

Uncovering the Truth for a Better Education: A Marxist Approach to J. C. De Graft's *Sons and Daughters*

Confidence Gbolo Sanka^{1*}, Patricia Gustafson-Asamoah¹, Charity Azumi Issaka²

¹Department of English, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana

²Department of English, KNUST Senior High School, Kumasi, Ghana

Corresponding author: Confidence Gbolo Sanka, E-mail: fikoff75@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: February 25, 2019

Accepted: April 25, 2019

Published: April 30, 2019

Volume: 7 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

What factors should come first in the choice of an educational programme or a future career for a ward? Is it the interest, potential, and passion of the ward or the ego of the guardian? Is it monetary consideration and social status that should be the criteria based upon which such a decision is made or the criterion of better prospects of a job market? These and other questions are raised and dramatised in *Sons and daughters* by De Graft. This paper examines the extent to which capitalist ideology plays a role in determining career choice and in creating the familial tensions and conflict that are presented in the play. By applying Marxist theory and praxis to the content and form of the play, it is found that *Sons and daughters* is not simply about a generational conflict between parents and their children; it equally presents capitalist ideologies that undergird some of the attitudes and decisions that we make on a daily basis. More significantly, evidence from the play indicates that it is the prospects of a job market, the potential and interest of the ward and not the ego of the guardian or the wishful careers of the latter which must come first in the choice of a programme or a future career for a ward.

Key words: Ghana, Marxism, Classism, Commodification, Consumerism, Rugged Individual, Imperialism

INTRODUCTION

The problem of programme choice at the tertiary level in Ghana, and in other African countries is a real conundrum. This is evidenced in online newspaper articles published by B. Dada and J. Mbabazi from both Nigeria and Rwanda, respectively. Both publications were made in 2018 (indicating the relevance and topical nature of the subject). In Dada's article, parents' "self actualisation" and their "ego" are the causes for insisting wards must read programmes like medicine, law, accountancy, architecture and engineering (March 5, 2018, <https://www.techcityng.com>). Though times have changed and these are no longer the highest paid professions in the world, ignorance, the ego and self-actualisation needs of parents still stand between them and interest of their wards. In Rwanda, Mbabazi highlights the seriousness of this problem by observing that it sometimes leads to the point of "parents threatening not pay the tuition fees of the child...choice" (February 28, 2018, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/esction/read/2034720>).

Thus, parents would want their wards to study "prestigious" courses at this level that can guarantee them both gainful employment and a respectable social status in the future. Such a programme should also bring prestige to the family's image. To this extent, there is competition in

African tertiary institutions for certain courses whereas other courses are not sought after at all. Again, the entry requirements for such courses are more stringent as compared with the requirements for other programmes. But, this situation, one may argue, is attributed to the uneven development of the economies of most African countries. The uneven development of African countries in general and among the different sectors of their economies is confirmed by Lundvall and Lema when they observed that, "The recent growth has been concentrated in particular countries and sectors and the transformation...automatically" (2015, p. 455) Thus, certain sectors of most African economies are experiencing a dearth of qualified personnel, especially in the areas of science, technology, engineering and so on whereas other sectors such as the business sector, the service sector, the civil service or the teaching sector are better equipped with more qualified personnel than the other sectors previously mentioned.

The real conundrum lies in the fact that in the attempt to get the ward to study a "prestigious" course at all cost, the potential and the interest of such a student or the prospects of a better job market is often neglected. Other external factors such as money, prestige, social status and so on are rather considered first in choosing a programme for the student.

The long term effect of future apathy and dissatisfaction with the career, the ward's inability to make progress in the future career and a general unhappiness about life are not often considered by these parents. Most African countries are not also like the Western nations where jobs are easily available or where the opportunities for career change are easily accessible. This is what makes this paper a relevant contribution to a better education in Ghana and in other African countries.

In this paper, both the empirical evidence and a literary perspective of the problem are presented by discussing previous publications on the issue, the theory of Marxism and the praxis that have been used in the discussion, the synopsis of the play, a critique of the play's content and form and a conclusion. The methodology involved here is entirely qualitative where attention is paid to both the primary source (*Sons and daughters*) and the secondary sources (literature review).

