

# Feminism in *Trois Prétendants*, *Un Mari* by Guillaume Oyônô Mbia and in *Sous L'Orage* by Seydou Badian Kouyaté

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## Abstract:

Feminism is generally conceived from the perspective of the condition of women and girls in society, notably concerning their responses to the inordinate urges of patriarchy. It is the manifestations of this general conception that we interestingly sought to determine in two great Francophone African works: *Trois Prétendants... Un Mari* (1954) by Guillaume Oyônô Mbia and *Sous L'Orage* (1964) by Seydou Badian Konaté. The problem hinges upon the still-surviving glimpses in African societies of that aspect of the lurking influence of tradition which results in the generational gap. At the end of it all, the key observation holds that though most women suffer and struggle under patriarchy, not all of them - rather significantly - take the necessary steps for their emancipation. To them, maybe, pain is inevitable; suffering is optional. Surprising? Is the condition of most of these women thus self-inflicted?

**Keywords:** Feminism, Condition, Chained, Standing, Submissive, Subjugation, Subjection, Emancipation

## 1. Introduction

Feminism, briefly, is a movement that consists of advancing and protecting the diverse rights of women and girls, while respecting their various experiences, identities, knowledge, and their strength. It advocates for gender equality for all. Its vision is the liberation of women from subjection in all its aspects. In other terms, it constitutes an instrument or a tool for liberating women from the servitude in which they live. From the woman's part, it is first the awareness of her inferior situation and the means to get rid of it. In short, and generally, feminism relates to the female condition. It can be radical (taking patriarchy as the source of the specific oppression of women), liberal (demanding only legal equality between men and women), or socialist (linking feminism to class society). The mission of this presentation is to study *Les Trois Prétendants... Un Mari* by Guillaume Oyônô Mbia and then *Sous L'Orage* by Seydou Badian from the point of view of the feminist traits displayed above. Consequently, we should observe the women in the societies of the two literary works from the perspective of their behaviors: their words, their attitudes, their actions, and their reactions in their situational interactions. In other words, this present study aims to identify feminism first vis-à-vis the testimonies of women's subjection and secondly the impact of this subjection on them. Then, the study will address the attitudes or responses of women towards their subjection from the angle of the replies of those among them said to be submissive and those of others who appear to be standing or poorly chained. Lastly, the study will try to see what strategies women usually adopt to emancipate themselves so that their condition improves. On this, the study will be organized into two major parts. Each will study - in the respective work - women in the various perspectives of their subjugation and related impact, their submission, their protests, as well as their liberation strategies. Then,

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the analysis will end with an overview of approaches in the form of a Conclusion and will direct reference to the works used as a Bibliography that will allow going further regarding the subject.

### **1.1.0 FIRST PART: TROIS PRETENDANTS... UN MARI**

#### **1.1.1. Subjugation of Women**

Several statements of subjugation manifest: objectification, forced marriage without any love, chores, polygamy, violence, discrimination in education, mandatory acceptance of inferior status, lack of respect, and sale to the highest bidder in marriage.

In the play, there are many signs relating to female subordination. First appears the way Makrita works almost all the time in the field while her husband, Atangana discusses in concert with other men, especially concerning money (1964: 24). Also, men are polygamous. The woman has no choice regarding whom she will marry. Marriage is imposed on her. There is also no limit to the number of women a man can marry. Ondua affirms that Meka "is so proud since his daughter became the deputy's twelfth wife" (Ibid. p. 35). The wealth, position, and privileges of the suitor are strongly considered, and the woman is given in marriage to the highest bidder. Ondua, for example, thinks that if Juliette marries Mbia the civil servant, Médola, the police commissioner of Zoétélé will no longer arrest either his wife or himself for public drunkenness and clandestine distillation of arki (Ibid., p. 24).

