

BOTTOM POWER AS A WEAPON FOR REVOLUTION: A STUDY OF BUTAKE'S LAKE GOD AND ARISTOPHANES' *LYSISTRATA*

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ABSTRACT

Lake God and *Lysistrata* are two plays, which are far apart in time: one is European and classical while the other is African/ Cameroonian and post – colonial. Although these plays are far apart in time, they are similar in one aspect: in these two plays, the playwrights show women using a sex strike as a weapon for revolution. This paper therefore sets out to evaluate the role of female sexuality and power in the politics of change in Greek antiquity and post – colonial Cameroon. Guided by the feminist literary approach, this article is predicated on the assumption that Aristophanes and Butake are male writers who seem to present societies where women are capable of bringing a difference, a revolution or change through a sex strike. The paper reveals that as Chinweizu says in his seminal book *Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy*, it is the woman who rules man in this world through her womb and also as Wolfgang Lederer points out in his germinal book *The Fear of Woman*, man is really afraid of women.

KEYWORDS: Sex/Sex Strike, Revolt/Revolution, Patriarchy, Oath Taking, Battle of the Sexes

INTRODUCTION

Women using a sex strike to solve problems in society is an age old practice. *Lysistrata* appears to be the first written work portraying this practice in classical and western literature. John Fletcher's play *The Tamer Tamed* written in 1611 was influenced by *Lysistrata*, as this play echoes *Lysistrata*'s sex strike plot¹. In Columbia in the town of Pereira in September 2006, a group of gangsters' wives and girlfriends declared a sex strike to force their partners to participate in a disarmament program. In April 2009 in Kenya, a group of Kenyan women organized a week long sex strike aimed at politicians. They encouraged the wives of the President and the Prime Minister to join them. They offered to pay prostitutes, who joined them for their lost earnings. Still, in Kenya last year, a prominent opposition Kenyan woman told Kenyan women to refuse their men sex, if they did not register in the voters' registers. Bole Butake is a Cameroonian tragedian writing his plays, which mostly focus on the political happenings in Cameroon after the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s. *Lake God* was inspired by the Lake Nyos gas disaster of 1986, where many Cameroonians lost their lives. Aristophanes is a Classicist or ancient Greek comedian well known for his literary, intellectual and political satires. *Lysistrata* was inspired by the Peloponnesian war. The Peloponnesian war is the name for the contest between Athens and the Peloponnesian confederacy led by Sparta. The war was driven by intense jealousy on either side for supremacy in Greece and among the Dorian and Ionian races².

This war took place from 431 BC to 404 BC. *Lysistrata* is a political satire aimed at showing the folly of both political power -lust and evil war between the Greeks³. To compare *Lake God* and *Lysistrata*, we are going to look at these two plays from the following angles: the patriarchy and political nature of the two plays, women's decision to revolt in the two works, how the women revolt through a sex strike and the outcome of this sex strike revolution on the two societies.

The Patriarchal and Political Nature of the Societies in *Lake God* and *Lysistrata*

In *The Theory of Criticism: From Plato to the Present* "Kate Millet used the term patriarchy to describe the cause of women's oppression in *Sexual Politics*"[520]. Patriarchy has been shown to be responsible for women's problems from the beginning of time. What do we understand by patriarchy? In *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* it is written:

I consider myself a recovering patriarchal woman. By patriarchal woman I mean , of course, a woman who has internalized the norms and values of patriarchy which Can be defined in short, as any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional Gender roles. Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and Decisive, they cast women as emotional, [irrational], weak, nurturing, and submissive.

These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify such inequalities , which still occur today as excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision-making positions[in the family as well as in politics, academia, and the Corporate World], paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job [if

Women are even able to obtain the job] and convincing women that they are not fit for careers in such areas as mathematics and engineering] [83-84]

Patriarchy is thus, by definition sexist, which means it promotes the belief that women Are innately inferior to men. This belief in the inborn inferiority of women is called Biological essentials because it is based on biological differences between the sexes That is considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women [84].