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Empirical research in Ghana, Africa and across the world has been conducted to ascertain the level of parents' influence in the choice of students' programmes or future careers at different levels of the educational ladder. One of such studies was conducted in Ghana by Mbawuni and Nimako (2015) who tried identifying the "the factors underlying students' choices in accessing higher education in Ghana" (p. 120). The study covered 183 students offering different masters programmes in a public university from Ghana as the sample size and utilised exploratory factor analysis in identifying 7 "latent factors that play critical role in students' choice of masters programmes" (p.120). The seven factors, according to the findings, are the "cost, student support quality, attachment to institution, recommendation from lecturers and other staff, failure to gain alternative admissions, and location benefits among others" (p.120). Conspicuously missing here is the influence of parents in the choice of the master's programmes. This might be due to the fact that most of the master's programmes are a continuation of the first degree programmes and decisions regarding such programmes by parents have already been made at that first level.

In Nigeria, several studies have been carried out in different states on parental influence in the choice of programmes and future careers at different stages of the educational ladder. Siyan, Maisamari, and Ahmadu (2018) investigated into the relationship between parental guidance and students' career choice in secondary schools. The study was carried out in the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria using the descriptive statistic instrument. It revealed that "parental guidance was higher on students' career choice in private schools than those in public schools" (p.135). Ajibola et al. (2017) conducted research into students' choice of programmes in the university. The study revealed that 79.4% of the students were in the university based on their parents' choice while 90% of the students were reading programmes based on their personal interest. About 69% of the students did not like university education and that might have accounted for their poor performance academically. There is, however, a correlation

between the choice of a university and the programmes being read by students which was not highlighted by the research. Thus if majority of the students were in specific universities due to their parents' influence, it also indirectly meant that, to some extent, the parents chose the programmes for them since it is not all universities that run the same programmes. Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014) also conducted research into the effects of parental influence on adolescents' career choice on secondary school students in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State. The study concluded that about 50% of the respondents agreed to being influenced by their parents. Pepple (2014) carried out his study on "Parents Influence, Career Views and Choice of Institutions as Correlates on Students' Choice of Science Education Career in Some River State Tertiary Institutions" and also concluded that "parents play an important role in the course of study, career choice and institution attended by children" (p.98).

Thus, all the four studies agree that there is parental influence on the choice of the wards' programmes or future careers at the different levels of education in Nigeria. Hence the recommendation by Siyan, Maisamari and Ahmadu (2018) that "parents should avoid the attitude of pushing their children into pursuing those wishful careers they were unable to pursue or achieve" but rather engage the services of professional career counselors to help them out (p.135). In effect, some parents would want their wards to read a particular programme because that is what they (the parents) feel will bring honour, prestige and possibly money to them (the parents). The wards interest, the prospects of better job openings and a steady progress in a career loved by the ward are all relegated to the background.

In South Africa, some studies have been carried out by Shumba and Naong (2017) and Myburgh (2005) on "Factors Influencing Students' Career Choice and Aspirations" and on "An Empirical Analysis of Career Choice Factors that Influence First Year Accounting Students at the University of Pretoria: A Cross-Racial Study". In the first study, the aim was to "determine factors influencing career choice and aspirations among South African students" (p. 169) and the study was guided by a quantitative paradigm. It was realised that "the family; the ability of the learner self to identify his/her preferred career choice; and teachers were significant factors that influence the career choice..." (p. 169). In the second research, the study was conducted across races in order to establish the factors influencing career choices among Accounting students. This study also concluded that "Performance in Accounting at school and the advice given by parents, relatives and school teachers greatly influenced the students' decision..." (p. 46).

In Ethiopia, Kumar (2016) conducted a research into "Career Choice and College Students: Parental Influence on Career Choice Traditionalism among College Students in Selected Cities in Ethiopia". The conclusion drawn from the research is that, "there is a significant influence of parents on career choice among students. Specifically, father's influence is found to be more significant ...mothers" (p. 23).

