

Revisiting Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* by Soyinka and Views by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*: Unifying Humanity Versus Feminist Separatism

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ABSTRACT

This paper concentrates on a comparative study between Alu of the drama *The Swamp Dwellers* by Soyinka and the Feminist views of Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* while the areas of the drama so far explored and discussed are native narrative, political views, decline through modernization, moral-spiritual standpoint, family bonding and human-nature tie. In the drama, if the vital role played by Alu is construed, she appears as a woman figure of infinite capaciousness with her duties, responsibilities, feelings, commitments, rights and privileges in family and society. Alu succeeds because her human-centric Yoruba tradition gives support to her family-centric biology and psychology. But contrary to Alu, Feminist views disseminated by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* embark on the estrangement of women from family and humanity. Thus, the paper seeks to unearth how Alu of Yoruba tradition harmonizes and unifies humanity through her role in family and society while Feminism of Beauvoir opposes them and wishes women to be separated. In this qualitative research of thematic analysis method, Family Systems Theory and Religious Humanism Theory were applied. By recommending for women the re-introduction of traditional human-centric life in family and society, this research may contribute to women's emancipation from misery.

Keywords: Alu, Beauvoir, Feminist Separatism, unifying humanity, Yoruba tradition

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka (1934-), in his well-known one-act play *The Swamp Dwellers* (1958), showcases an old couple-Alu and Makuri- living in a remote village amidst a swamp in Nigeria. In their shabby poor hut, they anxiously wait for their twin sons-Igwezu and Awuchike. Igwezu is to return from his cornfield damaged by flood water and Awuchike has been away into the city for ten long years without paying a single visit to his family. For a poverty-free life, Igwezu was also in the city like Awuchike. Parents, especially the mother Alu is anxious for Igwezu because the day is full of natural calamity. Igwezu, returning from the city, went out again to see the condition of his cultivation when the swampy village had recently met with a flood. Thus, Igwezu returns from the city but not Awuchike, and Alu's pain for the latter is indescribable. Alu even engages in a heated conversation with her husband Makuri over her concern for Awuchike. Afterwards, she is invited by her husband to reminisce their happy marriage and sweet young days. Throughout the whole play, Alu is a noteworthy

character as a woman in a sincere, cordial and harmonious relationship with children, husband, household chores, society and religion.

In the drama, Soyinka's effort at forging his very own narrative as a writer native to Africa against the western hegemonic ones, Marxist spirit, concern for various changes brought about by modernization, use of the elements of Absurd drama, moral and spiritual standpoint in African myths, and corruption in the field of religion have already received critical deliberation. But the robust character Alu also appears as an inescapable area of critical attention. In the drama, Alu is almost equally powerful like the protagonist Igwezu. She is near sixty but her dedication to family, society and greater humanity is well worth readers' reverence. If the pain she receives from Awuchike's separation from the family is kept apart, she would remain a happy woman in harmonious relationship with her husband and others. If her harmonious life and activities with others are deemed as her service to humanity, it may be called unifying humanity. Here what must be mentioned is that Alu's unifying humanity stems from the strength of her social linkage with Yoruba social dynamics. Notably, if Soyinka and his attachment with Yoruba society are seen, we see "[h]is family belongs to the Yoruba people, whose culture has influenced Soyinka's works" (The Nobel Prize, 2021, "Life"). Relevantly, on Yoruba people a report writes,

The Yoruba ... are one of the largest ethno-linguistic groups in sub-Saharan Africa. Yoruba constitute about 21 percent of the population of modern day Nigeria, and they are commonly the majority population in their communities...

While Yoruba can be found throughout the entirety of West Africa, even reaching into Benin, Ghana and Togo, the greatest concentration of Yoruba is found in Yorubaland, an area in western Nigeria...(New World Encyclopedia, paras 1-2)

But Feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) in *The Second Sex* (1949) expresses views on women contrary to those of the traditional societies like Yoruba which Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* represents. Beauvoir reconstructs womanhood defying the traditional outlook to reinterpret women's role in the society. In that reinterpretation, women are not to embrace motherhood, take care of children and do household chores. Women will first and foremost do outdoor activities. Irony is she gives examples of those men who undermine women's traditional role, and proposes women to change and adopt roles outside the family. Beauvoir's untenable viewpoint is a kind of servility to those unjust men. She does not confidently urge that women will not change their traditional family sphere; it is rather those unjust men who will be back to honor tradition. Thus, not appealing to those unjust men to honor justice and humanity, she over-generalizes and shows all men as unjust and hostile to women, and paradoxically addresses women to change according to the outlooks of those who are unjust among men. Her impression is such that nothing, be it peace or chaos, can touch women but it can effect men. With this impression, she says "it is up to man" to "unequivocally affirm their brotherhood" with women (2009, pp. 862-863). When there is an allegation against Feminism that "it emanates from a world outlook based on conflict", Beauvoir proves the allegation as true with her viewpoints in her book (Elmessiri, 2004, p. 18). This is how, Beauvoir, through her hatred for men in general and reinterpretation of women, severs women's traditional and natural tie with family and related responsibilities of humanity at home. In this manner, Beauvoirian paradigm seeks to separate women from humanity.

Thus, if Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* by Soyinka, and for the commonness of woman issue, viewpoints expressed by Feminist Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* are studied, what becomes clear is that Alu upholds unifying humanity through her roles in family and society being inspired by her Yoruba tradition whereas Feminist Beauvoir, by rejecting family and society, appears to advocate a kind of separatism from humanity.

