

Feminist, Ideological Contestations and the Tripod of Language, Identity and Solidarity in Irene Salami Agunloye's Dramaturgy

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Abstract

This paper examines Irene Salami's dramaturgy from the post-colonial feminist point of view, with emphasis on language, identity and solidarity as stand-points of her dramaturgy. The aim of the paper is to critically examine how the tripod of language, identity and solidarity are effectively harnessed as aesthetic elements by Irene Salami in her plays in order to assert her feminist ideological contestations. Being a textual analysis, the paper adopts a qualitative methodology approach. The data for the research are sourced through the primary texts under review and the secondary texts, which are other relevant materials that give scholarly perspective to the paper. Some of the findings in the paper show that Irene Salami's dramaturgy thrives on the feminist ideological theory and the interplay of language, identity and solidarity among her characters in her plays. The paper concludes that Salami's dramaturgy is heavily laden with contestations about women's right, privileges, dignity and socio political and economic power in patriarchal society. Among other recommendations, the paper recommends that more fora and avenues be created by government, the academia, religious, organizations, socio-cultural organizations as well as global organizations for the purposes of addressing all-encompassing contestations by women.

Keywords: Feminism, Contestations, Ideology, Language, Identity, Solidarity, Dramaturgy

Introduction

Literary writers since the turn of 19th Century have consciously and always pursue their literary preoccupations in line with ideological principles they tend to believe in (Eagleton 54). Since literary writers are

part of the society in which they live, happenings in their society often inform their ideological dispositions as writers. As such, their literary vocation tends to serve as tools for ideological contestations, conscientization and propaganda.

It is in the light of the above that this work examines Irene Salami - Agunloye's dramaturgy from the prisms of feminism, standing on the tripod of language, identity and solidarity. The dramaturgy of Irene Salami-Agunloye, a re-noun Nigerian and Pan-African female playwright, thrives on feminist ideological contestation. Her plays, usually situated in male dominated societies, have always projected feminist thematic and aesthetic narrative traits that have continued to generate interest in contemporary literary discourse.

As a gender constituency, women in Salami's plays always employ the weapons of language, identity and solidarity in their struggles for self-actualization and self-determination. As a matter of fact, they seem to find it expedient to arrive at a common means of expression that make them know who they are and to align together for the purpose of achieving their aim. It is against this backdrop that this paper undertakes an exegesis of Irene Salami's plays to show how they thrive on the tripod of language, identity and solidarity.

Women in patriarchal societies have always struggled to assert their rights and dignity as the case may be. These struggles have taken socio-political, intellectual and of course literary dimensions. From the literary dimension, many literary writers have emerged who employ their literary works as tools for feminist agitation. The increasing rise in feminist ideology across the global community has added impetus to the quest to interpret literary plays along this ideological prism. Thus, this study seeks to examine how Irene Salami pursues feminist contestations and ideals through the tripod of language, identity and solidarity in her plays. The representative plays to be reviewed are critically discussed, with penchant to the tenets of feminist ideology from the stand-points of language, identity and solidarity as platforms for actualization of aspirations and goals by women. It is hoped that at the end, this paper should be able to eloquently articulate how Irene Salami has been able to

pursue feminist agitation in her plays through the stand-points of language, identity and solidarity.

This discourse is of great significance for a couple of reasons. First, in this era of serious quest for women awakening and conscientization, this paper opens further vistas that are instrumental towards the galvanization and realization of feminist aspirations by women. The second significance of this discourse is that it shows that dramatic literature is not just concerned with entertainment; as Plato puts it, “art for art's sake”, but it is also interested in the burning sociological issues of the time, such as the one concerning women. In this case therefore, this study shows how the playwright treats the issue of woman with fervent zest in her plays.