In Spain, Sanchez (2012) investigated factors that influence secondary school students' choice of higher education

options. The results of the research revealed that the most important criteria for Spanish students interested in communication sciences were ranking, reputation, excellence and quality of the university's educational programmes.

Finally in Southampton, Maringe (2006) investigated "University and Course Choice: Implications for Positioning, Recruitment and Marketing." The research found that "...Students seem to be adopting a consumerist approach to their Higher Education" (p. 446). Again, the research concluded that, "The importance attached to labour market motives in terms of employment and career prospects significantly outweigh those related to pursuing HE on the basis of subject interest and a love for the subject" (p. 446). The last point here is of great interest since it stresses pragmatism over idealism. Thus, instead of insisting that the ward pursues a "prestigious" course which might not be that rewarding in terms of job satisfaction and salary, students are rather guided by market forces to make practical decisions. It is not the matter of allowing the ego of the parents to interfere.

In most of these studies, the level of parental influence in students' programme choice or career choice is certainly present in varying degrees. In the African countries, parents' influence on the choice of programme or career choice for their wards is certainly significant and it is a phenomenon that is prevalent as compared to the Western countries where emphasis is placed on factors other than the ego, the wish or the interest of the parents. This might be the case because parents in Africa use their influence not to advise but impose their decisions. It could also be as a result of the absence of proper counseling structures in place that could guide both parents and wards in making informed decisions and choices. That is, when it comes to choosing careers or programmes for students in other jurisdictions, both parents and students are accompanied by professionals in deciding what is appropriate.

The above evidence paints a worrying situation for both parents and wards since research indicates that there is a correlation between career choice and job satisfaction and between job satisfaction and performance. In other words, we are more likely to be satisfied with our future job if we make the right career choice and we also more likely to perform better and make progress on a job if we are satisfied with it. All these scenarios are possible due to the rippling effects of choosing the right career (Sokro, Osei-Bonsu, Agbola and Ankrh, 2011, pp. 83-88). But, in order to enjoy all these possible benefits of choosing the right career, what is needed most is "intrinsic motivation in career selection" (Sokro et al., 2011, p. 88) This intrinsic motivation really has to do with the individual's talent and interest in selecting a career. It is a condition that is sine non qua.

THEORY

It is important to note that though we no longer have out and out communist states or nations in the world, Marxism still continues to be relevant to us. This is because it is a theory that "would still give us a meaningful way to understand history and current events" (Tyson, 2006, p. 53) It is a theory and like many theories, it represents a perspective of

analysing a text, a situation or a condition. It is not the age of the theory that matters but it is the findings that matter. Aristotelian theory of mimesis still remains relevant to us though it precedes Marxism. What the theory is used to uncover is what makes the theory relevant and functional to contemporary society.

The main aim of Karl Marx is to "seek the structural causes" undergirding what he describes as a "system of capitalist exploitation and degradation" and to offer solutions to such a system of exploitation in the "spheres of economics and politics" (Habib, 2005, p. 528). The exploitation is as a result of the concentration of all the means of production in the hands of the bourgeoisie class who are outnumbered by the proletariat but who determine how the latter are treated or paid. Marxism believes that though all the work is done by the proletariat, they are treated unfairly by the bourgeoisie and the elite and the last two groups are able to mask this exploitation through obnoxious ideology which, on the surface, seems just and true but when subjected to critical analysis cannot hold water.

At the end of everything, "...capitalism reduces all human relationships to "cash" nexus, self-interest and egoistical calculations" (Habib, 2005, p. 528). And since Marxism is a "form of dialectical materialism", it is not surprising that Marxist literary theory is also "predicated on the idea that literature is a product of social forces and ideology" (Castle, 2007, p. 108) and therefore reflects this constant struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie over "getting and keeping economic power" which is the "base on which the super structure of social, political, and ideological realities is built" (Tyson, 2006, p. 54). The play, *Sons and daughters*, is a literary piece which reflects social, political and economic tensions that can be interpreted using the Marxist praxis of classism, consumerism, commodification, rugged individualism and imperialism.