While all women are subject to patriarchal oppression, each woman's specific Needs, desires, and problems are generally shaped by her race, socioeconomic class, Sexual orientation, educational experience, religion, and nationality.

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For one thing, patriarchy operates differently in different countries: There are significant differences between patriarchy in the United States and patriarchy in, say, India, Mexico, or Iran [95].

Patriarchy as shown in *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed* and *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* is responsible for Western binary opposition: subject/object or other, masculine/feminine, good/evil, light/dark, positive/negative, culture/nature, active/passive etc[Klages 96]. The phallogocentric culture is one, which aligns all the left-side terms as the valued ones, and consigns the right side terms to the position of other or undesirable[Klages 98]. All the things on the right side of the slash are the things Western culture works to control, to suppress, or to exclude, positing them as disruptive or destructive to the concepts on the left side of the slash[Klages 96]. Post structuralist feminist theory investigates how, and with what consequences woman is constructed as other, as non-being, as authority, as something outside of and dangerous to consciousness, rationality, presence and all those other nice things that Western humanist metaphysics values[Klages 96]. Helene Cixous follows Freud in calling women the Dark Continent and expands the metaphor by reference to Apartheid to demonstrate that these same binary systems which structure, gender also structure imperialism: women are aligned with darkness, with otherness, with Africa against men who are aligned with lightness, with selfhood, and with Western civilization[Klages 101]. Patriarchy therefore teaches men to avoid being feminine in behavior and traits, to acquire success, status and breadwinning competence, strength, confidence and independence and to be aggressive, violent and daring[Gregson 112]. Old English Dictionary described the word feminism as rare and the qualities of females. But, from the end of the nineteenth century the word feminist came increasingly to be applied to those committed to and struggling for equal rights for women including men. Woolf argues too, that the word feminist was one which was applied to those fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state to their great resentment. In other words the word was imposed on rather chosen by women fighting for the rights of women. Toril Moi distinguishes feminism as a political position, femaleness as a matter of biology and femininity as a set of culturally defined characteristics. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* distinguishes three phases in women's writing: the feminine stage of women's writing involves a prolonged phase of imitating the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition and internalizing its standards of art, the feminist stage involve the advocacy of the minority rights and values and the final stage is the phase of self-discovery and search for identity[Goring et al. 193]. From what has been presented above, it is seen that feminism is against patriarchy, because it is responsible for the marginalization of women and their oppression. Feminist texts are usually anti-patriarchal.

The societies Butake and Aristophanes portray in their works are the same. These two societies are dominated by men, in everything, especially in politics. Men are in control of everything and women are relegated to the backyard. They do not have any say. This is well illustrated in *Lysistrata* during the argument between Lysistrata and the Athenian Commissioner. Lysistrata is telling the Commissioner how her husband does not consider her opinion, especially about the war.

Lysistrata: *Well, we'd be quiet. But then, you know all at once, you men would think up something worse than ever even I could see it was fatal. And "Darling," I'd say "have you gone completely mad?" and my husband would look at me and say, "wife, you've got your weaving to attend to." "Mind your tongue, if you don't want a slap". "War's a man's affair"*

Commissioner: Good words and well pronounced.

Lysistrata: *You're a fool if you think so...*
 (Aristophanes, 897)

Kalonike: *Yes; and you can have my market – basket*
 Too. Go home; tighten your girdle, do they
 Washing, mind your beans. War's a
 Women's affair." (ARISTOPHANES, 1998, 898).