Literature review

If the review of literature on Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* is done, we see in the drama the colonial and postcolonial narrative from the perspective of a native African dramatist as well as the political views the dramatist hints at have drawn critical attention. Thus, it has been explored that Soyinka in *The Swamp Dwellers*, like Derek Walcott in *The Sea at Dauphin* and Athol Fugard in *The Island*, points finger to the discussion on the limitation of colonial and postcolonial theory, criticisms and narratives of the west addressing the islands where Europe once did exploration and colonialism. Western critical approach, with "[r]epression and erasure" tries to be "the only narrative" to which "writing back" appears to be the only option' for the islanders (Garuba, 2001, p. 73). Soyinka, like Walcott and Fugard, provides an inner narrative of "writing back" which is a limitation but bound to occur as a response to the western narrative (Garuba, 2001, p. 73). There is also the conspicuous presence of Marxist spirit in Soyinka's literary works. Thus in literary works like *The Swamp Dwellers*, "the revolutionary message is not implied but explicit" and "the heroic character is often an individual who single-handedly attempts a social transformation" (Balogun, 1988, p. 522).

Also studied in the drama is Soyinka's portrayal that the arrival of modernization following the commercial extraction of oil in 1960s brings declining changes in various fields of Nigeria. The inception of cities in Nigeria following the oil extraction brings about a drastic change in socio-economic, cultural and religious setting attracting young men and women to permanently shift from the village to the city. At the expense of the loss of all the valuable social dynamics pertaining to native tradition and culture, a new identity is assumed by the young generation. Thus a research shows the manner in which migration and acculturation gradually obliterate traditional values and restructure identity (Ferrara, 2021). As the drama shows, the arrival of modernization in Nigeria, with its predatory and derogatory impact on society and morality, is pernicious to society as well posing an obstacle for true progress and prosperity (Megbowon & Uwah, 2020). For the present day readers, solution to the crisis turns visible if the indigenous strength of Africa as reflected in the drama could be felt and their necessity in present age was analyzed from textual and postcolonial theoretical perspectives (Megbowon & Uwah, 2020). Likewise, the drama exhibits traditional man-nature cordial tie in Africa which faces jeopardy with the advent of modernity, establishment of modern cities and change in the climate (Nuri, 2018).

Critiquing on the drama *The Swamp Dwellers* has also examined the nature of the drama itself, the elements of morality, spirituality and their source for the dramatist, strong familial and social tie, and corruption in African religion. In the setting, characters, plot and language of the drama, there are distinct motifs like waiting, and eagerness for salvation that pertain to absurd drama. Also, the presence of desolation, spiritual emptiness, struggle to find meaning and objective of life qualify as absurd elements in the drama (Noureiddin, 2011). But in the drama strong moral elements of universal height remain as well. And Soyinka seems to confirm that his solid moral or ethical footing remains in African myths (Hogan, 1998). Also, the drama has profound husband-wife and son-parents relationship portraying a strong social dynamic of African tradition. (Rahman, 2014). The drama shows how corruption and commercialization enter into African religions as priests like the Kadiye, wearing the mask of holiness, exploits simple villagers to earn money that results in spiritual and moral decay in Africa (Nwosu & Chinonye, 2015). While religion itself is a must for truly civilizing mankind, the corruption by the priests is widespread in the world as it is to be found elsewhere in the world. Like the corruption of the Kadiye, the priest of the serpent god in the drama, there is Majeed in Waliullah's *Tree without Roots* in Bangladeshi context. Then the corruption of these priests is studied from foucauldian perspective of power and knowledge (Chowdhury & Dutta, 2020).

But there has hardly been any research attempt on the powerful woman figure of the drama, Alu. Being in a loving and harmonious link with her family and society, she represents unifying principles of her Yoruba tradition and culture. For their contrasting nature, come to

the forefront the Beauvoirian paradigms on women's emancipation as expressed in *The Second Sex*. Thus, the crystallized idea states that Alu of Yoruba propounds unifying principles of humanity whereas Beauvoir posits proposals of separation from others. This research is thus motivated by this gap.

METHOD

In this research the methodology of thematic analysis was followed. In this thematic analysis, on woman issue, a comparative study was done between traditional Yoruba views revealed through Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* by Soyinka and Feminist views of Beauvoir expressed in *The Second Sex*. Then the overall ideas explored from the comparative study of the two streams of thought were critiqued from the unified structure of knowledge as opined by Wilson and Nasr.

In the comparative study, Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* originating from Yoruba tradition provides a global picture on women's various sacred and beautiful roles in their families in traditional societies. But Feminism propounded by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* opposes ideas stemming from Alu and other traditional women. Thus when we thought of applying a suitable theory on the comparative study, it appeared to be a difficult task as we could discern that focus on Alu would often lead us to areas where there would be events related to Alu's feeling of the pull of soul for children and husband which in true sense can never be measured with any yardstick. Yet Bowen's Family Systems Theory seemed to cover a remarkable area in analyzing Alu's familial and social life belonging to Yoruba tradition. Notably, the definition of Bowen Family Systems Theory states

[It] is a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the unit's complex interactions ... People solicit each other's attention, approval, and support, and they react to each other's needs, expectations, and upsets. This connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent (The Bowen Center, 2021, para. 1).

Family Systems Theory turns more accommodating when '[Knapp] presents thorough, convincing defenses of interdisciplinary literary scholarship, especially of the integration of contemporary psychology and literary criticism, and of mimetic or "realistic" literary characterization even in the age of postmodernism...' (Bump, 1997, p.330). Knapp, in his attempt of integration, says, "Ours is a world in which language is not self-sufficient but embedded in society and history, especially the history of individual families" (as cited in Bump, 1997, p. 330). For this reason, we selected Family Systems Theory.