Classism is a Marxist terminology used to describe the capitalist ideology that "equates one's value as a human being with the social class to which one belongs: the higher one's class the better one is assumed to be because quality is in the blood, that is inborn" (Tyson, 2006, p. 59). According to this ideology, a commoner cannot become a noble person by working and living an upright life. Nobility cannot be earned or acquired; one must be born with it. This is an ideology that is thrown about in the play and the veracity of such an assertion will be ascertained in the analysis of the play which will follow the plot.

Another ideology to be encountered in the play is consumerism. It is a capitalist ideology which, according to Marxism, also reflects "shop-till-you-drop-ism." According to this ideology, the fundamental idea is that "I'm only as good as what I buy" (Tyson, 2006, p. 60). Thus, the quality, quantity and price of what we buy define our status and worth in the society in which we live.

Commodification is also another capitalist ideology that expands on the meanings of use value, exchange value and sign-exchange value for every product or human being. The use value is what the product can be used for, the exchange value is how much money we can derive from the sale of

the product or how many other commodities we can get by bartering the product for others. The sign-exchange value tells us how much social status or respect is conferred on the owner of the product as a result of the person owning the product. In the same vein, people form relations that can be assessed for their use value, their exchange value or their sign-exchange value. Commodification is therefore an "act of relating to objects or persons in terms of their exchange value or sign-exchange value" (Tyson, 2006, p 62.).

Rugged individualism is also a capitalist ideology that romanticises the idea of an individual who strikes out alone in pursuance of a target that often involves a lot of risk and which many people would not want to undertake. The problem with this ideology is that though it looks noble, it prioritises the "me" over "us" and it "works against the well-being of society" (Tyson, 2006, p. 60). It underrates the sacrifices that have to be made in order for the individual to succeed or the extent of the group's expense at which the individual succeeds.

Finally, the influence of imperialism which is the "...the military, economic, and/or cultural domination of one nation by another for the financial benefit of the dominating nation with little or no concern for the welfare of the dominated" is the final capitalist ideology that has been dramatised in the play (Tyson, 2006, p. 63). All these capitalist ideologies which underpin some of the decisions and attitudes of the characters in the play can be understood better by using Marxist ideologies to provide an exegesis on their repercussions on some of the characters in the play.

PLOT OF THE PLAY

Sons and daughters is a two-act play that was published in the sixties, shortly after Ghana's independence. It presents a typical Ghanaian family setting of the Ofosus where the father, Mr. James Ofosu is into a transport haulage business whereas Mrs. Ofosu remains a housewife. Mr. Ofosu is semiliterate, a disciplinarian and an astute businessman who believes that "money is what matters, money is power!" (De Graft, 2006, p. 46) This contrasts sharply with Hannah (Mrs. Ofosu) who is an illiterate, well-bred, mannered, and a disciplinarian but who believes that "Money isn't everything" (De Graft, 2006, p. 49). The couple is blessed with four children; three boys and a girl. The first boy, George, has graduated from a medical school and is a practicing medical doctor. The second boy, Kofi, is about chartering from an accountancy programme and the third, Maanan, (who is a girl) wants to read a programme in traditional dance drama. The youngest, Aaron, wants to read a programme in painting. The father does not have a problem with the choice of programme for the first two boys apparently because those programmes are what the boys like and they are also "prestigious" and can fetch a lot of money. With the younger two, though Mr. Ofosu is aware of their passion for the programmes and the prospects of better future jobs for such programmes, he is reluctant to sanction those programmes because to him, they are less 'prestigious' and less rewarding in monetary terms. Mr. Ofosu's is goaded into this ill-informed decision by his trusted and educated lawyer friend, Mr. Bonu for obnoxious

reasons that are later exposed in the play. This then leaves James with no choice than to allow the children to pursue their desired programmes.