The statement war is a man's affair is taken from Homer's *Iliad*, Book VI. These are the words of Hector to his wife Andromache. Hector is the greatest warrior on the side of Troy as Achilles is on the side of the Greek states. It is not only Lysistrata's husband who does not listen to her. This is seen in all the households in Athens, where men do not listen to their wives and to the whole political system where men go to war in Athens without listening or caring about what their women say. As Lysistrata says when men go to war, women suffer a lot and even more. From *Lake God* the situation is not different. Women are excluded from the political system which is the fandom. Angela, who is the Fon's wife, is not very influential in this play, although she is a teacher. Although she gives her views or opinions to the Fon, she is not listening to as the Fon only listens to his coach and god – Father Father Leo. When women consider Angela as no queen, she tells the Fon to take another wife to have children as they have been married for ten years without a child. The Fon influenced by his Bible studies, says they should wait like Abraham and Sarah. Because of this, Angela expresses her wish that at times she wishes she were a Fon. This is because her opinions are not taken on the running of the fandom. We think that if the Fon had listened to her, he would not have ended the way he ended tragically. From what Angela says, we tend to think that if she were given the opportunity to rule as a Fon, she would be a good Fon but unfortunately the fandom like the Greek world of Lysistrata is a patriarchal system in which only men succeed. In *Lake God* women cannot grow their corn because Dewa's cattle will eat all of it. *Lake God* is a play built on the conflict between Cattle and corn⁴. Meat and corn, which meet in the pot and pan cannot meet in this society. Men are the owners of cattle and women are the owners of corn. The Fon owns half of Dewa's cattle. The Fon used meat to corrupt the king makers to become king. Now he wants to use the same meat to become a parliamentarian. He is already the president of his party at the Branch Level and Vice President of his party at the Section Level. Women's revolt will mar his political ambition as the Fon and Father Leo see and say it. Father Leo tells the Christians in church openly and shamelessly that when he receives money from Europe, he gives it to the Fon to invest in cattle. That is why the cattle cannot leave the village at the woman's request. When women find themselves in a patriarchal system where they are not listened to and where their opinions are not considered, what is the logical step? Revolt.

Women's Decision to Revolt

In *Lake God* women are pushed to the extent that they have no other alternative than to revolt. Women want to drive away Dewa and the cattle grazers from the land because with the presence of Dewa and other cattle grazers, they cannot produce corn and therefore there will be no corn fufu, the staple food of the land, they decide to starve their men by not giving them food and by not having any sex with them. This double strategy is to put pressure on the men who will in

turn put pressure on the Fon through Kwifon, the secret cult for men in the land. Women are doing this through their own secret cult which is called the Fibuen. In *Lake God*, we therefore have two cats: the secret cult for men called the *Kwifon* and the secret cult for women called the *Fibuen*. The *Kwifon* rules the land. That is why it is referred to as the Seven Corners or Pillars of the land. The problem in *Lake God* is that the Fon has neutralized the *Kwifon* with the help of the government and Father Leo. We are told that *Kwifon* is in detention. The absence of *Kwifon* means there is no government and parliament on the land. It means the Fon has become an absolute dictator. It is because *Kwifon* is in detention that women decide to take things into their hands by reviving the *Fibuen*. The song of the *Fibuen* that the Fon recognizes has never been heard in the land since he became Fon. The women catch Dewa, tie him on a bamboo stretcher and bring him to the palace. That is when the complicity of Dewa and the Fon is revealed. Dewey reveals that half of his cattle belong to the Fon and that it is the Fon's cattle that ate the corn. The Fon demonstrates his corrupt nature of his relationship with Dewa. When the women started the *Fibuen*, the men were afraid that the women will overthrow them and manage the affairs of the land. That is why the men go to see Shey Tanto who is the leader of the *Kwifon*, to do something. *Kwifon* had once saved the land, but now it has been neutralized by the Fon and his agents. We see Shey Tanto goes to concert with Shey Bongo, the chief priest to see what to do to make the Fon go and sacrifice to the lake god as his father had done in the past. The question we can ask is that is it the *Fibuen* which overthrows the Fon at the end of the play or is it the *Kwifon* or the two? If *Kwifon* and *Fibuen* succeed in overthrowing the Fon, who contributes more - is it the *Kwifon* or the *Fibuen*? In *Lake God* the *Kwifon* has seven members, whereas the *Fibuen* has five leaders whom Father Leo qualifies in the church as devils leading the women's rebellion.