Justification for this paper stems from the fact that Irene Salami's dramaturgy could be interpreted from different critical perspectives. Being a female playwright who has never hidden her feminist disposition, the authors of this work think it appropriate to further excavate into her plays in order to reveal the depth of her feminist contestation as a playwright. Again, this research is justified because it enables the authors of this paper to reveal discoveries of contestations by women through the reading of the play texts of Irene Salami Agunloye, that also reflect contestations by women in real secular society.

The scope of this study covers two play texts written by Irene Salami-Agunloye. These plays are *Emotan and More Than Dancing*. These two plays like other plays by the playwright are concerned with the travails of women in male centered and male dominated society. The scope of this discourse is thus limited to discussions on how Irene Salami situates her feminist agitation on the tripod of language, identity and solidarity in these two plays.

This paper is purely library inclined, therefore qualitative research design is adopted. Creswell (21) sees qualitative research as constructivist, naturalistic and interpretative dimensions of research. This research design relies more on content and context of a study. Other aspects of qualitative research cover critical theory, discourse analysis,

cultural studies and semiotics. This paper is in the field of dramatic and literary criticism, as such, it is largely interpretative, as it relies on conceivable data rather than figures as in quantitative research. The sources of data for this work are both from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are the two texts under review: *Emotan and More Than Dancing* while the secondary sources are other relevant literary materials consulted and cited in this work.

Theoretical Framework

Theory is a critical factor in literary criticism because it gives a stand point from which a critic approaches his subject of discourse. Literary theory and literary criticism go simultaneously. Thus, Barry (34) submits that:

Every practical procedure (for instance in literary criticism) presupposes a theoretical perspective of some kind. To deny this is simply to try to place our own theoretical position beyond scrutiny in something which is “common sense” or “simply given”... Hence, it makes sense to speak of theory as if it were a single entity with a set of underlying beliefs, as long as we are aware that doing so is simplification.

Thus, this study is approached from the feminist theoretical perspective. Feminism is a 20th century sociological movement that is concerned with the rights, equality, justice and the liberation of women from all forms of subjugation, domination, oppression, exploitation and marginalization, occasioned by forces of patriarchy.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy identifies the fact that feminism is an ideology that is basically concerned with women's rights against discrimination of all forms: however, it also asserts that feminism is not monolithic. This view is further buttressed by SokenHuberty in her writing, *Types of Feminism: The Four Weaves*, where she asserts that feminism as a movement has evolved into many strands over time. These include; main stream/liberal feminism, gynocriticism, womanism, queer theory, post-colonial feminism, race feminism, African feminism and others. In order to eschew scholarly ambivalence, this paper deliberately

adopts post-colonial feminism as its specific theoretical framework. This theoretical approach seeks to challenge the anti-women colonial legacies with its atavistic relics in most post-colonial third world countries. The post-colonial feminist approach to the paper enables the authors to critically articulate the contestations of women in the dramaturgy of Irene Salami Agunloye and how such concerns are addressed through the deployment of language, identity and solidarity by women in the play texts under review.

Conceptual Definition of Terms

Key terms employed in this paper are conceptually delineated within the confines of their usage in the paper. These words are:

Feminism: This refers to a movement that is concerned with the rights of women. It could further be seen as a principle that strongly upholds and propagates the practices of agitating for the rights of women. Scholars and practitioners of this movement like Irene Salami are known as feminist.

Contestations: In this paper, contestations refers to arguments, disputations, conflicts or contentions about something.

Ideology: Eagleton (14) states that:

The largely concealed structure of values which informs and underlies our factual statements is part of what is meant by “ideology”. By ideology; I mean roughly the way in which what we say and believe connects with the power structure and power relations, in the society we live in.

In the context of this work, ideology refers to the philosophy that guides the dramaturgy of Irene Salami as well as the ideology that guides this paper which is the belief and philosophy feminism.

Tripod: This is derived from the Greek word “tripodos”, meaning three-legged stool. But in the context of this paper, tripod refers to language, identity and solidarity being the pedestals upon which Irene Salami's

female characters tend to achieve their aspirations.