ANALYSIS

The first capitalist ideology that one encounters in the play is classism. As explained earlier, Marxism has a problem with this ideology because it believes in the nobility and worthiness of the individual based on which social class the individual belongs. That is, a person from the working class cannot rise to the position of nobility and respect in society through merit. Rather, these are qualities that can be obtained from an individual based on blood or genealogy. Again, by this ideology, the fact that one belongs to a noble class is enough to guarantee an upright and worthy life from such a person. This assumption has been proved false by incidents in the play and in other literary works.

In *Silas Marner* (1986), George Eliot used the eponymous weaver to prove the extent to which classism can go wrong. The poor weaver turns out to be more noble and respectful at heart than the reckless biological father of Eppie who is from a noble class. And as if to indicate that God himself agrees with Marx's criticism of classism, Silas Marner, who became an atheist somewhere along the line, is compensated beyond measure for his honesty and hard work. His lost money is not only found, but he is also rewarded with the love and care of a daughter whom he never fathered biologically.

In *Sons and daughters*, James Ofosu, Mrs. Bonu and Aunt Fosuwaa are the characters who display tendencies of classism in the play. To Mrs. Bonu, her husband is lowering his class by associating himself with James Ofosu. The elite, rich and respectful lawyer should be dealing with people who belong to the same class with him and not with ordinary business men who never went beyond the elementary school. James wants all his children to read his so-called "professional" courses such as medicine, accountancy, engineering and law not only because of the money such programmes would bring to the family but more specifically because of the prestige and honour they would bring to the family. Thus, if James cannot belong to the same social class with Lawyer Bonu, he (James) still wants to attain this feat vicariously through his children. The children must belong to the same class as Lawyer Bonu so that some of the honour and respect that come with such "professions" would come to him. In striving so much to be like Lawyer Bonu, James throws overboard the interest, passion, talent and future happiness of his younger son and daughter.

Aunt Fosuwaa is bent on getting Lawyer Bonu to marry Maanan even if the latter does not love the former a bit because of the money which Lawyer Bonu has, and the social class to which he belongs. Both James Ofosu and his sister firmly believe in "the higher one's class the better one is assumed to be because quality is in the blood, that is inborn" (Tyson, 2006, p. 59) All these assumptions about classism make the brother and sister gullible to the pitfalls in the evil machinations and lies of Lawyer Bonu.

The language and dramatic techniques of the play also reinforce the falsity in the ideology of classism. The dramatist

uses the language of irony and the technique of dramatic irony to help readers and theatregoers understand the truth that is hidden beneath the veneer of classism. In terms of language, James Ofori makes all readers to understand that it is the welfare of his children he has at heart and this is why he insists that they all read the courses he has chosen for them. He also insists that he simply wants all the children to read professional courses. Getting to the end of the play, readers are now able to understand that Mr. Ofori's "professional" courses do not include teaching, painting or dancing and that he is doing all he can for the children to read the programmes chosen for them because, "Money rules the world! As for teachers and their knowledge, you can judge for yourself by what they are paid" (De Graft, 2006, p. 46) Thus, James' "professional" programmes really consist of only those that he deems can fetch big money in future. The fact that he is sacrificing for the children to have good education means that he has the power to get them to read courses that would bring prestige to him; it does not matter whether there are no future job prospects or if the children are unable to progress in their future careers due to apathy for the job they will engage in.

Through the technique of dramatic irony, the playwright reveals that class does not necessarily come from the blood. It is based on merit. Thus, through Aaron's unintentional deceit, Lawyer Bonu is caught pants down trying to fondle Maanan in a hot afternoon in her own father's home. Luckily for Hannah and Maanan, it is James Ofori himself who hears Lawyer Bonu "bellowing like a bull on heat" when Maanan bites the lawyer in an attempt to resist the fondling (De Graft, 2006, p. 40). That is when James descends from the first floor of his home to the ground floor only to find Lawyer Bonu making frantic efforts to fondle Maanan at all cost. This is exactly when it downs on James that nobility of heart and mind does not come from one's social class. Rather, it comes from sources or factors other than class alone and hence James admits that Lawyer Bonu is "...a liar, a disgrace to his profession" (De Graft, 2006, p. 40).

