persuade in order to bring out the best in the listeners even beyond their perceived ability. It thus seems that a creative leader is the one that can use words that persuade and speech that influences the judgement or the feelings of the people. This has been described as the essence of rhetoric (*Microsoft Encarta*, 2002). Quoting Spencer (1970: 612-13), Adegaju (2005: 86) asserts that 'Every political arena is characterized by a field of potentially appropriate rhetorics '... The skilful politician (leader) thus chooses his (her) rhetorics with an eye to his (her) audience and the impact he (she) desires...'

Considering such an important role that language plays in issues pertaining to leadership, it becomes important

that the way it is used could make or mar a leader's effectiveness in a group. More than this is the effect the use of language by a leader of a group could have on the situation of a society. In this wise, it is our considered opinion that the way women leaders use language in women groups could have grave implications for the society at large if it is taken for granted as just one of those noises women make in the groups. Also, the effective use of language in sincere communication with the Nigerian people can greatly help the desire of the government to get across its policy agenda to the Nigerian people, adding moral leadership. That is, the government leading the people by example, while presenting its intentions. This is rooted in accountability. This paper thus examines how Captain Ara Sharp of the Bumpy-Chested Movement in *Rebellion of the Bumpy-Chested* by Stella 'Dia Oyedepo uses language to attain her intended goals in the group and the effect the attainment of such goals have on the social equilibrium within the text.

Theoretical Framework

The study is an investigation of the importance of language as a device of power-play. It investigates language as an important strategy employed by the lead female character in the text under study to control the actions of the women she leads. Obviously, two major strategies are employed by Captain Sharp to help the women obtain emancipation in the play. She helps them attain psychological emancipation and get physical strength with which to maintain this newfound freedom.

The paper is, however, limited to the investigation of language as a device through which the women were led into psychological liberation. The study thus takes an inventory of the lexical items predominant in the speeches of Captain Sharp in order to ascertain their conceptual contents and the power implications for the addressees. The rhetorical devices (affirmatives and face-threatening acts) employed were also examined, and their possible effects on the women and the consequence of these for Captain Sharp's leadership status and influence were highlighted. All these drive the analytical procedure in this paper. Each linguistic device is discussed in greater detail under the relevant subsection.

The question – In which way was Captain Sharp able to use these language elements to control the actions of the women and succeed in her proposed intentions? – would be the guiding compass.

The Rebellion of the Bumpy-chested (Rebellion)

Rebellion is a story of women's revolt against the oppressive patriarchal social structure obtaining in the

society in which they found themselves. It dramatizes the women's bid to organize politically to fight against the perceived unfairness in the societal treatment of the womenfolk. The Bumpy-Chested Movement (BCM) has Captain Ara Sharp as its leader. She is presented as the soul and force behind the BCM. She comes across as a very forceful leader that brooks no nonsense and does not condone any demonstration of 'weakness' by the women.

In the course of the series of meetings held by the women, Captain Sharp succeeds in 'indoctrinating and brainwashing' the women with the 'extremist' ideology of revolt, which majority of the women actualize in their matrimonial homes (Tobrise, 1998: 43). These revolutionary acts by the women led to a lot of upheavals in their homes. Some of them actually physically overpower their husbands (as exemplified by Falilat, Ashake and to a lesser degree, Tara). They are, of course, already engaged in bed and kitchen strike to forcefully press home their points (*Rebellion*, pg. 5). Taking care of their offspring is also seen as a sign of weakness as their husbands are expected to do their (the husbands') own share of the domestic 'drudgery' in order to allow the women liberty to do the really 'important things'.

At the end of the day, the men decide to turn the table on the women by paying them back in their own coin. They start dressing like women (for instance, Akin); hawking rice on the head (for example, Akanbi), thereby taking the wind out of the sail of the women who had previously become trouser-wearing, taxi-driving and palm-wine-tapping rebels. The women are naturally caught off guard by this turn of events. It leaves them confused and nonplussed at this point. Apparently, as a last face-saving device in the face of a possible botched revolution, the women insist that the struggle continues.

The Data

The data used were taken from the speeches made by Captain Sharp at different points in the play. The point of interest, especially, is the discussion she had with the women, which consistently reveals her manipulative skills being effectively employed. This seems to demonstrate the issue of the leader that exploits social influence for control purposes.