Language: Language in this paper refers to any available means of communication and expression by female characters in the plays for the purpose of realizing their aspirations.

Identity: This refers to recognizing or realizing what makes individuals the same. In this paper, the issue of identity of women is not entirely about their sociological classification and treatment, but the writers try to show how women in Salami's plays tend to recognize common predicaments that bedevil them, but paradoxically unite them also.

Solidarity: This refers to the spirit of togetherness and comradeship. In the context of this paper, solidarity has to do with how women in Irene Salami's dramaturgy tend to support their common struggle towards attaining their goals.

Dramaturgy: This has to do with the principle behind playwriting. In this context, therefore, the paper is interested in the play texts by Irene Salami and her principles as a playwright.

Irene Salami Agunloye

Irene Salami Agunloye is a Professor of Theatre Arts in the University of Jos. She has occupied many positions in the academia and in various professional bodies. Irene Salami has eight published plays to her credit apart from children's literary texts. She has been a strong feminist scholar who is involved in many women movements in Nigeria, Africa and beyond Africa. With regard to her feminist disposition as a playwright, Salami-Agunloye (95) submits that:

In an attempt to situate myself within the male dominated literary space, I have resolved to re-write the negative stereotypical portrayal of women in texts written by men. In doing so, I am constructing new identities for female characters or heroines whom I use as mouth piece to buttress my feminist view point and engaged in criticism of the social order.

The above audacious statement by Salami-Agunloye about her feminist disposition should set the tone for a critical discourse of her play texts selected for this exercise.

Synopsis of *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

The play *Idia*... is a play about the legend of ancient Benin and Queen Mother of Oba Esigie, by name Idia. The play is set in about 1504 CE. The play is a drama of protest by Idia against the tradition of killing the Queen Mother as soon as her son ascends the throne of Ancient Benin Kingdom. With limited time and death staring her in the face, Idia decides to stir a revolt that will lead to the reformation of the obnoxious tradition of killing the mother of an Oba as soon as he ascends the throne of ancient Benin as king.

Series of revolts by women of Benin inspired by Idia the Queen Mother and led by Sogie, the leader of Benin market women make the Oba to announce a radical reform that abolishes the killing of Queen Mothers in Benin. He further goes ahead to create the office of the Iyabo (Queen Mother) of Benin Kingdom.

This reform does not go down well with Oba Esigie's Council of Chiefs, who sees this as an outright desecration of their age long standing tradition. Being led by Chief Ozomo, the Council of Chiefs fears that with the political and mystical powers at the disposal of Idia, she will exercise much influence over her son the Oba, and Benin Kingdom will end up being ruled by a woman. The deliberation by the Council of Chiefs' against the Oba's reform is resisted by the Benin market women, as they interrupt the Benin Council of chiefs meeting. They do not just demand for the right to life for Idia, but maintain that henceforth, no Queen Mother of Benin should be killed when her son ascends the throne of Benin Kingdom. The Chiefs accented to the demands, but under the condition that she should not step her foot in Benin, but operate in her official palace at Uselu.

The conflict in the play takes a new dimension with intrigues, betrayal and conspiracy by Chief Oliha, an erstwhile supporter of Oba Esigie, to overthrow the Oba. Chief Oliha goes into alliance with the Attah of Igala

Kingdom, and this sends some jitters in the hearts of Oba Esigie and his Council of chiefs.

When Idia learns about the alliance between Chief Oliha and the Attah of Igala, and their war threat against Benin Kingdom, she decides to lead the war against the foes. Most of the Chiefs who have been afraid of the war attempt to spitefully discourage Idia from going to the war, but she does not just defy them, Idia leads the war; kills Chief Oliha and also captures the Attah of Igala and brings to him Benin as war prisoner. Idia's prowess earns her the loyalty of Benin Chiefs as the Benin women eulogize her.

Feminist Contestation in *Idia*...