Then as the process of the comparative study required us to include religious parameter, we opted for Religious Humanism theory. Its definition states,

Religious humanism embraces some form of theism, deism, or supernaturalism, without necessarily being allied with organized religion. The existence of God or the divine, and the relationship between God and human beings is seen as an essential aspect of human character, and each individual is endowed with unique value through this relationship. Humanism within organized religion can refer to the appreciation of human qualities as an expression of God, or to a movement to acknowledge common humanity and to serve the needs of the human community (as cited in Uddin, 2021, p. 23).

When Wilson's opinion on the relation among and structure of knowledge domains was included as a standpoint pertaining to Family Systems Theory, Nasr's views on knowledge that comprise the God of monotheism (more specifically, Allah in Nasr's Islamic belief) necessitated to switch to Religious Humanism Theory.

As materials for the research, we collected relevant books, articles, essays and interview in print versions and from various reliable internet sources. Then data in compliance with the

research focus were carefully obtained and judiciously analyzed. This is how we carried out the study to reach our finding and draw a conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Alu's Unifying Roles, and in Each Case Beauvoir's Separating Views

The care a woman is to have from her husband

When, in search of her son Igwezu, Alu wants to go out herself at a time of natural calamity in the swamp, Makuri says, "Stay where you are" (1973, p. 83). Alu does not go out, nor does she feel disheartened for Makuri's show of anger. Alu realizes that her husband's tone of anger is actually a tone of care. Alu knows the Yoruba ethics that women are to be cared for by men because they are physically weak. When the local priest the Kadiye asks Makuri and Alu whether Desala has come with her husband Igwezu, Alu, still to know about Desala's shift from Igwezu to Awuchike, says, "He wouldn't want to expose her to the flooded roads and other discomforts of the journey" (1973, p. 97). Alu wants to mean that there has been incessant rain, and movement in the swamp, including crossing the river is full of risk. Besides, many other difficulties remain in a journey. So, Igwezu, with care for his wife, has not perhaps brought her from the city. This is how what is clear is that in Alu's Yoruba society men maintain an ethics that women are physically weak and they must be taken care of properly. All dangers will be faced by men keeping women safe. Even, Yoruba ethics is such that a woman will walk in front and the man will remain behind her so as to ensure safety to her. Familusi writes,

In Yoruba ethics, it is the responsibility of men to give protection to women as weaker sex. When they walk together, the woman should be allowed to go in front while the man follows her so as to afford her protection and defence in case there is any danger. ... Implicitly, she is more cherished in this regard. (2012, p. 307)

In Yoruba society the male attitude or perspective of care with regard to female is perhaps the scenario in almost all traditional societies of the world. Defying society in some or many cases, men nurture negative, even harshly inferiorizing point of view about women. But this must not be generalized and thus masculine identity must not be demonized. Traditional societies, that preserve a space of care for women, must not be dismissed; it must be retained or recuperated. But Beauvoir wants to say that all men in all traditions, cultures and religions, instead of looking at women as complete human beings, consider them as female sexual organ to derive pleasure from or an organ to give birth to children. She says men hold this viewpoint of severe insult about women while they feel proud of their identity. Beauvoir writes,

Woman? Very simple, say those who like simple answers: She is a womb, an ovary; she is a female: this word is enough to define her. From a man's mouth, the epithet "female" sounds like an insult; but he, not ashamed of his animality, is proud to hear: "He's a male!" (2009, p. 41)

Actually, most of the men who consider women simply as sexual organ of physical pleasure are men from capitalist West or capitalist men from any other region of the world. The reason is Capitalism allows boundless enjoyment. Capitalism is originally a theory of Economy, on which a viewpoint says,

Capitalism, also called free market economy or free enterprise economy, economic system, dominant in the Western world since the breakup of feudalism, in which most means of production are privately owned and production is guided and income distributed largely through the operation of markets. (Britannica, 2020, para. 1)

So, when Capitalism is all-pervasive, its “free” attitude in economy transmits into the behavior of the state reflecting in its treatment of the subjects. Paradigm shifts occur from tradition to Capitalism. A relevant viewpoint says,

Capital leaves not the tiniest corner of society free of its domination ... The supervision by the state of the moral life of the proletariat is directly related to the proletariat’s role in commodity production, including the production of labor power itself, without which the entire capitalist society would cease to exist. (Dixon, 1977, p. 18)

The strong inflict tyranny upon the weak in all spheres. Consequently, among many, women turn out to be the sufferers when capitalist men, with a sense of sheer superiority, reduce them to female sexual organ to derive pleasure from. Beauvoir’s viewpoint is mostly applicable in case of capitalist men. This point achieves more truth when we see that she gives her views relying on capitalistic France and greater Europe of similar nature during the first half of the 20th century. So, problem lies mostly with Capitalism, not masculinity which Beauvoir perhaps fails to notice. Likewise, she overlooks the wider scenario where traditional societies express a caring attitude to women. She indiscriminately blames all men and thus, makes masculinity itself the enemy of women. This is how Beauvoir’s message is of anger and separation while, with her happy life in connection with husband, family and society in Yoruba, Alu’s message is of love and unity.