The age or character of the suitor is never taken into account. This is why Juliette is obligatorily asked to marry Mbia who was rich but old and polygamous. The potential compatibility between the couple or their happiness means nothing. Girls who oppose arranged marriages are considered stubborn and disrespectful. This is why Matalina, who is against Juliette regarding her rejection of her suitors, is considered rather by traditionalists as a wise girl. Men believe that women are inferior and do not reason. According to Ondua, regarding women, "a man should never waste his time trying to reason with them" (Ibid., p.20). Also, women do not deserve to be consulted about anything, "this or that!" (Ibid., p. 21). It is only indignation that leads to the exclamation "Consult a woman about her marriage!" (Ibid., p. 22). In other words, women should be silent when men speak. Thus, Abessolo inquires about since when "women speak in Mvoutessi" (Ibid., p.28). Moreover, young girls are not supposed to go to school except for parental material gain. Atangana hopes to benefit from his daughter's marriage, and that is why he sends her to school. In other words, his daughter's education will "pay off" one day (Ibid., p. 22). Girls, according to men, should not go to school since they believe that school is the number one enemy of traditions. Consequently, Abessolo strongly believes that formal education is not good for girls. He advises people to never send their daughters to school since he believes that schools "have ruined everything!" (p. 21). Other statements of subjugation still exist. Abessolo is indignant that some men allow their wives "to eat all kinds of taboo animals" and "wear clothes" (Ibid., p. 21). This means that women are expected to accept their position of inferiority. According to Abessolo, for her to be obedient and submissive, women and girls should be punished at the slightest misconduct (Ibid., p. 21). This indicates that women are not respected by men. Truly, they are trivialized and seen only as something to be sold in marriage but for which the required dowry is equivalent to negotiating about a very special and very expensive object. This is why Abessolo believes he acted well in accepting "the hundred thousand francs" that "Ndi paid" as dowry (Ibid., p. 22).

#### **1.1.2 Effects of Subjugation**

The major effects of subjection are very troubling: feelings of dehumanization, slavery, and total subjugation.

Most of the choices imposed by men disturb women who feel dehumanized. They consider themselves objects for sale. Juliette exclaims: "What, am I for sale then?" (Ibid., p. 28). She unfortunately compares herself to an object at the market "like a goat" (Ibid., p. 33) exposed for sale. Women see themselves as oppressed. They contemplate themselves as subjugated and cheated. Young women are especially forced to compete with women who are much older than them. Mbia already has many wives, but Juliette is forced to marry him. In Mvoutessi, giving a girl in marriage is always based on the size of the dowry and not love. It is under the pressure of this conception that Juliette exclaims if "money is proof of love" (Ibid., p. 77). Girls are forced to abandon school and consequently do not achieve their goals. They cannot marry the men they love. Sometimes, they find themselves obliged to deceive their parents in order to have what they want, like Juliette who steals three thousand francs in order to be able to marry Oko.

### **1.2.0 Submissive Women**

Bella, Makrita, and Matalina are the women said to be kneeling.

#### **1.2.1 Bella**

Abessolo's wife, Atangana's mother, and Juliette's grandmother, Bella is from the grandparent generation and thus a traditionalist through and through. She is very obedient to the norms of tradition. In other words, she is well chained, and she accommodates herself to it. She even appears aware of this chaining. That is why she is surprised to see women "eating even vipers, wild boars,..." against the prescriptions of tradition" (Ibid., p. 21). Consequently, she is never concerned about her emancipation especially since she does not perceive any problem in her situation. She wants to remain traditional and submissive by accepting - whatever happens - her condition as a woman traditionally married to Abessolo. She thus has nothing against the proposed forced marriage. On this, she acquiesces: "Juliette is going to marry a real white man!" (Ibid., p. 23). Referring to her potential son-in-law, she says happily that he "will bring a lot of money!" (Ibid., p. 24). She even consents to the convention of accepting the highest bidder. That is why she joyfully exclaims to her granddaughter: "A husband, Juliette? But you already have two, my child!" (Ibid., p. 27). Bella believes like other traditionalists in the wisdom of marriage to a materially well-placed man. Her opinion is that a "wise girl would not miss such a chance!" (Ibid., p. 29). Bella tries to convince Juliette by advising her that in her time, "only the most expensively dowried girls were respected" (Ibid., p. 33). She therefore does not understand how Juliette would like to act "... like Myriam who had married a pauper" (Ibid., pp. 33-34). She wonders how many dresses Oko can unfortunately give to Juliette. A submissive woman, Bella respects family and parental authority. That is why she exclaims before Juliette: "How can you disobey your family like this?" (Ibid., p. 74). And then: "A girl does not speak when her father speaks" (p. 32).