History tends to play a significant role in the dramaturgy of Irene Salami, as she utilizes materials in history in order to recreate and address contemporary issues. As a matter of fact, Salami tends to see history as a platform for the articulation of her ideology of feminism. Thus, this is eloquently expressed in her choice and portrayal of Idia as a heroine, alongside her co-women characters in the play. Speaking on the dramaturgy of Irene Salami, Rwang (199) asserts that;

There is no doubt that history has been formulated into an advocacy tool for the service of feminism in the dramaturgy of Irene Salami-Agunloye. To a large extent, one aesthetic value that remains consistent in the works of Salami Agunloye, no doubt, is the foregrounding of women in history. Through her dramatic tropes, history is rewritten to confront gender imbalance and also by ideological means, deconstruct gender codes and constructs encrypted in culture and tradition.

Thus, the historic legend of Idia of Benin tends to provide Irene Salami a ready platform to propagate her feminist contestation, propaganda and manifesto. Through Idia's radical feminist disposition, she remonstrates against an age-long obnoxious tradition of killing the Queen Mother when her son ascends the throne of Benin Kingdom. Idia refuses to be silenced, but gives typical oppressed women under tradition and

patriarchy a voice to stand up and say no to all forms of harmful practices. Another radical dimension Salami Agunloye takes in the play *Idia*... is through a heroine that is aesthetically created to defy masculinist stereotype against women as it concerns her heroic capabilities. This is portrayed in the disdain and mockery the Benin Chiefs directed at Idia, as she indicates her interest to raise an army to fight Chief Oliha and the Attah of Igala, when they themselves are not already to go to war. But at the end of the war, Idia's exploit tends to contest and also demystify the masculinist thinking that wars are fought and won by men only.

Language as a Weapon of Feminist Contestation

Language is always a key factor in any form of engagement. This is because language it is a means of expression, communication and identification for the purpose of interaction and so on. *Encyclopedia Britannica* acknowledges that, there are many definitions of language by scholars. Nevertheless, this authority sees language as an agent whose “primary purpose is to facilitate communication in the sense of transmission of information from one person to another”. Putting the idea of language within the framework of this discourse is to articulate its function by feminist characters in the play *Ida*... Sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic studies have drawn attention to some functions of language to include the expression of local and national identities. Within the context of this paper therefore, language is employed by female characters as a means of identification and agitation. Women of Benin first identify themselves as a collective body as they engage in protest against patriarchal oppression of women. This is succinctly captured in the protest statement of the women as they intrude in the meeting of the Benin Chiefs:

Iyase: Now women, when did you become part of decision-making arm of Benin Kingdom? Are the chiefs incompetent to do so?

Women: No to the killing of our Queen.

Sogie: With all due respect, I dare say that in this matter, we are dissatisfied with your decision to kill yet another Queen Mother. We've had enough. We will be silent no more. We will shout our discontent for the world to hear. (*Idia*, pg. 25).

The language of identity and oneness through collective pronouns such as “we” “our” “us” is employed by the women as a galvanizing force of identity and unity, as they advance their protest against the tradition of killing the Queen mother in Benin Kingdom. The action of the women in the excerpt above also demonstrates the language of mass protest as a weapon of agitation. At the end, the message is well received by the Benin Council of chiefs. No wonder, Ayodele (9) citing Nwadike asserts that, language is the key to the heart of the people.

The Strength of Identity and Solidarity in Feminist Contestation

Women in *Idia*... do not just identify themselves as a gender group, but they identify themselves as the most victimized group as a result of an obnoxious tradition of killing the Queen Mother. This identity further drives them to embrace a sense of solidarity and struggle. Idia who is supposed to die as her son Oba Esigie ascends the throne decides to rise and challenge that age-long tradition with a personal resolve and resistance, thus:

Idia: No Iyesogie, I say no, not any more. The last Queen Mothers destined for death, died with the death and burial of Oba Ozulua's mother. I Idia will not die. I refuse to die ... let it be known today that I Idia the Queen Mother, refuses to cease shining, I stand to question our tradition. I demand for my life. Why must I a woman die simply because I am the mother of the reigning king? Is it because I am fortunate enough to bring to life a prince who is also fortunate to have ascended the throne of great Benin Kingdom? Tell me Iye-Sogie, is it a crime? (Idia ..., pg. 4).