Appreciation of women’s motherhood and subsequent raising of children

When the day is calamitous, and Alu and Makuri wait for their son Igwezu to return home from his corn field, there has been hot yet caring words exchanged between the husband and the wife on the subject matter of the well-being of their son. Their altercation includes Awuchike too. To make the situation normal, Makuri wants to remember his wedding night with Alu. As Alu feels shy, Makuri says, “Won’t you even tell how you dragged me from the house and we went across the swamps, though it was so dark that I could not see the white of your eyes?” (1973, p. 85). Then Alu is convinced, and both are “in a warmer vein of memory” (Cook, 1964, p. 38). The story of the drama gives hints that Alu in her wedding night became pregnant and later gave birth to twin babies, Awuchike and Igwezu. Here Alu’s dragging of her husband to the river bed in the swamp and becoming pregnant are significant. It is as if the force with which she dragged her husband was chiefly the forecasting of her force that she would express by becoming a mother and nurturing her children. Actually, Alu was prompted not only by her female instinct but also by her Yoruba society’s recognition of power and forceful action in a woman when she becomes a mother and takes care of the children. Olajubu writes, “Images of kneeling and breastfeeding figures ... reinforce the motif of motherhood as an avenue of power. ... women’s experiences of pain and labor could be invoked as an equally potent force for action” (2003, p. 16). Thus, in Yoruba culture, the posture in which a mother kneels and breastfeeds her child indicates motherhood as power. The pain and severe hardship which a woman goes through during giving birth to her child are considered tremendous energy for actions in life. This is how, Yoruba culture, far from showing negligence, recognizes every stage of motherhood, and motherly affection and care for the children. Alu represents this positive cultural and humane scenario in Yoruba culture.

When Alu’s happiness conflates her being a mother, raising children and caring for them even when they are grown-ups, we see the implications of a unifying humanity. On the other hand, Beauvoir gives support to abortion going against motherhood. She urges all to resist motherhood and demands worldwide legitimacy of abortion. While expressing this demand, she asserts, “Nothing is more absurd than the arguments used against legislating abortion” (2009, p. 596). While justifying abortion, what she says furthermore is noteworthy. She says,

The practical reasons invoked against legal abortion are completely unfounded; as with moral reasons, they are reduced to the old Catholic argument: the fetus has a soul, and the gates to paradise are closed to it without baptism. It is worth noting that the Church

authorizes the killing of adult men in war, or when it is a question of the death penalty; but it stands on intransigent humanitarianism for the fetus. (2009, p. 599)

When Catholicism invalidates killing fetus as it is actually killing life, Beauvoir terms the argument as “old”. She perhaps fails to see that truth never turns old. Scholarship demands that scholars will try to see whether something is true or false, not whether old or new. This has not been done by Beauvoir. Then, mentioning the approval of Catholic church in killing men in war and death penalty, Beauvoir seems to say that Catholic church itself allows killing life, so it cannot have the moral ground to oppose the killing of fetus. But in saying so, Beauvoir unknowingly has disclosed the idea that if Catholic church has the right of homicide, women must be given the right too in committing their homicide through killing fetus. However, not allowing motherhood for a woman means Beauvoir likes to keep a woman as an isolated individual, without adding to her the identity of a mother. This is giving a blow upon the perpetuity of human generations, sequestering a woman from family and society resulting in her loneliness and otherness which is sure to make her suffer.

But Yoruban Alu stands apart with her life’s philosophy of construction that consists of unification and harmony. In opposition to it, stands Beauvoirian apocalypse of motherhood and subsequent human bonding.

Recognition of women’s feminine features

Makuri at one stage of the drama proudly mentions the inflexible honesty of Alu by remembering an event when she confidently rejected the traders who, showing the hardships in poor swampy village, had offered her to go with them to the city and assured her a luxurious comfortable life. Makuri recalls the memory by saying,

Those traders-every one of them wanted you to go back with him; promised he’d make you live like a lady, clothe you in silks and have servants to wait on your smallest wants . . . You don’t belong here, they used to tell you. Come back with us to the city where men know the value of women . . . No, there was no doubt about it. You could have had your choice of them. You turned their heads like a pot of cane brew. (1973, p. 85)

The swamp is “home, the center or point of origin” for Alu which is why she rejects those traders (Garuba, 2001, p. 66). Makuri also remembers Alu’s patience, and ability to smile with him despite a greater poverty caused by natural calamity in earlier days. Makuri says, “Ah well . . . Those were the days . . . those days were really good. Even when times were harsh and the swamp overran the land, we were able to laugh with the Serpent” (1973, p. 87). From these two instances what we have realized about Alu is that she can confidently play her role in her family by unhesitatingly holding on to her feminine features of love, affection, patience, calmness, perseverance, honesty etc. Actually, in her Yoruba value system, the feminine features are rather matters of welcome, necessity, and even beautiful metaphors of oratory. Olajubu writes,

Female principles are generally regarded as symbols of coolness (*ero*) whereas male principles are construed as representing toughness (*lile*). This underlines the people’s s conception of female (*abo*) and male (*ako*). Hence the people say, “*K’odun yi y’abo fun wa o*” meaning “may this year be female for us” . . . (2003, p. 9)

Alu, with all her feminine attributes that can be described with a single word “coolness”, is determined and happy. When her husband’s attributes or, in general, male attributes in Yoruba are signified with “toughness”, they must have been positive in nature. If it were not so, they would be in conflict with Alu’s. Thus, being in this harmony, Makuri happily remembers Alu’s steadfast mindset in rejecting the offer of the traders. Makuri also proudly remembers her power of endurance and remaining happy when Makuri’s economic condition was more shabby. So, Alu, with her “coolness” in harmonious and complementary position

with Makuri's "toughness", is a happy woman. Notably, Alu's "coolness", in another sense, has inherent "toughness" when she is inflexible in her positions of honesty, patience and love. Correspondingly, Makuri's "toughness" has "coolness" when he too waits with "unbearable uncertainties" for Igwezu and Awuchiike, and undergoes a severe inner pain for them (Cook, 1964, p.38). This is all about dignified humans with limitless beauty where engrained is harmony between men and women.