Lexical choices

Tobrise (1998: 47) notes that Oyedepo's linguistic technique is highly rhetorical and verbalistic, adding that the female characters are separatist and sexist in their language. A look at Captain Sharp's lexical choices seems to confirm this position. They appear highly separatist and reveal radical feminism in its crudest form.

The words used are potently graphic and sometimes almost nauseating in their referential imaging. These words are presented in their contextual forms to help make their semantic deciphering easier. Examples of words found to be predominant in Captain Sharp's vocabulary, as used in some of her speeches, are:

...dangling muscles between the thighs? (the penis) (4)
...ordinary erectile tissue (description of penis by the women) (5)

That supposed feminine weakness
(14) ...only in the imagination
...psychological factor of suggestibility

...womanhood...euphemism for slavery
...perpetual thraldom...motherhood
...fetters...woman
...coop...her desires

cribbed and cabined...her ego
...cribbed and cabined...her ego
...reins of bondage (15) ...reins
of servitude!

...daughters of Eve...steadfast
...in pains
...fight

...the shackles...agonizing!
...the flunkeydom...torturing!
...helotry...disesteeming!

...subjugation...harrowing!
...servitude...disconcerting!

...drudgery...sentenced...
...state of submissiveness...(16)
...suffering...(17)

An analysis of these words reveals a negative presentation of the state and status of womanhood. Such words like *slavery*, *suffering*, *fetters*, *servitude*, *subjugation*, *torturing*, *drudgery*, *sentenced*, *agonizing*, *harrowing*, *disesteeming*, and the like are words that paint very vivid pictures of the woman's uncomplimentary and unenviable position in the scheme of things. An understanding of the conceptual content of these items gingered up the women and they declare that they must fight.

SEGI: (suddenly incensed): We must fight!
ALL: Yes!

Obviously, the image painted before them with the choice of words incenses the women and makes them truly mad at the society that keeps them in perpetual thraldom and slavery (p. 15). As noted by Adler and Towne (1993: 181) 'Ideas are certainly powerful...'

These ideas are extended in describing the essence of man's maleness by Captain Sharp. A power indication can be observed in the description of the male dominant manhood, the penis. It is described as a 'dangling muscle

between the thighs' and 'ordinary erectile tissue'. The impression one gets is that the male penis is no big deal. Through linguistic choices, the very thing that is the centre of male power, the penis, was successfully downgraded before the women. In this way, Captain Sharp accomplishes the objective of making the women see that the very essence of maleness is a mere biological differentiation and not a terrifying rod of power, as men would have women believe. This choice of the word 'ordinary' not only downgrades this centre of power but actually presents it as a mere tool by using the word 'erectile'. And this tool is essentially for male pleasure. This last lexical item thus shows the male as a passionate predator that is not to be feared. A demystification of the male is the disempowering of his manhood. All of this was successfully achieved through lexical choices. This naturally enables the women to see the man as just ordinary, and not deserving of their reverence as the society would demand.

Adler and Towne (1993) however add that '...but the way we express them (ideas) can also make a tremendous difference in how well they – and we – are received' (parenthesis added). It then becomes obvious that rhetorical devices are also important in effecting the desired control apparatus of stirring 'our blood', as quoted above. The question to tackle then is: What rhetorical devices did Captain Sharp employ to obtain the necessary control?

Rhetorical Devices

It is observed that Captain Sharp makes use of affirmatives and repetitions to achieve an effective persuasiveness and control. Another device observed is face threatening act. Face threatening acts will be discussed last under rhetorical devices. We will presently discuss its apparent homonym, affirmative, and come back to face threatening acts later.

Affirmatives

Literally, *The Free Dictionary Online* (2010) defines affirmative as 'expressing or manifesting praise or approval'. Linguistically, affirmatives involve statements that express approval of an action carried out by an interlocutor in a communication process. Therefore, affirmatives, as employed here, involve statements that possess the illocutionary force of affirming and encouraging. Every time the women do things pleasing to her, Captain Sharp affirms them, thus reinforcing them, which gives the women verbal encouragement that they are on the right path. This, the paper sees as an added control mechanism. Doyle and Smith (2001) note that social influence is one of the ways through which leaders control others. As observed by Clark (2010), one of the

important factors of leadership is communication. Even though, to him, communication is two-way as discussed in the situations used as illustration, this is adapted to the discussion here in terms of positive communication. Affirmatives are positive communication exemplified as they are a kind commendations and encouragements to do better from a superior to a subordinate. Obviously, a leader with encouraging words tends to get the follower to desire to have more praise by doing much better. This is the secret that educationists use and call reinforcement in their professional practice. The control apparatus here is like that used by Pavlov in his experiment. Captain Sharp succeeds in making the women do her bidding by continuously giving them positive communication or positive face threatening acts (FTAs) every time they do what pleased her or that they go out of their way to try to please her. Affirmatives thus become important tools in her hand to control the women's action. The use of affirmatives is first noticed at the end of the rigorous exercise at the beginning of the play:

SHARP: All right! Relax!...We aren't doing badly. (exuding satisfaction and confidence)

ALL: (rowdily) Sure...We are making it...Yes...

SHARP: Sure, everything is taking shape. Good. (in a thumb-thumping gesture) B.C.M.!

ALL: Yeah! (brandishing their sticks) (3)

Then at Falilat's suggestion on how men should breastfeed babies

SHARP: (amused) That's a clever contraption. Very ingenious really (8)

At the return of Tina and Oyin from their poster-pasting adventure

SHARP: ...Tough ...Tina. Tina! Tough. (both beam radiantly as they take their seats) TINA: Thank you, Captain. (63)

On Sabina's successful palm wine tapping

SHARP: Welcome and weldone Sabina! (81)

All these statements (and actions) prove to be helpful in encouraging the women; these rhetorical tools also help to increase Sharp's influence on them.

Repetitions

A lot of drilling was employed by Sharp in order to make sure that the women never lose focus of their source of grievances. In the use of repetition, Sharp is able to obtain the control valve of the mind focus of the women. This affords her enormous control over their thinking, which she exploits to the hilt.

She employs this rhetorical device to secure an uptake with the women. Clearly, this seems to help the ideas, issues, images and state of their affairs to loom large in the women's minds. She is able to help them to have clarity of their focus of hatred as the men. In bringing their situation into a sharp relief, she also becomes, for them in her

confident poise, the focus of their freedom. This is especially so as she is able to help them streamline their ideology and give name and essence to their perceived sufferings and incapacitation. Examples could be seen on pages 3-4. She repeats the movement's name three times as an attention arresting technique. She then goes on into rhetorical questioning thrice again. This rhetorical device is obviously to confirm what they all already have an awareness of; it is not meant to elicit any fresh information (as interrogative sentences are usually meant to do).

SHARP: What about the spirit? What about the fire? What about the struggle?(4)

Their respective response to each rhetorical question only gives a confirmation of her expectations.

ALL: It has not flagged! It has not been quenched! It will not stop!(4)

She then moves to give assertives, which they also confirm in their responses.

SHARP: It will not stop...! Until...Say it loud! Say it loud!

What is in the dangling muscle between the thighs?(4)

What is in it? etc.(5)

And the women's responses confirm her each of her assertives:

ALL: Until we have won! We are women, we are strong! What a man can do, a woman can do! Nothing! (4)

TARA: Ordinary ... Ordinary erectile tissue! (5)

The last distinct statement from Tara reveals how effectively Captain Sharp has made Tara see the powerlessness of the male penis over women through Tara's emphatic declaration that the male manliness is actually nothing but a mere biological organ. On page 10; HARP: We have to fight like our sisters in history, the Amazons. We must not be daunted. We must fight. We must fight with all our soul! (10)

At times, the rhetorical device makes use of substitution of lexical items for a greater effect. The same lexical elements are not employed, but their synonyms in a kind of climactic order, which of course has the ability of building up rage in the women. The linguistic choices are in a kind of ascending order, culminating in a climatic form. It starts with the woman being in fetters then her desires are cooped; from there her ego is cribbed and cabined until the reins of bondage and servitude inescapably put the daughters of Eve in perpetual pains! This enraged the women to the point of almost hysteria as they rose up in one voice to fight the oppression 'disesteeming', making them harrowed and disconcerting them. All of this negative experiences resulting from 'flunkeydom', 'helotry', 'servitude', and 'subjugation' used as weapon of mass oppression by the male, of course. So the women got mad at this enemy enough to determine to fight, and fight until they win. This is graphically presented below.

In fetters is the woman
In a coop are her desires
Cribbed and cabined is her ego
I say cribbed and cabined is her ego.

The wind blows and cannot be confined.
The river flows in its course!
The waves roar when they desire!

But the reins of bondage!
The reins of servitude!
Hold the daughters of Eve steadfast
Albeit in pains!