This individual revolt by Idia also attracts the interest of other women in Benin who also subscribe to Idia's revolt as affirmed by Sogie one of the women:

Sogie: Your Majesty, we are indeed sorry if we have disturbed the peace of your court session. However, there can be no peace, your majesty, if an innocent soul is to be killed simply because she is the Queen Mother ... We unanimously say that all attempts to take the life of the Queen Mother must be stopped with immediate effect.

We demand from now hence forth, no Queen Mother will lose her life on account of her son's ascension to the throne of Benin. This tradition must be put to an end. This is our request, your majesty (Idia ... pg. 25).

All the women respond to this clarion call with a firm voice of identity and solidarity thus:

Women: The killing of our Queen Mother must stop with immediate effect

Irene Salami's feminist submission here tends to suggest that, women must identify their common plight and resolutely confront same with a sense of comraderie. This is in tandem with Social Identity Theory, as Powers (i) maintains that:

Social identity theory attempts to explain why individuals can act primarily as group members and secondarily as individuals to maintain positive social identities. Individuals are motivated to establish social identities to increase self-esteem and reduce uncertainties, and to do so by using prototypes to cognitively represent, categorize and compare in groups and out groups.

Though a play set in the precolonial time, Irene Salami tends to employ this play for the purpose of solidarity with feminist contestation and struggle in the contemporary time. In corroboration with the post-colonial, feminist posture of this paper, Ogundipe-Leslie (35-36) submits that:

African women share common affinity everywhere in the world through the intuitive domination by erstwhile colonizers. This is associated with the tradition of feudal, slave-based sociology and its resultant effects of poverty and ignorance enforced by colonialism. This practice was inherited and sustained by the patriarchal regime in Africa, thus rendering the African women vulnerable.

So coming from the angle of history, in *Idia* ... Salami metaphorically demonstrates solidarity with feminist contestation and struggle in the contemporary time. In essence, *Idia* ... is more than a historical play, but a post-colonial feminist rejoinder drama that identifies with women's contestation against injustice.

Feminism and the Tripod of Language, Identify and Solidarity in *More Than Dancing*.

Irene Salami is such a dynamic playwright that transverse the historical, the mythical as well as the socio-political environments in her arts of dramaturgy. Unlike her other plays like, *Emotan*, *Idia the Warrior Queen of Benin*, and *The Queen Sisters*, which deal with historical, traditional mythical and mystical events, *More Than Dancing* is a play set in a socio-political environment of the contemporary time, all the same, with a typical Salami's feminist disposition.

A Synopsis of *More Than Dancing*

The play opens up with a mini convention of the United, Peoples Liberation Party, where women is wing of the party is performing a dance. Madam Bisi stops the session as she challenges women to change the traditional narrative of women in political activities as that of dancers and supporters of leadership. She further reveals how the men of the party have always embezzled the party funds in order to perpetuate their dominance of the political space at the expense of women. Madam Bisi therefore calls on the women to change their idea of political participation.

With this awareness created in them by Madam Bisi, women of UPLP resolve to participate in the political activities of the party as a power bloc. As such, they decide to present a female candidate as a presidential flag bearer of the party.

After a heated debate, the women settled for the candidature of Prof. Nona Odaro. Prof. Nona expresses her in experience and timidity in politics, but in her dream, she is visited by legendary historical heroines likes of Queen Amina of Zauzau, Queen Idia and Emotan of Benin Kingdom, Moremo of Ife, Queen Kabasa of Bonny, Madam Tinibu, Mrs.