#### **1.2.2 Makrita**

Atangana's wife and Juliette's mother, she is from the parent generation. She is a traditionalist. She is neither educated nor westernized. In short, she is not evolved. She is, however, very hardworking, almost "always in the field" (Ibid., p. 20). She is entirely obedient except regarding the hours of return from the fields to the house. Typically chained, she accepts her position of inferiority. She rejects the idea of educating girls. She understands that sending a girl to school means earning later. About this, she says to her daughter: "You cannot know how difficult it was for your grandmother and me to persuade your father to give you money when you were sent away from Dibamba for lack of pension!" (Ibid., p. 74). Makrita finds Juliette mean for having refused the offer. In this regard, she believes that Juliette, who has also refused, "has no heart" (Ibid., p. 75). Makrita consents that women should be given to the highest bidder in marriage. She also consents to forced marriage. She will therefore expressly tell her daughter: "Your

father is giving you a very hardworking husband, Juliette!" (Ibid., p. 32). Makrita respects parental authority. When Juliette says she will never go to Sangmélina, she whispers to her: "Not so loud! If your father heard you!" (Ibid., p. 76). In concert with other traditionalists, she believes that money is proof of love. She therefore asks Juliette: "Didn't you know that?" (Ibid., p. 76). That is why even when realizing that Oko has not given any dress to Juliette, Makrita asks her daughter: "And you love him?" (Ibid., p. 76). Makrita does not seem to have any terrible experience of her own condition as a submissive woman apart from the effects of Juliette's behavior that go against the norms. Makrita shows no tendency to exhibit any suffering related to her condition in a way that would invite pity for her. In short, she clings to her situation as if it were the only path to salvation.

### **1.2.3. Matalina**

Ondua's daughter, Matalina is from the younger generation. However, she is not educated. She is naively obedient. Out of greed, she considers the proposal regarding Juliette's marriage to the civil servant very advantageous, which makes her father Ondua and her grandfather Abessolo proud. Matalina thus becomes supposedly wise in the eyes of the elderly. She shares the same sentiment as the elders. That is why she asks her cousin: "How can you say that, Juliette? Do you think you can be happy with a poor husband? What will he give to your family?" (Ibid., p. 30). It is even because of her that Abessolo believes that schools "have ruined everything," (ibid.) because he declares: "Look at Matalina who has never been to college: isn't it that she always speaks like a wise and obedient girl?" (Ibid., p. 30). Another traditionalist, regarding forced marriage, comments that Matalina is right since a "wise girl would not miss such a chance!" (Ibid., p. 30). Far from revolting, she joins others in believing that material goods bring happiness especially in marriage. Surprised, she says: "A car! What luck, Juliette! You will never walk on foot again!" (Ibid., p. 30). She cannot understand why Juliette prefers "a simple schoolboy" (Ibid., p.29) to a man loving "enough to pay two hundred thousand francs of dowry for her" (Ibid., p. 77). Matalina thus believes that material goods substitute for love. She asks in a doubtful tone to her cousin about the poor boy that this cousin loves: "... are you sure he loves you? What has he already given you?" (Ibid., p. 77). Matalina finally becomes annoyed when she fails to convince Juliette; therefore, she prefers to leave under the pretext that "it is getting darker outside" (Ibid., p. 79).

### **1.3.0 Poorly Chained Women**

We realize that there is only one in the play: Juliette. Judging by Juliette who bursts into tears without sneaking away when her father tells her bluntly: "You will therefore marry Mbia! It's decided!" (Ibid., p. 63) one would say she is submissive. But an analytical study reveals that she is rather more revolting than standing.