In *Lysistrata* we have a similar scenario. *Lysistrata* and the other women decide to revolt, because they realize that men do things or take decisions which affect both men and women without consulting women. That is why the Chorus of Women in *Lysistrata* tells us that their slogan is EXCELSIOR, a Latin motto meaning roughly "on to nobler things" or literally "higher" and that their watchword is to "SAVE MANKIND". We therefore see that, the women of *Lysistrata* are the same like those of *Lake God* as they are out not to save only women or men but mankind which means humankind in this context. Women in *Lake God* and *Lysistrata* are not selfish, sexist, but lovers of humankind. In what they do, we see philanthropy, not misanthropy. *Lysistrata* has discovered that men go to war, because they control the treasury or the money of the country. So she wants to stop war for the good of men and women. How does she stop this war? She decides that young women, who are sexually active will be put in a gate, where they will not have any contact with their husbands and lovers and the older women, who are not sexually active will go and seize the Akropolis, which houses the treasury of the country. These are the two strategies she uses to end the Peloponnesian war. She says and knows very well that "no money, no war." Even in *Lake God* women want to drive away Dewa and his kin for the good of all men and women. Not only women eat corn fufu, men, even eat it more than women who cultivate it.

How Women Revolt – The Sex Strike

When women decide to revolt in the two plays, we see the conflict between men and women or what has been called the battle of the sexes. In *Lake God*, this conflict is seen in terms of the two secret cults in the play: the *Kwifon* and the *Fibuen*. In *Lysistrata*, we see it in the division of the chorus into two: The chorus of Old Men and the Chorus of Old Women. These two courses are there to fight each other and when the problem is solved at the end of the play, the two merge into one. The rebellion of women in *Lake God* is the same like the rebellion of women in *Lysistrata*: women use their bottom power in a sex strike to solve the burning problems of the day. They refuse their men sexual privileges. To

make all women respect this and for it to succeed, the women must take an oath. It will be interesting to look at the oath taking in the two plays. In *Lysistrata* the oath taking is very long, elaborate and interesting. Lysistrata administers the oath taking. She reads the wordings and Kalonike repeats these wordings on behalf of all the women present.

Lysistrata: I WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MY HUSBAND OR LOVER

Kalonike: I WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MY HUSBAND OR LOVER

Lysistrata: THOUGH HE COMES TO ME IN PITIABLE CONDITION

Kolonike: THOUGH HE COMES TO ME IN PITIABLE CONDITION

(Oh Lysistrata! This is killing me!)

Lysistrata: IN MY HOUSE I WILL BE UNTOUCHABLE

Kalonike: IN MY HOUSE I WILL BE UNTOUCHABLE

Lysistrata: IN MY THINNEST SAFFRON SILK

Kalonike: IN MY THINNEST SAFFRON SILK

Lysistrata: AND MAKE HIM LONG FOR ME

Kalonike: AND MAKE HIM LONG FOR ME

Lysistrata: I WILL NOT GIVE MYSELF

Kalonike: I WILL NOT GIVE MYSELF

Lysistrata: AND IF HE CONSTRAINS ME

Lysistrata: AND IF HE CONSTRAINS ME

Lysistrata: I WILL BE COLD LIKE ICE AND NEVER MOVE

Kalonike: I WILL BE COLD LIKE ICE AND NEVER MOVE

Lysistrata: I WILL NOT LIFT MY SLIPPERS TOWARD THE CEILING

Kalonike: I WILL NOT LIFT MY SLIPPERS TOWARD THE CEILING

Lysistrata: OR CROUCH ON ALL FOURS LIKE THE LIONESS IN THE CARVIING

Kalonike: OR CROUCH ON ALL FOURS LIKE THE LIONESS IN THE CARVING

Lysistrata: AND IF I KEEP THIS OATH LET ME, DRINK FROM THIS BOWL

Kalonike: AND IF I KEEP THIS OATH LET ME, DRINK FROM THIS BOWL

Lysistrata: IF NOT LET MY OWN BOWL BE FILLED WITH WATER

Kalonike: IF NOT LET MY OWN BOWL BE FILLED WITH WATER

Lysistrata: You have all sworn

Myrrhine: We have. (ARISTOPHANES 885 – 886)