Funnilayo Ransom Kuti of Lagos, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, women from the famous Aba women riot of 1929, and Fictional Mama Nigeria, who encourage her to answer the women's call to service. This dream gives her renewed vigour to continue in the political race.

Challenges begin to set in for Prof. Nona as her husband Uyi Odaro, who at the beginning shows support to his wife, but now changes his mind when the men of the party visit and offer him the sum of twenty million naira to withdraw his support for his wife and serve as running mate to Alhaji Bawa, a male presidential candidate. This eventually adversely impacts on the marital relationship of Prof.. Nona and her husband Uyi Odaro.

Despite her depressed state, Prof.. Nona is encouraged by her friends Ameze and other women group who mobilized funds for her campaigning. Prof. Nona wins the party primary election as well as the presidential election. Prof.. Nona and her husband in the end reconciled.

Feminist Contestation in *More Than Dancing*

The dominant feminist contestation in *More Than Dancing* is aimed at reconfiguring and mainstreaming women in a hitherto male dominated and male centered political equation of Nigeria. The opening of the play portrays the relegated and marginalized position of women in the political landscape of Nigeria thus:

United People's Liberation Party's (UPLP) mini-convention is in progress. The men are gorgeously dressed and seated on the top rows while the women dance groups from various regions are seen coming into dance one after the other.... When they finish dancing, each group is given two bags of rice, a bag of salt, a carton of maggi cubes and two wrappers (*More than Dancing, pg. 1*).

This ugly scenario provokes Madam Bisi who interrupts the events.

Bisi: Stop the drumming! Stop the dancing! Stop immediately. Stop I say!! Enough is enough! Year in year out, primaries come and party elections go. All we do is dance? That is all we

are meant for? The men have since stopped dancing. Look at the high table... How many women do you see up there? Where are the women I ask? Look at us... dancing and collecting two bag of rice, one bag of salt and one carton of maggi cube to be shared among thirty-five women... (*More than Dancing*, pg. 2).

This is feminist consciousness. Shikna (i) posits that "... Feminist consciousness attacks majority positions and points out the injustice of history". Madam Bisi is projecting a feminist consciousness that takes off the dark veil of injustice, ignorance and marginalization that characterize the history of women in politics. Giving credence to the above assertion, Green (i) argues that: "Feminism is more than a philosophy or ideology. It is a "vocabulary of motives" maintained by strong support, Becoming a feminist leads to a transformation of consciousness and an alternation in the perception and interpretation of everyday life".

In essence, for women to assert their place of relevance in the political landscape as a marginalized and relegated group, transformation and alteration of their socio-political consciousness and perception is absolutely necessary.

Language as a Tool of Feminist Agitation in *More Than Dancing*

Language also remains a viable tool of feminist agitation in *More Than Dancing*. Tika and Ririn, submit that: "In socio linguistics, study about language and gender emphasis the focus on the effect of gender on the use of language. The relationship between language and gender is the relationship between language and the nation of men and women". Thescholars go further to cite Ecker and Gine (203), stating that "... women are forced to learn a weak trivial and deferential (Language) styles as part of their socialization, which is essentially training how to be subordinates". According to them, Ecker and Gine regard women's language as a reflection of their powerlessness. However, Irene Salami in *More Than Dancing* tends to radically deconstruct and debunk the above linguistic stereotype about women. One can hear a strong assertive language by women expressed by Madam Bisi.

Bisi: Enough! Go back home! You must realize that it is your fundamental right to participate in governance. This is a democratic world. It is for women as much as is for men. Women are equal partners with men in governance... (*More than Dancing*, pg. 2).

When the men of the party attempt to confront Madam Bisi, more bold and radical responses ensue from some of the women thus:

Aisha: The veil covering our faces has been removed. We can see clearly now. You cannot intimidate us with your yelling any more (*More than Dancing*, pg. 3).

Ebele: Alhaji, enough of that, you can no longer scare us with that. It is already a timeworn... (*More than Dancing*, pg. 3).