Atangana's daughter, heroine, and very modern and from the young generation. She is a truly standing woman, poorly chained by tradition. A college student, educated, intelligent, perceptive, and analytical, her Western training and strict discipline confront the tradition and customs of her origin. Potentially emancipated, her desire to free herself is however hindered by the first two generations. She nevertheless takes the path of freedom. She considers that education is more important than marriage. She wants to take part in decision-making regarding herself. She has revolutionary ideas about marriage, that is, she wants to know her suitor before consenting to marry him; and she thinks that marriage should not be considered a profitable enterprise. Consequently, she marries Oko (from her generation), in reality, without dowry, contrary to the suitors proposed by her parents. She is not docile like traditional women. She is the only woman with a Western name in the play; she therefore represents the revolt against harmful traditional

practices in society. Her sanctions and sayings are part of the struggle against patriarchy or male domination. She speaks against the traditional concept that is the absolute authority of parents.

#### **1.4.0 Strategies Against Subjection**

Juliette's maneuvers to escape her condition are several. First of all, she spontaneously and intermittently experiences different emotions according to the bitterness of her situation. She is indignant as consistently and calmly as possible: "What, am I for sale then?" (Ibid., p. 28). She gets angry, remains stubborn, irritated, lively, acerbic, harsh, impatient, mischievous, furious, very bitter. She therefore asks bitterly: "So what?" (Ibid., p. 74). She speaks at the top of her voice: "I am already engaged" (Ibid., p. 61). She doesn't want to understand anything. Exhibiting a defiant air, she wants to know: "Why not?" (Ibid., p. 77) and then "Is money proof of love?" (Ibid., p. 62).

She feels relaxed: "But I am free of my person" (ibid., p. 63). She shows herself stubborn: "Not a franc!" (ibid., p. 63). Sometimes, she becomes harshly mocking, especially when she says, apparently amused: "Respectable?" (Ibid., p. 63) reacting to the advice that her union with Mbia will make their family estimable. Again, she bursts maliciously with joyful laughter: "That's why then... give me to the civil servant!" (Ibid., p. 80). She then adopts the strategy of saying no and that it's no while possibly and necessarily defying. Another very effective strategy is to sob: "Nobody loves me here." (Ibid., p. 80). She also tries to plead: "But it's you who don't understand me" (Ibid., p. 63). Furthermore, she uses her intelligence and education to outwit the subjugating agents. Consequently, she suggests to Oko: "... no one other than ourselves is going to get us out of this mess..." (Ibid., p. 63) and then "It's about playing a good trick on all these people" and then "You are going to take the three hundred thousand francs paid by the planter and the civil servant to reimburse them" (Ibid., p. 71). Also displayed is her very operative strategy of exhibiting behaviors to influence decisions during events. It is therefore not surprising that Ndi, finding her comfortable and independent, proposes to her without going through the elderly. Similarly, at her own level and that of other young people, especially Kouma, she makes decisions that influence the elders. It is thanks to her wisdom and diplomacy that no one suspects the basis of her relaxation (her resolution to steal the dowries already paid) when she says calmly: "No, thank you" to Bella who seeks to understand if Juliette is not proud of Mbia. Again, no one suspects her tranquility, unlike her constant air of indignation, when she says softly: "I still remain for sale, and I am never consulted for anything" (Ibid., p. 124). Again, she accuses no one nor suspects anyone when she says mysteriously: "Perhaps someone will come here, who could pay for everything!" (Ibid.). No one incriminates her either when she asks vividly to draw lots by choosing the fourth leaf. Is it therefore amazing for Atangana to finally say to Oko: "There, my son, Juliette is now your wife" (Ibid., p. 140).

## **2.0 SECOND PART: SOUS L'ORAGE**

In this part are addressed the phenomena of feminism in the second work. Thus can be seen professed several of the main feminist manifestations in the form of objectifications, having as a key foundation patriarchy: segregations, stifling of voice, chores, servitude, polygamy, feelings of being beaten, threats, domestic violence, forced marriage, discrimination, etc. Again, this second part does not exclude the various categories of women, including their respective responses to their condition.

### **2.1 Subordination of Women**

*Sous L'Orage* bears witness to all the major manifestations of feminism - notably as an unworthy condition of women - as well as the impact and related responses. First, in the text is apparently displayed an organic and functional separation between men and women. Father Djigui says to Birama: "You will stay on the

men's side" and realizes that Kany "found herself alone among her aunts and cousins" (Ibid., p. 111). Not far from Tiekoura's door, one notices the presence of "a group of men who were discussing in front of a heap of peanuts" (Ibid., p. 43) while women and children are grouped around the wells. In Djigui's village, these women "who just now were chatting so enthusiastically said nothing more" (Ibid., p. 101).