But Beauvoir appears with her intellectual rejection of a woman's feminine features which remain in harmony with her husband's in the family. Here quite relevant is what Beauvoir writes on a woman's relation with society:

She delights in showing off her home and even herself, which her husband and children do not see because they have a vested interest in them. Her social duty, which is to "represent," will become part of the pleasure she has in showing herself to others. (2009, p. 649)

It is right when to Beauvoir family does not appear to be "a closed community" because family does have interaction with society. Family does this interaction keeping intra-family activities smooth. But the intra-family activities and in them, the role of a woman are not concentrated on by Beauvoir. Perhaps to avoid it, she does not even keep a chapter called The Family Life, the way she has permitted the chapter The Social Life in *The Second Sex*. Not concentrating on the duties and responsibilities of a woman in her intra-family activities, Beauvoir sheds light on a woman's role in inter-family or societal activities. The truth is a woman does have societal activities but not skipping her familial ones. Moreover, Beauvoir is perhaps not right as she says that representation of family to society is done only by a woman. Her husband and children represent the family too. Furthermore, Beauvoir says a woman interacts with society by representing her home and herself to it. Are interaction and representation same in meaning? Actually interaction signifies duties and responsibilities, and by not mentioning interaction Beauvoir seems to avoid social duties and responsibilities of a woman. Again by saying "She delights in showing off her home and even herself", Beauvoir equates representation with show off which denotes pride, and pride human beings must get rid of noticing all the physical limitations and superior natural forces they encounter each moment. Also, Beauvoir places a woman's husband and children in a hostile position with the woman by saying that they have "a vested interest" when the woman is busy "in showing off her home and even herself". Thus, Beauvoir evades or discloses silent dismissal of the truth that in family a woman, with her feminine features like love, patience and calmness remains in harmony with her husband who as a man has his. By so doing, Beauvoir wishes to focus a woman's role in building social standing for her family. But overgeneralizing her materialistic European experience, Beauvoir's very placement of husbands and even children in negative light turns antagonistic to the institution of family.

Women in their private space of raising children and doing household chores

From the beginning of the drama we see Alu involved in various household activities. Already it is clear that she has successfully taken care of her two sons, Igwezu and Awuchiike who are adult, and in good health now. The drama opens with busy Alu and Makuri in the parlor cum family workshop of their hut. Makuri is making baskets with rushes and Alu is undoing the patterns of adire cloths (a native Yoruba cloth with unique design) which is already dyed. Alu anxiously waits for her son Igwezu to return home safely on a calamitous day. She is also anxious for his return in time so that he is not late for the dinner which she will serve. She washes the feet of the blind exhausted Beggar as he comes to her hut as a stranger. She applies an ointment on the feet of the beggar later for his comfort. When the arrival of the village priest the Kadiye is understood beforehand, Alu is eager to receive him duly and, thus her enthusiastic involvement with household chores is more obvious. The dramatist writes,

Alu begins to tidy the room hastily. She takes away Makuri's baskets and rushes, returns to fetch her own things and takes them out of the room. She trims the lamp wicks and takes away any oddments lying around. (1973, p. 93)

In fact, a woman plays her exclusive role as a mother and responsible person for the household affairs. This role ultimately contributes in a wider sphere when the children whom she takes care of grow up to contribute to the society. This exclusive role of a woman, for which she is mentally and physically suitable with perfection, is preserved by almost all the cultures and traditions of the world. Olajubu writes,

The private domain, i.e., domesticity and motherhood, seems to be the space for women in most cultures. Private and public space are however linked. Women, for instance, shape the lives of those who occupy the public space in their capacity as mothers and people who nurture. (2003, p. 10)

Alu does instinctively realize the worth of becoming a mother after her marriage and her subsequent role in taking care of her children besides doing household chores. In these pulsating activities of humanity, Alu finds happiness far from considering it an obstacle in achieving it. She is not confined to her "private" space because it is indirectly connected with "public space" as her children are supposed to contribute in that "public space". And from Makuri's side, in entire drama, we do not see an iota of negligence to Alu for her involvement with children and household chores. Rather there are always tacit and vocal appreciations. Hence, both Alu and Makuri "are rooted in a sense of permanence" in Yoruba tradition (Cook, 1964, p. 40). The viewpoint is held by almost all the women all over the world as integral with their inner self. It brings them honour too. Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, while using wheat metaphors, reminisces his childhood and remembers the extraordinary smell of bread served by his mother. Al-Sheikh writes, 'Darwish prides himself on the bread of his mother. In his poem "I am a mom's bread," his scent of bread (life) appears to be connected with his mother's smell' (2021, p.84). Darwish's mother is gloriously portrayed in his poem because she understood the worth of her private space consisting of raising children and doing household chores. Thus a woman as a mother is not only shown honour but also immortalized.

But Beauvoir interferes into the inner self of women, upholds direct and immediate gain and interprets women's happiness in children's contributions in 'public space' as "women's indirect involvement" and "the dream of passive success" (2009, p. 439). Then she says that such a woman "will hold back her own accomplishments" (2009, p. 439). It is almost expressing the viewpoint that a gardener should not be happy when in his garden flowers bloom because the blooming is the direct affair of the plants whereas it is indirect for the gardener and for this reason, to be happy, the gardener himself should grow flowers on his body. Beauvoir could change the angle of her observation and notice that keeping children and husband in good health, enabling children to be properly educated, and keeping home tidy and clean are a woman's direct success where her husband's success is indirect. However, for women, Beauvoir prioritizes outdoor jobs over the familial ones. It undoubtedly contributes to breaking of the unified system in family structure.