This oath is taken by women, who are still sexually active. Although these women take this oath, they do not want to respect it. Lysistrata has put them in a barred gate at the Akropolis, so that, men should not have access to them. We see these young women coming up with all the lame excuses because they want to go home and have sex with their men before coming back. Lysistrata does not give them room to do that. We even see how she tells Myrrhine to torment her husband Kinesias who cannot bear it and has come to do it with her on the barred Akropolis gate. Myrrhine uses all the delaying tactics and there is no sex at the end. She tells her husband that they will only have sex if he agrees to stop the war, which is what Lysistrata and all the women in the Greek world want, and that is what they obtain at the end of the play. The Chorus of Old Men cannot bear this woman's rebellion and as such comes to the Akropolis with brazier of fire, puts the gates to flames, but the Chorus of Old Women, comes and puts off the flames of this fire with their pitchers of water and even soak the Old Men with their pitchers of water. The Old Men are defeated and accept their defeat. In the same vein, the Commissioner is defeated by Lysistrata in an intellectual war and accepts his defeat. In *Lake God* the oath taking is very simple. It is called the oath of sealed lips. It is administered by a woman called Ma Kusham:

Ma Kusham: Now listen. Hold the stick in your right hand between the thumb and forefinger like this. Cross your lips vertically with the stick like this. Break it in the middle and throw both ends behind you while repeating the following: if my mouth discloses what my ears have heard in this gathering, may my tongue swell and fill my mouth with dumbness.

The rite is performed in strict silence, after which Ma Kusham sprinkles the women with the liquid from the pot (BOLE BUTAKE 25).

After this oath taking in *Lake God*, women behave the same in the fandom. They starve their men physically and sexually. In *Lysistrata* after the oath taking, women starve the men sexually. While Lysistrata controls all the women in Athens, Lampito controls all the women in Sparta. Lampito took an oath in Athens before going to Sparta. In *Lysistrata* for men to sleep with their women again, they need to be purified first. This is not clear in *Lake God*.

The Outcome of Women's Revolt

In both *Lake God* and *Lysistrata* women decide to revolt and that rebellion leads to something at the end of the plays. What is this? Women all get what they wanted in the two plays, thereby changing the society in which they lived. In *Lysistrata* women with their sex strike pushed the men to make peace. This means the sex strike solved the problem of women and men. Both men from Sparta and Athens are obliged to make peace if they do not want to be starved sexually. Peace is made in *Lysistrata* when we see the Spartan Herald who comes to an erection. He wants to be led to the Central Committee of Athens to make peace. The Commissioner tells him to go back to Sparta and bring the officials of Sparta to start the peace talks. We then see the coming of the Spartan Ambassador who comes in and the Athenian Commissioners. What is surprising is that these two parties accept openly that they cannot talk about peace successfully without Lysistrata. This is seen in the last scene of the play, which is Scene five:

Ambassador: Words fail me. But come, gentlemen, call in your Commissioners and let's get down to a peace

Commissioner: Won't somebody call Lysistrata? – Gentlemen, we're no better off than you.

Ambassador: So I see.....

Commissioner: Shall we call the meeting to order? Now Lakonians, what's your proposal?

Ambassador: We propose to consider Peace.

Commissioner: Good. That's on our minds too. Summon Lysistrata. We'll never get anywhere without her.

Ambassador: Summon Laces' – anybody! Only summon!

Koryphaios^m: No need to summon: here she is herself.

(ARISTOPHANES 920-921).