The fact that nobility of heart and mind do not come from one's social class is further buttressed through the technique of characterisation in the play. By presenting a foil to Lawyer Bonu in the person of Awere, theatregoers are able to see the differences between these two characters and to assess how low Lawyer Bonu has descended in his use of foul tactics to get Maanan to go to bed with him. While Awere is frank, sincere and open with Maanan when it comes to their friendship, Lawyer Bonu resorts to the tactics of sexual harassment, telling lies to James on Awere and Maanan, manipulating James against his own daughter in order to break to her will to resist his (Lawyer Bonu's) advances and finally resorting to fondling her. Lawyer Bonu is guilty of all these crimes while Awere can but win the admiration of the theatregoers for his honesty, hard work and passion for his profession. Yet these are two individuals who belong to different social classes and different professions, or if we may put it right, one belonging to a "respectable profession" according to James and the other belonging to nothing close to a profession, according to the same James.

The second capitalist ideology which is also thrown about in the play is what Marxism refers to as commodification. This ideology is perfectly panned out in the relationship between James Ofori and Lawyer Bonu. Their friendship, at the end of the day, is dependent on the ideas of sign-exchange value and exchange value. Thus, while James wants to associate with Lawyer for a specific reason, the latter at a point in their relationship also has a particular value and use for the relationship he has developed with James. In the second act of the play, James confesses thus:

I admired you and wanted your friendship because I thought you were educated and honest. I thought that in your company I could hope for some of the esteem which men of my sort rarely get.... But he is a liar, a disgrace to his profession. (De Graft, 2006, p. 40)

Thus, the sign-exchange value which James places on his relationship with Lawyer Bonu is not how true or reliable or necessary it is; rather, its sign-exchange value depends on how much the society is prepared to respect James as a result of his association with Lawyer. A poor man who might be honest in his relationship with James but who does not command any respect from society would be of no use to James. He must associate with Lawyer Bonu for the prestige that goes with such a union.

On the other hand, Lawyer Bonu also has some value and use for the relationship he has formed with James. The relationship is worth going to bed with Maanan. Lawyer Bonu is prepared to use his friend, James, to get to Maanan. Though the Lawyer is old enough to be Maanan's father, and though he has a wedded wife, he does not mind having an illicit sexual affair with Maanan. When he realises that he is finding it difficult to convince her, Lawyer Bonu decides to poison James' mind against the possibility of Maanan reading a programme in traditional dance drama. Lawyer Bonu knows very well that what she wants to read is traditional dance drama. It has nothing to do with western ballet. He is also much aware that it is not the dancing per se that makes a dancer a prostitute; it is the upbringing. Despite all these, Lawyer Bonu is prepared to deceive James into believing that choosing a dancing career will make a prostitute out of Maanan so that she can get desperate and yield to his lusty advances.

Theatregoers, to some extent, may therefore not be surprised to find the relationship falling apart since it is not built, in the first place, on principles of sincerity, reliability and the need for a true friend in life. The falling apart of the relationship between the duo and the discovery of how each of them used or intended using the other is a further proof of the falsity embedded in the ideology of commodification. There are certain items, relationships and individuals in our lives whose values are priceless. We should not therefore commodify every item, relationship or individual in our lives. The dramatic irony employed by the playwright in the second act is what precipitates the unraveling of the kind of value that the two friends attach to the relationship between them.

The rugged individual as a capitalist ideology is also found in the play. It is a philosophy that romanticises the