To see from a different perspective, for Makuri's making of baskets, physical labor is more required than mental focus. But in Alu's work at cloths mental focus and patience are more essential than physical labor. Makuri's basket making indicates his outdoor activities, especially in his farm land which he was more involved with at young age. Alu's work at cloths indicates her role in the indoor affairs of taking care of children, family and household chores. This is how Alu and Makuri complementarily play their roles for the smooth functioning of the family. Actually, among Yoruba people men and women, with their respective roles resulting from their belief in cosmic arrangement, complementarily ensure the smooth functioning of the society. Women mainly take care of their children and household affairs whereas men do the

outdoor activities like agriculture that require hard physical labor. While in this complementary contribution to family and society, women remain happy far from feeling any sense of deprivation or torture. Olajubu writes,

The existence of gender construct among the Yoruba does not translate to notions of oppression and the domination of women by men, because it is mediated by the philosophy of complementary gender relations, which is rooted in the people's cosmic experience, ... (2003, p. 9)

Alu, being a sincere member of Yoruba culture, does understand that she and her husband complementarily play their roles, and thus they enable the family as well as the society function smoothly.

But Feminist Beauvoir rejects the idea of men and women's exclusive and complementary roles in the family and society. She advocates a woman's participation in outdoor activities pertaining to politics, economy, society etc as precondition to becoming a mother. That is, to her, for a woman, those outdoor activities side by side with men, if not like men though it seems to be the reality making men her standard of life, are more important than becoming a mother. She writes,

But today she demands participation in the movement by which humanity ceaselessly tries to find justification by surpassing itself; she can only consent to give life if life has meaning; she cannot try to be a mother without playing a role in economic, political, or social life. (2009, p. 645)

Beauvoir does not see the truth that a woman does participate in economy, politics and society when her children, receiving proper care from her, become persons with strong aptitude and play their vital roles in those sectors which is manifested by Alu's Yoruba society. Beauvoir seems to suggest a self-serving purpose for women, that is, she is of the psychology that children's success in outdoor activities cannot please a woman; rather a woman has to be involved in those activities in order to be pleased. Even this act of being pleased is called "humanity" by her. Her "humanity" turns ironical because she actually turns anti-human when she, for a woman, prioritizes outdoor activities over the truly humanitarian act of becoming a mother and raising children.

A woman in a collective identity with others in her family household

Awuchike, one of the twin sons of Alu and Makuri, went to the "dehumanizing" city, and has not returned or visited his family in its family household for ten years (Garuba, 2001, p. 70). Perhaps he never will. So, Alu, like her husband Makuri, is extremely agonized. As a mother, of course, she feels for her son. Also, when his return to the hut is felt, it seems to hint at the importance of the family household as a place to uphold collective family identity to the society. To Alu, it seems Awuchike is getting apart from that collective family identity. It is almost equal to death. This is why, her subconscious mind perhaps makes her say "Awuchike was drowned" (1973, p.83).

In Yoruba culture, as regards family household or *Ebi*, it is so viewed that "each individual is identified by the public not with any of his/her direct parents, but with the household that he/she resides" (Abdul, 2014, p. 81). Here psychological impact in an individual's identity as linked with his visible family household is clearly discernable. Or, if the family is an idea, the household is its manifestation. Thus an individual gives effort to remain a good individual for the image of his *Ebi*, and it is eventually reflected in the society. As a result, order prevails in the society. Society in turn provides a favorable environment to an individual irrespective of gender. The result is much awaited peace both for men and women. Abdul writes,

In this connection, each individual has the responsibility to protect the name and image of the *Ebi*. The inculcation of values and codes of conduct that project the good name of

the *Ebi* in the larger society into the psyche of each member is a fundamental mechanism that engenders social order. (2014, p. 85)

Alu, through her care for family and society including her deep concern for Awuchike, sincerely tries to uphold the image of her *Ebi* as it is done by her husband and Igwezu. So, Alu herself is in a collective identity and does care for it.

But Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* only focuses on others' duty to or interactions with a woman, not on a woman's to others. Thus, by isolating a woman from all her essential domains - family, relatives, society, culture, tradition, history, religion, etc., Beauvoir tries to give an individual identity to a woman. So, a woman does not have to preserve the image of any of those domains which Alu is profoundly conscious of. With an individual identity, a woman is suggested by Beauvoir to be autonomous in this manner. The truth is this autonomy is sheer arbitrariness to result in a painful loneliness.

A woman's sense of humanity reaching beyond her family

Alu feels sympathy and a sense of humanity seeing the pain of others, not only that she has a feeling of fathomless love for her family. When the Beggar tells Makuri about their long-awaited favorable weather in Bukanji and subsequent success in agriculture as well as the sudden appearance of locusts destroying the entire crops to nothingness, Alu cannot help expressing her sympathy for the Beggar and the villagers of Bukanji. Moaning, she says, "Ay-ii, Ay-ii . . ." (1973, p. 99). As Makuri asks Alu to bring water so that the muddy feet of the Beggar can be washed, Alu, on her own, brings warm water both for the cleanliness and comfort of the Beggar. After cleaning his feet with her own hands and drying them up, she furthermore applies on them an ointment to remove possible ache. Soyinka describes the scenario by writing,

While the Beggar is speaking [with Makuri], Alu squats down and washes his feet. When this is finished, she wipes them dry, takes a small jar from one of the shelves, and rubs his feet with some form of ointment. (1973, p. 98).