Women remain silent most of the time. For example, one witnesses the scene where Father Benfa turns his gaze towards the women who have fallen silent (Ibid., 1954, p. 183). Women find themselves limited to "complaint and history" (Ibid., p. 34). This complaint "often results in a flogging" (Ibid.). No woman participates in the discussion of Kany's marriage. For example, Maman Téné, during the discussion, has only one "eye on her pot and the other on the veranda" (Ibid., p. 40). Thus, women are very often kept in the dark. Regarding Kany's marriage, "Maman Téné knew nothing; the co-wives knew nothing either." (Ibid., p. 162). In other words, Father Benfa does not discuss it with them beforehand.

Now comes into consideration the fact that women are condemned to work incessantly. Firstly and by way of example, the numerous women at the bank circulate, discuss, bargain, wash (Ibid., p. 99). Again appear Maman Téné and Kany who have just gotten up, prepare their utensils for the morning cooking, and head towards the well (Ibid., p. 19). This same Téné is always seen in the kitchen from which comes out "a white and thick smoke" (Ibid., p. 31). She arranges the veranda, sweeps the floor, cleans the walls, transports old calabashes and basins to the kitchen (Ibid., p. 33). It is even she who carefully places the snuffbox made of skin next to her husband (Ibid., p. 36). She is almost always busy, "spinning her cotton every evening" (Ibid., p. 42). Her husband, he is often preoccupied with thinking about "what to do to dazzle all these people" (Ibid., p. 14). He only "begins to inspect his house hut by hut" (p. 20). And, "dreamy", (Ibid., p. 14), "so majestic, so imposing" (Ibid., p. 32), "the closest to the beyond" (Ibid., p. 35), "ceremonious" (Ibid., p. 50), "patriarch" (Ibid., p. 178), always seeking that people say "with respect and admiration" (Ibid., p. 14) when he appears "There he is!" (Ibid.). Ancient, his key mission is only to watch, order, flog and teach (Ibid., p. 29). And what kind of teaching is it, apart from the consciousness of his family having "known how to maintain itself in the traditions left by our fathers" (Ibid., p. 36)? Meanwhile, family heads only leave "their family at home and run the streets" (Ibid., p. 63).

Women are more or less held as slaves. Take for example the case of the beaten woman, who "puny, the camisole in tatters, the braids undone" sits on the edge of the well and begins to cry (Ibid., p. 59), which prompts Sidi to wonder whether the woman is in marriage or in slavery (Ibid., p. 60), an attitude qualified as "bizarre and even a bit vexing" (Ibid., p. 60). Victims of polygamy, they always have to share the husband's love. Since tradition accepts polygamy, Famagan is advised to ensure "that Kany never has anything less than her co-wives" (Ibid., p. 39). Kany, in Birama's eyes, will be in the "middle of Famagan's two wives, she would be like Téné and like so many others" (Ibid., p. 77). Father Djigui is polygamous. Birama's exclamation summarizes this polygamous phenomenon in a way that makes Samou cry:

"Kany at Famagan's! Kany relegated to the back of a hut, stupefied by kneeling, brutalized morning and evening at the whim of the master, Kany abandoned to her miseries while the master invariably runs the streets in search of new prey!" (Ibid., p. 80).

Men, mesmerian and in meditation, (deliberately?) inspire fear to threaten women. Tiekoura, expressly avoiding greeting Maman Téné, pretends to converse "with invisible powers", which frightens the woman (Ibid. p. 45). This mesmerism through a hallucinatory atmosphere of sinister drums, strange blood-colored boubou and "masks with terrifying grimaces" freezes Maman Téné's heart (Ibid., p. 47). For his part, Father Djigui can never be excluded:



"On the roof of one of his huts, Father Djigui, his head thrown back, his neck stretched and his cheeks puffed, was blowing powerfully into a horn armed with amulets. The women withdrew to their huts" (Ibid., p. 121).