idea of an individual who sets out and undertakes a difficult and risky mission which, to a lot of people, would appear unpleasant. The problem with this ideology is that it praises individualism over communalism and it overlooks how much of the communal welfare is sacrificed for the rugged individual to succeed. Mr. James Ofofu's transport and haulage business is the enterprise that aptly describes the idea of the rugged individual. James is proud of his success and he believes that he achieved this hard-won success by toiling "all day and through the year to make enough money..." (De Graft, 2006, p. 23). He now owns many haulage trucks and proudly displays "... a calendar advertising heavy-duty truck tyres" in his home (De Graft, 2006, p. 1) He has forgotten how others have contributed indirectly to this success, especially Hannah. He has also forgotten that even the clerks he employs and pays contribute in other ways towards the success of the business and for which he does not pay them. They contribute towards the success of the business through their trust and goodwill which he does not pay for. He pays for their labour. Even his children who contribute their quota towards the domestic chores and by giving him the delight of being a proud and a successful father contribute towards his success. They are children who are disciplined and have not gone wayward; their success is a source of pride, joy and inspiration to him in life. All these are contributions coming from the group which ensure the success of his business and which provide him with the temerity to continue to fight for success despite the challenges that life may throw at him. But, with the ideology of the rugged individual, consideration is only given to the one in charge; sacrifices from all other members of the group are not given due credit and this does not paint the true picture of the situation on the ground.

The tendencies of consumerism are displayed in the dramatic piece by both James Ofofu and Mrs. Bonu. To the latter, an individual in the society is as important as what he consumes and can buy. Therefore, as Maanan puts it, Mrs. Bonu "... thinks of nothing but new dresses from morning to evening, and showing off at U. A. C. buying the whole shop up with..." (De Graft, 2006, p. 18). Mrs. Bonu is of the view that the shop-till-you-drop syndrome is the yard stick of social respect and status. Therefore, she thinks of and does nothing other than to shop all day. But to Hannah and her daughter Maanan, there is more to life than being a victim of consumerism. Thus, while Mrs. Bonu is busy buying everything in U. A. C., her marriage is falling apart. She is unable to keep her husband at home and she is convinced that what she wears is what automatically confers societal respect on her. Sadly enough, Maanan and her type are aware that "Any educated woman will ..." not waste her precious time on consumerism. There are other acts or philanthropic activities in life that command better societal respect and heavenly blessings than consumerism.

The stage direction at the beginning of the play also indicates there is "a metal trolley with an impressive array of expensive drinks and cheap glasses" in the sitting room of the Ofofus (De Graft, 2006: 1). It is an arrangement that is made to indicate that James Ofofu also believes in consumerism and commodification. The drinks are just a display to the theatregoers of

what he, Ofofu, can afford to buy. When he comes from work, what he drinks is water and he normally drinks in the company of his friends like Lawyer Bonu. There is no instance in the play where it has been mentioned that James Ofofu drinks at home; he does so outside home. The drinks are therefore kept there as an indication of how much James Ofofu can spend on drinks and the quality of the drinks is meant to confer on him a sign-exchange value for owning them.

Finally, the influence of imperialism is another ideology that is dramatised in the play. The stage direction of the play indicates that in terms of the furniture arrangement in James Ofofu's home, there "...is a leaning to the obviously imported or European. The only item of traditional furniture... elephant stool" (De Graft, 2006, p. 1). This setting is obviously influenced by the fact that James himself is semiliterate and his tastes and ideology about life have been influenced by the West. The play was produced in the sixties, shortly after Ghana obtained independence. And since Ghana was colonised by Britain, and the language and culture of the coloniser was imposed on the colonised, it is no wonder James displays a lot of ambivalent attitude when it comes to matters pertaining to aspects of the Ghanaian cultural life. For instance, when he comes from work and is given water to drink, he first gives some to the ancestors to drink by pouring some of it on the ground. This is a belief and practice which might lead some of the theatregoers to conclude that James, despite his education, has not thrown his culture away.

At the same time, it is the same Ofofu who has to apologise to his wife, Hannah by expressing the idea that illiterates are of no consequence in life. Not just this alone, he admires the traditional "adowa" dance but he does not want his daughter, Maanan, to read traditional dance drama because he thinks it will not fetch her a lot of money in the future and also because he thinks that dancing will make a prostitute out of Maanan. He is influenced by the western culture of ballet dance and their dressing which he thinks is a way for the female to attract men to herself. He also wants all his children to become "professionals" like lawyers, doctors, chartered accountants or engineers because he is influenced by the British system of governance in Ghana. The lawyers, doctors, accountants and engineers were the ones who were in charge of the administration of the colony and they commanded a lot of respect. Thus apart from the political heads such as the governors and the district heads, the lawyers, accountants, engineers and doctors came next in terms of social status during the colonial period.