This much is done by her ignoring the weakness of her old age because she feels sympathy for the Beggar when he says that he has walked most of the distance from Bukanji to the swamp taking more than several weeks' time. A blind man who is a beggar and at the same time has walked that far is something which does naturally arouse a sense of humanity in Alu. When in this manner, readers see Alu's profound care for the Beggar who is simply a stranger to her, readers' minds unknowingly generate awe for her. In fact, Alu learns from her Yoruba society which is humanistic by nature. This can be understood when we look at the characteristics and construction of its families and their link with the society. Abdul writes, "In Yoruba parlance, *Ebi* is the appropriate term for family and it is the basic unit of the society", and "each individual is identified by the public not with any of his/her direct parents, but with the household that he/she resides" (Abdul, 2014, p. 81). Then, Abdul points out,

...the term [*Ebi*] connotes family bonds beyond what obtains either in a nuclear or extended family, that is, *Ebi* means that an individual has family connections with so many other individuals outside the immediate household that he/she resides, in other words, the term suggests that one's family goes beyond one's nuclear and extended families.

In its denotative sense, *Ebi* as a family household occupies a large compound popularly called *Agbo Ile* (conglomerate of houses) where each individual member of the household possesses an apartment of his/her own with or without a nuclear or extended family. (2014, p. 81)

Then Abdul writes,

In the *Agbo Ile* [conglomerate of houses], there are families of different lineages that live together as one in commensality. Some of these families of different lineages may have relationships with the household through marriage, adoption, and other linkages created by human or natural factors – for example, displacement resulting from either war or natural disaster. (2014, p. 82)

This is how we see a Yoruba family, while going through various happy or tragic experiences of life, includes into the compound of its family household people from other families or lineages and becomes one single family entity. With this broadness of heart, a Yoruba family can build permanent and intimate bonding with others. Alu's husband Makuri owns simply a shabby hut in the swamp because he is poor. So, to the Beggar, Makuri may not offer a house to be included into their family compound. But Makuri and his wife Alu, in their hearts, do have the magnanimity of Yoruba tradition in making others intimate. So, Alu considers the Beggar as someone belonging to her family and takes care of him accordingly.

In this manner, we visualize Alu's happiness in serving humanity which is the impact of her unalloyed womanhood and Yoruba society. On the other hand, what Beauvoir tends to do with myriads of scholarly references in *The Second Sex* is the reconstruction of women for the convenience of separating them from the duties and responsibilities of motherhood, children and household chores which society has determined for them. Thus, Beauvoir tries to cause for women a disjuncture from service to humanity.

Background Behind the Characterization of Alu

The experience of colonialism and modernization makes Soyinka notice that Western Hellenic approach in literature is also unethical. So for ethics in his literature he depends on his Yoruba tradition, that is, to Soyinka, "...Yoruba traditions are more thoroughly imbued with ethical principle than are the Hellenic myth of so much European literature", hence the female figure Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* is the embodiment of that Yoruba ethics and humanity (Hogan, 1998, p. 585). Noticeably, the myth of the Yoruba tradition has a universal appeal which Soyinka advocates and thus "[e]thical universalism ... animates Soyinka's use of [Yoruba] myth in drama" (Hogan, 1998, p. 585). In this process Alu of Yoruba tradition resembles Linde of *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen in European context, who "manifests the teachings of *The Holy Bible*" belonging to the Christian tradition (Uddin, 2021, p.26), whose "human-centricity shines" like Alu (Uddin, 2021, p.27).

Alu's Unifying Role Manifesting Unity of Knowledge While Beauvoir's Views Advocating Separation from It

Men and women have their respective nature in their respective roots of biology and psychology. So, in the field of Social Science, biology and psychology must be concentrated on as the discipline gives one of its major focuses on human nature. This is why, Wilson cannot support some great Social Science scholars like Durkheim, Marx, Boas and Freud who do not shed light on biology and psychology while doing their studies on humans. Wilson writes, "They aimed to isolate their nascent disciplines from the foundational sciences of biology and psychology..." (1998, p. 200). Those scholars eventually could not prove themselves right after the end of their time. Wilson writes, "But once the pioneering era ended, the theorists were mistaken not to include biology and psychology. It was no longer a virtue to avoid the roots of human nature" (1998, p. 200).

While Social Science concentrates on "human nature", Wilson's emphasis is on the study of biology and psychology of men and women because those two areas are unique among them, and accordingly their human nature becomes unique too. Similarly, in *The Swamp Dwellers*, the "human nature" of Alu emanates from her unique female biology and psychology distinct from her husband's. Notably, the essential instinctive level of her female psychology turns enriched with knowledge and wisdom from her Yoruba tradition, culture, history and religion, and the enrichment occurs in accordance with the human-centric structure of her unique female psychology. Thus, Alu's "human nature", having its origin in her biology and psychology, is

not only the relationship of Social Science with biology and psychology, but also it is a part of the greater truth that all disciplines of knowledge are convivially inter-connected, and whenever this interconnection is maintained in any task of knowledge in any discipline, the task of knowledge assumes greatness. Wilson states, “Units and processes of a discipline that conform with solidly verified knowledge in other disciplines have proven consistently superior in theory and practice to units and processes that do not conform” (1998, p. 216). And the idea of the unity of knowledge achieves perfection with the belief of a Creator-Controller God of monotheism behind the system because the harmony and unity can never occur on their own which is the very worldview comprising all creations and knowledge. Islamic civilization manifests this worldview. Nasr (2009) writes,

Of course, Islamic civilization is based upon tawhid, upon unity, and in the framework of the Islamic sciences all the different disciplines, from poetry to music to philosophy to history to geology to medicine to physics and mathematics, all of these have some kind of interrelation. There has always been an overall world view that has embraced them. (Answer no. 2, para. 1)

This is the greatest of all truth. Along the path of this greatest truth, Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* goes a long way by realizing Wilson’s unity of knowledge. Unlike animals, men are innately familial and social with proneness for long standing ties with others, especially with those in the family, and create moral principles to live happily in the family. Even the long-standing ties emerge as codes of morality and rules to govern society. Wilson writes, “Human social existence, unlike animal sociality, is based on the genetic propensity to form long-term contracts that evolve by culture into moral precepts and law” (1998, p. 325). Alu of Yoruba society expresses this “genetic propensity”, and lives a life of harmonious unification which is of course a happy one.