Benfa, he yells and shouts so much that Maman Téné is afraid of him. That is why she only throws "furtive glances" (Ibid., p. 42) in a way to avoid him taking it out on her" (Ibid., p. 76). Invaded by fear, she shouts to Kany: "Who? Your father? Your father! Get up" (Ibid.). Moreover, women freeze with fear, curious, worried, motionless, when they see the two clerks (Ibid. p. 101).

Let's imagine this barbaric and strange situation made of women! She who never has to walk with her husband! This is why Father Benfa laughs heartily upon hearing that White people like to walk with their wives (Ibid., p. 26). He asks, in a mocking tone: "And who stays at home, then? ... The dog!!!" (Ibid.). One is tempted to think that he takes women for animals! Bent over, therefore, women are relegated to the corridor. Sibiri reiterates the tradition according to which women have no voice even regarding matters that affect them. Sibiri's "It is we who decide" (Ibid., p. 54) and then his "Yes, we have the right to impose..." are very explanatory (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, women who protest against their fate are considered demonic. Correlatively, Father Benfa refers to Kany as "a daughter of Satan" (Ibid., p. 75) because she never agrees with the forced marriage. Father Benfa breaks her schooling so that she can marry because he believes that school is the number one enemy of tradition. Fadiga the muezzin supports him by saying that some of the girls who go to school "go so far as to want to choose their husbands!" (Ibid., p. 22). Again, truly, women are considered only as things to be sold in marriage. This is how Birama declares that the elders act "Kany was not a person, but a vulgar sheep" (Ibid., p. 54). Samou is indignant against the customs accepting this auction that makes him sarcastically note that too much will be spent on the wedding so that in the end, the husband demands at his home that the bride grazes on grass (Ibid., p. 65). The offering of women to the highest bidder is vehemently criticized by Sidi who notes that even some so-called literate families marry their daughters "absolutely out of interest" (Ibid., p. 159).

These reasonings lead us to the awareness of the suffering of women in general in the novel. How do these women themselves react to their condition?

## 2.2.0 Submissive Women

There is usually a group of women who are concerned neither with the inequality nor the injustice of the condition in which men or tradition have placed them, a condition, however, equivalent to anarchy and slavery. Usually and on the surface, many women appear to be in this category. Despite their condition, very often, most women laugh heartily. This is how some laugh during "the preliminaries of the third dance" (Ibid., p.140) while others at the bank also laugh "loudly" (Ibid., p. 99). Moreover, the way co-wives do a bit of everything together gives the impression that polygamy constitutes no curse for them. For example, at one point, Maman Téné's co-wives, apparently without any emotion, "were washing around the well" (Ibid., p. 154). At another moment even in Kany's life, despite her challenges especially regarding forced marriage, she gives the impression that the universe is smiling at her (Ibid., p. 151). Even jealousy seems exotic within the polygamous home, especially from Maman Téné who finds herself with her co-wives "around the calabash of steaming porridge" (Ibid., p. 164"). There is again a moment when she goes to her co-wives to make a request to one of them. Situations in which women rejoice abound. But let's specifically study the cases of Maman Téné, Maman Coumba, and the old Grandmother.

### 2.2.1 Mother Téné

She is commonly calm, tender and maternal despite her condition as an illiterate woman. According to her, she knew nothing about writing; yet she was "like others, thank God" (Ibid., p. 71). Here indeed is a woman who denies herself by yielding all her suzerainty and personal independence to her husband, while readily accepting her inferiority. She therefore says to her daughter: "I can do nothing, you know that well, I am nothing. It is your father who decides: beside him, we are nothing, neither you nor I" (Ibid., pp 74-75).

Behind this facade of calm, however, hides a soul that has suffered greatly from the blows of fate. Having married his two young wives who now make the law for Mother Téné in the house, Father Benfa neglects her, yells at her on behalf of Mata, the most annoying co-wife, and becomes a stranger to her. Moreover, Mother Téné bends under the weight of chores – selling, knitting, dyeing, braiding – "and all this to be able to clothe her children" (Ibid., p. 69). Sometimes she worries about her daughter's absence, sometimes she imagines with sadness her daughter's reaction, especially "When she would know that she was no longer free, that Famagan had won her" (Ibid., pp. 69-70). Believing, like traditionalists, that the greatest happiness and the noblest aspiration of a young girl is "the home, a husband and children" (Ibid., p. 71), she supports her husband who thinks that school is not important for girls. She respects parental authority. She accepts her condition as a submissive woman, and like Father Benfa, her conception of marriage is truly traditionalist. That is why she persuades her daughter to take an old man – Famagan – as a husband: "It is not a question of loving, listen, you must obey; you do not belong to yourself and you must want nothing; it is your father who is the master and your duty is to obey. Things have been this way since always" (Ibid., p. 72).