The language sounds confrontational, yet justifiable, since the women have resolved to fight masculinist political domination and marginalization.

The Strength of Identity in Feminist Contestation

In the play *More Than Dancing*, Irene Salami depicts how women decide to carve out a new identity for themselves. In the opening of the play women are depicted as mere dancers and political paupers before the men folk, their membership of the party notwithstanding, Realizing their identity as a dominated and marginalized group is an important step towards pushing for a new identity for themselves. PratyushaMada argues that women have “identity crisis” imposed on them by society that makes them doers of less prestigious work such as serving food, bed-making, or people to call on when one needs something. “To add to the debate on women's crisis of identity, Kanza Zia (Women in Identity Crisis), Posits that, a woman has always been identified by the role she plays in society”. This is the perception about the identity of women at the beginning of the play *More Than Dancing* where women are portrayed as political appendages of men and side attractions at political conventions.

But the vociferous denouncement of the stock identity of women by MadamBisi at the mini convention of the UPLP serves as a catalyst for

creating a new identity for women. The women identify themselves as a political power bloc that has the capacity to give the men a run for their money. Irene Salami's stance in this play is penchant to the need to realize stereotype identity and to change same.

Solidarity in Feminist Contestation

The spirit of solidarity among the women in *More Than Dancing* is that which cuts across diverse classes of women in line with the principle of collective struggle as asserted by Marx and Engels (14). The composition of the women in this political struggle is captured by Madu the secretary of UPLP as he reports to the men thus:

Madu: In their caucus group, there are a lot of professional women; Emzele is a medical doctor; Boma is a judge, Ebele is a reputable market woman. Azira is a petroleum engineer, Alero is a Chartered Accountant, Garos is a top computer engineer; Aisha is a diplomat; they have many lawyers, university lecturers, accountants, computers analyst, engineers, fashion designers, market women, farmers, women in purdah and many others. They have mobilized women from all works of life. Literate and illiterates, poor and rich all, that is really dangerous (*More than Dancing, pg 32*)

The composition of women in this political solidarity movement cuts across religious, ethnic, educational and social affiliations. But that it is just the first step of solidarity suggested by Salami in *More Than Dancing*. The second step of solidarity in the play is portrayed as the women reach out to men for political alliance, as Nona states:

Nona: My sisters don't get us wrong we are not anti-men. We will be fools to think that we can go far without men. Already, Madam Bisi and some of us have met a lot of men who are sympathetic to our cause. We strongly believe that men and women complement one another... (*More than Dancing, pg. 50*).

This shows that the solidarity in feminist struggle can be more effective

when the male folk and even the non-feminist women are brought on the solidarity platform through diplomacy.

Conclusion

The two play texts *Idia the Warrior Queen of Benin* and *More Than Dancing* by Irene Salami, reviewed in this work are feminist plays. The playwright being a feminist herself has always channelled her creative fecundity towards addressing feminist concerns through her dramaturgy. Through a critical engagement of the text from the feminist point of view on the tripod of language, identity and solidarity, the paper arrives at the conclusion that Irene Salami's dramaturgy is deeply rooted in feminism, with the tripod of language, identity and solidarity playing some vital roles in achieving the feminist concerns of the plays; thus making it unequivocally clear and to also eloquently state that, Salami's plays are heavily laden with contestations about women's rights, privileges, dignity and socio-political and economic power in patriarchal society.

Recommendations

After a critical examination of Irene Salami's dramaturgy from the prism of feminist ideological contestations, language, identity and solidarity the paper hereby presents the following recommendations.

- i. More fora and avenues should be created by government, the academia, religious organizations, socio-cultural organizations as well as global organizations for the purposes of addressing the all-encompassing contestations by women.
- ii. Women in every society should sustain the embers of feminist contestations within the ambit of legality.
- iii. Society should come to terms with the reality that women have legitimate concerns that give rise to contestations by them, which should be respected.
- iv. Literary writers should do more in producing literary works that project and also address contestations by women.

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