Beauvoir too takes into consideration biology and psychology while focusing female human nature. But while looking at biology of women, instead of looking at women’s biology itself, she seems to hypothetically establish a point that pregnancy is not an integral part of womanhood. She gives examples of some small or microscopic creatures among whom females do not involve themselves in sexuality for the purpose of reproduction. She argues, “In one-celled animals, infusorians, amoebas, bacilli, and so on, multiplication is fundamentally distinct from sexuality, with cells dividing and subdividing individually” (2009, pp.41-42). So, Beauvoir wishes to say that women, for their being women, are not bound to go through sexuality with the purpose of pregnancy. Not doing women’s biological analysis from objective point of view, Beauvoir wishes to separate women from pregnancy with a view to separating them from subsequent motherhood, care of children and related household chores. Again, when Beauvoir attempts to analyze psychology of women, she claims to have her findings in a way so that they can support her earlier biological findings. She writes, “The female is a woman insofar as she feels herself as such” (2009, p. 73). It means males ascribe on females the thoughts of pregnancy, motherhood and motherly care for children, and make them women; that is, those male-ascribed thoughts are not native to female psychology. In this way, Beauvoir’s analysis on women from biological and psychological perspectives does not reflect their true human nature. Thus, the analysis cannot make a bridge with Social Science. By not conforming with the Unity of Knowledge, and attempting disunity or isolation or separation among various branches of knowledge, Beauvoir’s views loses its strength.

Thus, Beauvoir poses her radical Feminism which, being reluctant to family, advocates not only abortion and childlessness but also lesbianism which never matches with African or any human culture. Familusi writes, “Things such abortion, lesbianism, and choosing to have children or not; advocated by radical feminism (Ukpokolo 2005:119) must be ignored as they negate African cultural heritage” (2012, p. 310). But Liberal Feminism is also against true familial and social values because it stereotypically treats women separating them from the whole and tries to hand over freedom shattering traditional paradigms. Baehr (2021) writes,

“Liberalism is a family of doctrines that emphasize the value of freedom and hold that the just state ensures freedom for individuals. Liberal feminists embrace this value and this role for the state and insist on freedom for women” (para. 1). So, in Feminism, starting from Beauvoir’s radical version to the Liberal one, there is only monolithic focus on women separating them from family as if they will live in the world separately.

Notably, Feminists even try to historically establish women’s separation from common humanity and concomitant ideas. A Feminist write-up discovers poetic figures Christine de Pizan and Marie de France as the founders of Feminism in the Medieval Age while poetic figures like Petrarch and Boccaccio are marked as the founders of humanism which aimed at ending the dark age. The write-up states, “Therefore, it can be asserted that besides humanism, the foundations of feminism [were] also laid in the Middle Ages” (Bashpinar, 2015, p. 23). What is proved is Feminism is apart from humanism. Not seeking solution to women’s crisis in humanism or not trying to establish the demand within the concept is tendency toward separation from all. It is more frustrating when proneness to separation is even expressed regarding history because the practice may produce separate woman history starting from Eve resulting in the formation of all time Amazonian history of Amazonian myth.

Thus, Yoruban Alu of *The Swamp Dwellers* accords with Wilson’s biological and psychological analysis of men and women as unique entities, their inevitable and durable linkage in family and society, and goes a long way in realizing Islamic worldview of knowledge as discovered by Nasr. It indicates the epistemological value of Alu’s unifying or holistic role of humanity in her family and society. In this process, Alu makes clear that Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, not doing an objective analysis, tries to biologically and psychologically interpret that pregnancy, motherhood, motherly care and related household chores are not integral part of a woman’s feminine identity. So, Beauvoir appears with her Feminism which separates women from family and society.

CONCLUSION

In fine, in *The Swamp Dwellers*, the roles played by Yoruban Alu in her family and society are the roles of unifying humanity. But when through Alu’s unifying role of humanity ideas that are propounded by Soyinka are studied in comparison with the views of Beauvoir in 852 pages of *The Second Sex*, we find that she gives scholarly effort for women’s emancipation by separating them from family, society, mankind and humanity. Thus, Beauvoir’s views on women may be termed as Feminist Separatism. This attempt has a consequence that women will be separated from the care and right which they are supposed to have from the society of just men and women. Meanwhile, when “Yoruba women are very intelligent, lively, expressive, courageous, devoted to family, enterprising and versatile” and Yoruban Alu is one of them, she seems to foreground women’s traditional unifying roles of humanity in family and society as an effective means of women’s emancipation in a global context of women’s misery (as cited in Familusi, 2012, p. 309). With the contribution of the finding of this research, just men and women may identify those men who deviate away from the teachings of their traditional society or build attachment with newly emerged cultures like the capitalist one and deem women with negligence or insult, and thus those just men and women may take measures to reassociate those deviated men with the teachings of their traditional society and arrange human-centric education both for men and women to enable women’s emancipation process achieve success.

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