James is therefore a clear example of Homi Bhabha's concept of unhomeliness in the play. He neither belongs completely to the traditional Ghanaian way of living and its philosophy about life, and neither does he completely belong to the western culture because he is not well educated, he is black and he knows that is not his culture.

CONCLUSION

Sons and daughters is a play that dramatises an issue that is real and problematic in Africa and other parts of the world. The choice of a ward's future career or choice of programme at the tertiary level is important and delicate. Due to the delicate

nature of the choices at this level, it is relevant that parents guide their wards and children to make informed decisions instead of imposing programmes on their wards. In the situation where the parents lack the technical knowledge to guide their wards, professionals in that field should be consulted. *Sons and daughters* is, therefore, not simply about a generational conflict between parents and their children. It also dramatises the extent to which capitalist ideologies undergird some of the attitudes and decisions that we make on daily basis. The ego, wishful careers and social status should not necessarily be the yardstick by which parents impose programme choices on their wards. The play equally demonstrates the extent to which capitalism as an ideology has influenced our lives. Sometimes, we are even unwilling to question or re-examine some of tenets of its ideologies thrown at us.

REFERENCES

- Castle, G. (2007). *The Blackwell guide to literary theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- De Graft, J. C. (2006). *Sons and daughters: A play*, Ibadan: University Press PLC.
- Eliot, G. (1986). *Silas Marner*, London: Penguin.
- Dada, B. (2018). On parents and career choices in Nigeria, *Techcity*, <https://www.techcityng.com>, accessed on April 21, 2019.
- Enughe, A. M. O., et al (2017). A study on students' choice of programme in the university, *Journal of Educational Research and Social Research*, 7(1), 137-143.
- Pepple, F. T. (2014). Parents' influence on career views and choice of institution as correlates on students' choice of science education career in some River State tertiary institutions, *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 5(19), 98-101.
- Habib, M.A.R. (2005). *A history of literary criticism: From Plato to the present*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kumar, S. (2016). Career choice and college students: Parental influence on career choice traditionalism among college students in selected cities in Ethiopia, *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 3(3), 23-30.
- Lundvall, B. and Lema, R. (2014). Growth and structural changes in Africa: Development strategies for the learning economy, *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 6 (5), 455-466.
- Maringe, F. (2006). University and course choice: Implications for positioning, recruitment and marketing, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 20(6), 446-479.
- Mbabazi, J. (2018). Career choice: How to deal with parent-child clash, *The New Times*, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/203472>, accessed on April 21, 2019.
- Mbawuni, J. and Nimako, S. G. (2015). Critical factors underlying students' choice of institution for graduate programmes: Empirical evidence from Ghana, *International Journal of Higher Education*, 4(1), 120-135.
- Myburgh, J. E. (2005). An empirical analysis of career choice factors that influence first year accounting students at the university of Pretoria: A cross-racial study, *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 13(2), 35-48.
- Olaosebikan, O. I. and Olusakin, A. (2014). Effects of parental influence in adolescents' career choice in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria, *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 4(4), 44-57.
- Siyan, J. A., Maisamari, J. Y., and Ahmadu, Y. (2018). Relationship between parental guidance and students career choice in secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja-Nigeria, *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(18), 135-142.
- Shumba, A. and Naong, M. (2017). Factors influencing students' career choice and aspirations, *Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(2), 169-178.
- Sierra Sanchez, J. (2012). Factors influencing a student's decision to pursue a communications degree in Spain, *Intangible Capital*, 8(1), 43-60.
- Sokro, E., Osei-Bonsu, N., Agbola, R. M. and Ankrah, E. (2011). Impact of career choice in job satisfaction among employees in Ghana, *Indian Journal of Commerce and Management Studies*, 2(6), 83-88.
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today: A user friendly guide*, Second Edition, New York: Routledge.