Lysistrata comes in and takes over the peace talks. She first asks the women to go and bring her RECONCILIATION. The women bring her an enormous statue of a naked girl who is called RECONCILIATION. All the eyes of the men are on this naked statue. She tells the Athenians and the Spartan that they all have a common heritage and as such should not fight each other! “We are all Greeks. Must I remind you of Thermopylai, of Olympia of Delphoi? Names deep in all our hearts? Are they not a common heritage? Yet you men go riding through the country from both sides, Greek is killing Greek, storming down Greek cities” (Aristophanes 922). She brought out instances in the past when Athenians helped Spartans and also when Spartans helped Athenians. Before entering to take over the talks to bring reconciliation between the two countries, the Commissioner addresses her as “Lysistrata! Lion of women” (Aristophanes 921).

At the end of the play, women do not take over from men to manage the affairs of the two countries. If this happens, this will be one domination succeeding another, that is, matriarchy replacing patriarchy. We assume or think that the women go back to their homes to continue to make their domestic choice, which in this play is weaving. We still remember that in an argument between the Commissioner and Lysistrata, the Commissioner told Lysistrata that only a woman can reduce state matters to weaving and she continued with her weaving metaphor plan to save Greece:

Lysistrata: Do you know anything about weaving? Say the yarn gets tangled: We tried it this way and that through the skein, up

And down, until it's free.

And it's like that with war. We'll send our envoys up and down, this way and that all over Greece, until it's finished

Commissioner: Yarn? Thread? Skein? Are you out your mind? I tell you, war is a serious business.

Lysistrata: So serious that I'd like to go on talking about weaving

Commissioner: All right. Go ahead.

Lysistrata: The first thing we have to do is to wash our yarns, get the dirt out of it, you see? Isn't there too much dirt here in Athens? You must wash those men away.

Then our spilled wool – that's like your job – hunters, out for a

Life of no work and big pay. Back to the basket, citizens or not,

Allies or not, or friendly immigrants. And your colonies? Hanks

*of wools lost in various places- pull, them together, weave them
Into one great whole and our voters are clothed for ever*

*Commissioner: It would take a woman to reduce state questions into a matter
of carding and weaving*

*Lysistrata: You fool! Who were the mothers whose sons sailed off to fight?
For Athens in Sicily?*

Commissioner: Enough! I beg you do not call back those memories

(ARISTOPHANES 899-900)

Lysistrata tells the Commissioner that they can manage the state treasury very well, because they are the ones who manage their family budgets. Although women go back to their domestic spheres, they have successfully shown men that they should not manage the country without taking into consideration the opinions of women. War is not only the concern of men, it is also the concern of women. War is even more destructive to women and children than the men:

Lysistrata: And then, instead of the love that every woman needs, we have

*Only our single beds, where we can dream of our husbands off
With the Army. Bad enough for wives! But what about our girls
Getting older every day and older, and no kisses?*

Commissioner: Men get older too

Lysistrata: Not in the same sense. A soldier's discharge, and he may be

*Bald and toothless, yet he'll find a pretty young thing to go to
Bed with. But a woman! Her beauty is gone with the first gray
Hair. She can spend her time consulting the oracles and the
Fortunetellers, but they'll never send her a husband.*

(ARISTOPHANES 900).

In *Lake God*, what does women revolt lead to? It leads to the total collapse of the fandom. The Fon and Father Leo had successfully neutralized the *Kwifon* and that is why women seeing that there is no *Kwifon* in the land bring out *Fibuen* to fight the excesses and the corruption of the Fon. Men seeing the revival of *Fibuen* are afraid that women will overtake them. That is why, men try to revive also the *Kwifon* which is in detention. The Fon, therefore has two forces fighting against him – the *Fibuen* and the *Kwifon*. It is true that the Fon as a tragic hero has his flaws and as such is responsible for his downfall. This is seen in the conversation between Lagham and Forgwei:

Lagoon: I do not question the wonderful things Father Leo has brought to this

Land. But I blame the Fon for allowing himself to be misled by the Father

*Leo. Was it not the late Fon who allowed Father Leo to start the?
School? But he continued to rule the land in the way that it had
Always been ruled. He continued to lead the people in the year
Sacrifice to the lake god. He always listened to Kwifon and never
Allowed the cattle grazers to settle in the land. Is there Kwifon in this land today?
The Fon has reported Kwifon to gamma and Kwifon is in detention.*

Forge: We agree that the Fon is to blame for what is happening in the land.