However, in her deepest interior, Mother Téné herself knows that this marriage constitutes "a trial" (Ibid., p. 73) for her daughter. She is aware of the "thousand difficulties" that can fatally arise from this marriage (Ibid., p. 42); nevertheless, she keeps her composure; she tries to convince her daughter to accept her fate as a traditional woman. Mother Téné declares the acceptance of all her torment and advises her daughter Kany to never stand up against her father so as not to increase her sufferings, Mother Téné's. (Ibid., p. 73). It is this same acceptance that forces her to declare: "If all mothers did as I do, no family would know shame and disagreement" (Ibid., pp 44-45).

Despite the total acceptance of her inferiority and her exhortation to her daughter to obey her father, Benfa – ironically – bitterly and brutally accuses Mother Téné of having spoiled her daughter when the latter refuses Famagan. Having the absolute conviction that the daughter is incited by her mother, Father Benfa therefore deprives Mother Téné of her daughter's presence to fulfill the misfortune of the former (Ibid., p. 75). Nevertheless, Mother Téné's exhortation to her daughter: "Do not forget that you are no longer free" (Ibid., p. 71) corroborates her other forms of acceptance to qualify her absolutely (Mother Téné) as a submissive and kneeling woman.

### 2.2.2 Mother Coumba

Mother Coumba, Samou's mother, is very hardworking. She is seen, for example, pouring a calabash of flour, blowing on the fire with stinging smoke, washing calabashes and basins, reselling curdled milk, making blankets, etc. (Ibid., p. 81). In short, she is "tireless" (Ibid., p. 85). So, since the death of Samou's father, he never lacks anything. She works "tirelessly for him and only for him" (Ibid., p. 85).

Naturally traditionalist, she is also troubled by her son Samou's marriage project, staying "awake all night" without sleeping (Ibid., p. 81). She presents an entire facet of feminism, from the perspective of forced marriage, by saying to her son: "Your uncle promised me his daughter for you. You have women



everywhere. Think about it and don't kill yourself for just one girl" (Ibid., p. 83). A conflict is embodied: Samou, thinking that "the time is no longer for these things" (Ibid., p. 83), considers the long duration of his coupling with Kany to the detriment of the so-called daughter of his uncle whom he does not know so well.

Mother Coumba well accepts her condition as a traditional woman well tied up. She is very convinced that educated women, not fearing their husbands, "easily dislocate families" (Ibid., p. 83) since they know only their husbands. She believes that "a woman must obey, she must be patient" (Ibid., p. 83). She thinks that the idea of an ideal woman is not taught at school. For her, an ideal woman must be able to unite the family while knowing "how to offer hospitality to people who will come to your house" (Ibid., p. 83). In fact, nothing better indicates that here is a perfectly connected woman who nevertheless welcomes her condition.

## **2.4 The Poorly Chained Women**

### **2.2.4.1 Kany**

It is only Kany who proves to be poorly chained in the novel. On the surface, one might say that she is very conforming to a condition of a well-chained woman. This is due to the fact that she accepts the punishment of going to Father Djigui's village "for the rest of the vacation" (Ibid., p. 82).