Yes, we must fight.
Because the shackles are agonizing!
The flunkeydom is torturing!
The helotry is disesteeming!
The subjugation is harrowing!
The servitude is disconcerting!

Apparently, the manner in which all these repeated and substituted elements help paint a vivid picture of incarcerated and incapacitated womanhood cannot be missed by the women. This logically produces a predictable belligerent effect on the women as already mentioned. Their desire to fight and become free increased, and Captain Sharp's hold on them proves to be firmer – whether she intends it to be so or not is an entirely different matter. They are thus ready to do all that is required, even if it means sacrificing their homes (the very symbol of the 'oppression') on the altar of their freedom fighting.

When one looks at all these linguistic choices analyzed above, it is obvious that Captain Sharp succeeds greatly as a leader. She is able to take the women to the point of changing the state of affairs in their society and taking control with impunity (This is without prejudice to the way the men seem to undertake a coup de grace, which the playwright refuses to resolve at the end but left to the imagination.) Language could thus be seen as a powerful tool in the hands of a creative leader, the gender notwithstanding. In this wise, a leader's ability to manipulate language to achieve her/his personal ends becomes a way of being an effective leader. Creative use of language thus distinguishes a leader that is in charge from a powerless one. The paradox of powerless leader thus becomes an unlikely one. As Captain Sharp clearly demonstrates here, communicative competence becomes a virtue. Nonetheless, morality becomes another important responsibility for the leader. This is extensively discussed below. Leadership that is articulate and eloquent but immoral becomes an institution that cannot be respected. True leadership should thus also be a responsible one (cf. Clark, 2010).

Leadership and Responsibility

Kord, quoted above, is of the opinion that the leader that would be considered good must have 'a spark of

madness' and be able to 'stir our blood' and 'not appeal to our reason' (in Seyler, 1994: 43). But Clark's (2010) view of a good leader is that they are made. One however wonders if it is the creation of madness in others that make them.

It is a fact that Captain Sharp stirs the blood of the women and is not interested in helping them to use their heads. She does the thinking for them. This paper however believes that this could become dangerous for the followers as seen in the devastating effects of Sharp's oratorical control on the women's families. It is observed by Seyler (1994: 4) that: 'Good evidence and good sense are powerful tools against emotional appeals of ...political demagoguery.' The present writer supports this position. Sarah exhibits this in the play by managing to maintain equilibrium in her home despite being a member of the Movement.

Does this mean that one approves of her seeming treachery; especially in the face of her husband's conceited boastfulness? No. It is obvious from the play that the women have only succeeded in exchanging one state of powerlessness for another. They have only traded their slavery to their males for the slavery of the mind to Captain Sharp, the hard taskmistress. This does not portray her as a responsible leader.

Face Threatening Acts

Her use of face threatening device becomes relevant at this point. The concept of face threatening acts here agrees with Adegolu's (2005) use of the same as acts of accusing/ alleging, threatening/ warning, commanding/ ordering, and so on. Captain Sharp uses this rhetorical device many times to put the women in their place. She reveals through this that she is totally in control, and they have to obey her orders and succumb to her will. This agrees with Wikipedia (2010) description of such negative face threatening acts as having behind them the intention of one of the interlocutors intending to make the other submit to their will. This brings to the fore the issue of power versus powerlessness in intra-gender associations. As noted by Adler and Towne (1993:183), hesitations, hedging and all such expressions are signs of powerlessness in speech. Imokwa and Rade demonstrate this through their having to face the wrath of Captain Sharp at their sign of 'weakness' in daring to express maternal feelings (*Rebellion*, 6-7; 11). Bostrom (1988: 12) also observes that totalitarianism smacks of 'suppressing the freedom of expression.' This can be seen exemplified in the expressions below:

SHARP: (in a display of toughness) First, it was a dripping pair of breasts... Then a protesting foetus kicking furiously at the mother's womb. What is coming next, we don't know. Aren't we making a ridicule of ourselves?