*Being the illiterate that I am, I could not submit myself to the power of the Father
Leo the way our Fon has. But my question still stands. What is to be done?
(BOLE BUTAKE 31).*

In the above excerpt, we see the contrast between the present Fon Joseph, whose real name is Yosew Kim Bong and his late father. He claims, he is an educated and an enlightened Christian monarch and as such has nothing to do with pagan practices like offering sacrifices to the *Lake God*. With the total destruction of the fandom and the survival of Man, Woman, Boy, Girl who are the characters we see in Butake's next play *The Survivors* which with the next play *And Palm Wine will Flow*, which make up his trilogy, we see that in the next society after the one in the *Lake God*, women play very important roles in the society. This is seen in the role played in *The Survivors* by Mboysi, who is able to maltreat Officer and Kwengong one of the wives of Shey Ngong and the Earth-goddess in *And palm Wine will Flow*.

In *Lake God* scenes where the sex strike is seen on the stage is the section entitled *Dead – End*, where women in a series of mime refuse to have sex with their men. In *Lysistrata*, this is seen where Myrrihine refuses to have sex with her husband Kinesias on the stage. In Butake's *Lake God, The Survivors and And Palm Wine will Flow*, women play very prominent roles just like in the three plays of Aristophanes which are *Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae or Ladies Day* (411) and *Ecclesiazusae or Women in Parliament* (392). Partake in *Lake God* uses Pidgin English like Aristophanes in *Lysistrata*. The Spartans like Dewa speak Pidgin English in the play. Butake again in *Lake God* like Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* uses obscene language or sexual language. He refers to women's menses as "periodic sickness" and to the penises of men as "my friend kept nodding and nodding like a lizard". In *Lysistrata*, we see phalluses and erections every where and a naked statue of a woman called RECONCILIATION. The language used in the peace talks is pornographic. The geographical areas the men use as compensation to end the war are the same parts of the body of a woman. This is serious punning in the play. Structurally *Lysistrata* has a Prologue, Five Scenes and an Exodus. *Lake God* has a Prologue, Fragment, Dead-End and Passage.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we set out to demonstrate that *Lake God* and *Lysistrata* are plays, which are similar to that in these two plays women use a sex strike to achieve or bring change in their societies. Using the feminist literary theory, the paper argued that women can use their so-called bottom power or what Chinweizu calls in his book as the female control of the womb, to bring a lot of changes in their respective societies like they have done in *Lake God* and *Lysistrata*.

From the study of the two plays, we discover that any society which attempts to stifle or neglect its women folk is doomed to destruction or failure. We also learn from the plays that when women decide to act nobody can stop them and they only stop when they have succeeded. Feminists, when they read texts ask some questions as: does the text seek to reinforce or undermine patriarchal ideology, and what does the *text imply about the possibilities of sisterhood as a mode of resisting patriarchy?* *Lake God* and *Lysistrata* answer the above questions and qualify the texts and their authors as feminist.

NOTES

- ¹ Wikipedia on *Lysistrata* at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysistrata
- Sparknotes on *Lysistrata: Context* of the play at www.sparknotes.com/drama/lysistrata/context.html
- Brian Wilke and James Hurt. *Aristophanes* in Literature of the Western World: Volume I: The Ancient World Through the Renaissance: Second Edition pages 874 – 876.
- ¹ Miriam Goheen. Men Own the Fields, Women Own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grassfields. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996. In this book it is written: “while men are busy tapping palm wine and politicking in the palace, women are working in the fields cultivating food crops: over 90 percent of the food is grown by women” (73) “women are conspicuously absent from making decisions about land allocation even though they are the primary farmers” (117). “According to Customary Nso tenure, only men inherit land”. There is an ideology, amounting almost to a taboo: “mine own the fields: women own the crops” (108).

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