However, she can be considered as a poorly tied up girl. She is categorical in her assertion that she can never "be Famagan's wife" (ibid., p. 72). She prefers to die rather than marry Famagan whom she never loves. In this case, she is emphatic: "I love Samou and I will always love him" (Ibid., p. 75). So we see that she has chosen. Not surprising: the fetish priest has already orchestrated an oath to formally seal the Kany-Samou union in the realm of spirits. Consequently, neither parental nor traditional authority nor any other material good can dissociate her from her choice. If she were to allow herself to be bound, then she would be "bound to Samou... for life" (Ibid., p. 22). She reveals to her mother the reason for her choice: She would not want to suffer as her mother has suffered. Kany is an observant girl who knows through effective observation of everything that happens in a polygamous family. She therefore does not want to be "forced to marry Famagan" (Ibid., p. 74). Thus, feeling lost and believing herself in an unknown world, she weeps pitifully while retreating to her hut. The soundness of her opposition to her condition is summarized by Birama: "This marriage will make Kany unhappy; that is why I am against it. Our sister does not love Famagan; she will never be happy with him. And besides, he already has two wives. Kany loves another boy. Why would you oppose their union? This boy will succeed one day, believe me" (p. 53).

### **2.3.0 Strategies Against Subjection**

Women adopt certain strategies to break everything that binds them and hinders their progress. In other words, they know, in some ways, "to restore a balance destroyed by blindness and the pursuit of selfish interests" (Ibid., p. 148) to give free rein to the demands of civilization. These maneuvers they employ are many. For chained women, it is through submission, acceptance, patience and respect, even adoration. Having exploited all these means, they never feel either bound or hindered in their actions or reactions. One of the fundamental reasons for accepting their condition is the fact that they think that school is the daughter of the contestation of patriarchy. They regularly put their minds at ease, knowing that they do not need formal education to attract husbands since they already know – among other things – how to cook well, till the land, and make blankets. They take the so-called educated girls for dolls who know nothing "except to arrange their nails, hair and eyebrows" (Ibid., p. 89).

For Kany the standing woman, the most ostensible strategy is the fact of sulking. She even refuses to eat: "I am not hungry" (Ibid., p. 62) and then "No, No" (Ibid.)! Moreover, she braves everything. First, she refuses her father's order to never see Kany and Samou together again. That is why she does not in any way "take account of the father's threats" (Ibid., p. 40). As a result, she pronounces "the name of Samou in all the songs" (Ibid.), even "in front of the whole family gathered" (Ibid., p. 157). Her most effective strategy consists of sucking information from the elders about what is happening behind the scenes by purposely joining her mother and her co-wives "around the calabash of steaming porridge" (Ibid., p. 164). Another strategy is to scream each time she is shown "the magnificent gifts" (Ibid., p. 41) from suitors to show that she is not for sale. Perhaps her most effective maneuver is to be rude to "Famagan's messengers each time" they try to joke. Another protest behavior on Kany's part is to cry and sob. The last form of maneuver is the use of the support of all young people, except Sibiri, to finally obtain Father Benfa's agreement. This brings peace; she has succeeded: "It was a night of Peace. Differences seemed forgotten. Sorrows vanished; resentments were dead, yes, dead, because, here, the heart has always commanded gestures and words." (P. 179).

### 3. Conclusion:

Having as mission the study of feminism in *Les Trois Prétendants... Un Mari* by Guillaume Oyônô Mbia and *Sous L'Orage* by Seydou Badian Kouyaté, our journey first specified the conception of feminism to be used in the form of a working definition: the condition of women in society and their related responses. On this, we studied the instances of women's subjugation, including the respective impact. The discovery is that enslavement has its source in tradition that empowers men at the expense of women, some of whom accept their living conditions while others, in very limited numbers, struggle to get rid of it. The former, well chained by tradition and consequently submissive, do not even perceive the phenomenon of chaining, hence their calm despite their condition. The latter, standing and called poorly chained, use various strategies – including stratagem, refusal to speak, radical disobedience, to screaming. Our conclusion is that in both texts, *Trois Prétendants Un Mari*, and *Sous l'Orage*, affirmations of feminism abound especially under three main angles: the vassalage of women, their various reactions to their condition as well as the strategies they adopt to escape this condition. Still, one realizes that in both texts, manifestly, similar testimonies of the same phenomenon of feminism are expressed, including dazzling impressions of liberation processes adopted. From the point of view of the two texts, the similarity that jumps out is the radicalism of feminism according to which patriarchy is taken as the major source of women's condition. The only fundamental difference is the prohibition, in the case of *Les Trois Prétendants Un Mari*, for women to eat certain taboo dishes.

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