...and now you want to make piddling excuses, turning

lofty plans into a play,... full of foolery and ridicule...No sacrifice is too much...Learn to suppress those things for which the rival sex has stamped you 'the weaker'. (turning to Imokwa) And now, for a little lesson in physical discipline, Imokwa, please jump up three times. (holding to her belly, Imokwa jumps up thrice, and grimaces afterwards)
SEGI: The Captain has spoken. We shall obey. (12-13)

Obviously, the power relations presented here is not equal. The use of 'please' is not for the sake of the respect for Imokwa, apparently. It is therefore not an attempt to mitigate her threatened face. Thus, Adler and Towne (1993) advise that '...a knowledge of the context and the personalities of the speakers is necessary before it's safe to make any assumptions about who controls whom' (p. 183). From the discussion and the extract above, it becomes easy to deduce who is actually in charge.

Moreover, it should be pointed out that Captain Sharp's use of face threatening acts negates persuasion. She evidently is compelling the actions at this point. Her use of force and compulsion to enforce the women's cooperation in the instances noted above contrasts with what O'Hair et al (1975: 579) in Adegoju (2005: 99) describe as one of the goals of persuasion. They note: 'at some level, the persuadees must have a choice – that they must perceive that they have an option to accept or reject the persuader's message.' This choice is not really allowed in Captain

Sharp's persuasion of the women she leads. Such a leader can definitely not be held accountable as she is not answerable to anyone. Jennings (1959) notes that the main duty of the opposition in a democracy is holding the government accountable to the citizenry. In Nigeria, this turns the opposition to saboteurs. Apparently, Captain Sharp is not accountable to anybody; there is no opposition to her government. This is why she could successfully threaten the women's face, and no one among them could challenge her. Her leadership is thus comparable to Nigerian governments at different levels' situation that no opposition is acceptable in the political arena despite the existence of the fifty plus other, though non-effective, political parties.

Tobrise (1998: 44) hints that Sharp's seeming unsympathetic attitude to the display of maternal impulses by some of the women as shown above could be seen as due to her possibly having been left on the shelf. This is, of course, a debatable matter, considering that Oyedepo (2002) does not really categorically state or imply this. Moreover, this paper is of the opinion that a woman has a right to choose to be single. The contention, however, is that she cannot be purportedly fighting oppression and be an agent of it herself. It portrays her as a misguided and frustrated woman leader. One wonders if this is the playwright's intention.

CONCLUSION

Oyedepo largely succeeds in presenting a larger than life portraiture of Captain Sharp. She also succeeds in

showing that women can organize people, especially themselves, politically and effectively. Moreover, their ideological posturing is streamlined and organized in such a manner that it is able to completely destabilize the status quo. They therefore succeed in attaining their political goals. This can also be done in a new Nigeria if there is sincere and committed leadership. One may however hold suspect Captain Ara Sharp's tactics of achieving her political goals.

The paper, nonetheless, is of the opinion that the women's state of powerlessness is never removed. In relation to the male characters, they become empowered, both psychologically and physically; but in relation to their leader, this reality does not hold: they remain powerless. Thus, as much as Captain Sharp could be said to have greatly succeeded in exerting influence and power through language devices she employs, she actually achieves a state of affairs she is fighting against, in a reverse order. She becomes the oppressor of the women in the stead of their men. It is also observed that her choice of words is quite offensive. As much as they are effective in changing the women's perceptions, they also reveal her as being in the same sexist class with the men she is fighting. This proves to be a way in which the play lived up to its billing as 'a feminist manifesto' probably. A phrase like *the rival sex* (p. 13) easily reveals that gender mainstreaming, to her, portrays a contest between male and female and not just the attainment of social justice.

In conclusion, the paper holds with Clark (2010, par. 1) that good leaders are made and not born. The situation the women found themselves seemed to throw up Captain Ara Sharp as a natural leader to take the women out of their state of powerlessness. However, she appears to have appealed more to the emotions of the women rather than their reason. Our argument is that rhetoric should not be a mere persuasion based on whipping up of emotions but the presentation of the truth to the interlocutors. It is from this truth that women would be able to make intelligent choices that could help the society fully realize itself without going into chaotic birth pangs of self-annihilation. It is through this responsible behaviour, rooted in accountability, that women leaders can really help women to be truly free.

In the same vein, leadership accountability in Nigeria needs to go beyond rhetoric. Talk without moral leadership makes a system ineffective. Captain Sharp actually succeeds in getting the women to accept her ideology because she gives a focus-driven leadership to them. However, her exhibition of oppressive tendencies through the employment of negative face threatening acts calls to question accountability in her leadership. Leadership should, therefore, be about exemplification that is accountable to the citizenry rather than mere talk of it as it presently obtains with most Nigerian leaders at every level of governance.

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