

Olive senior gardening in the tropics essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the section Gardening in the Tropics Senior appears to examine stereotypical notions of Caribbean men and women. Within the title of each poem, Shango: God of Thunder and Yemoja: Mother of Waters, traits of the men and women of the region are echoed, along with reflections upon our African lineage. Shango Orisha in the religion of the Yoruba people is a warrior deity, sky father and represents fire, male sexuality and power. He was once the fourth King of the Oyo people who was deified after death. Shango as King and as a God represent different elements of masculinity.

As a King he was a womanizer who had three wives, he ruled over his people and women stringently, he was a fierce warrior, and a ruler who was quick to anger and tantrums. As a God he represents harsh judgments through fire and thunderbolts but is merciful, warning first of actions that are unpleasant to him through his voice (thunder). He also grants gifts of illumination, helping his followers to see the fallacy and reality of their perceptions. Both aspects of Shango as King and God are resounded in Senior's poem as well as Caribbean reality. Within the poem, Senior speaks of Shango as being a womanizer, sweet mouth and smooth talker.

It is said that the girls like him despite knowledge of his three wives. This description applies to Shango during his mortal life, as he was known as a notorious womanizer. It also reflects men within our society. I have personally come into contact with such men in my family circle. These men gather woman as though they are trophies, with each "trophy" knowing its place and being quite aware that it is among many in the womanizer's trophy case. They are polished with compliments and false promises, and

seem to be always competing to gain the womanizer's sole admiration, doing what he sees fit.

This reality is identified in stanza six (6), lines one through six " the girls like him... he sweet mouth them yes have his way..." right into stanza seven lines one to seven " If they want him to stay they must do as he say... woman must know her place...". Shango's first wife Oran cut off her ear in an act to become his only woman, women in real life situations also go to extremes for their men. Shango God of Thunder is known to grant gifts of illumination as stated previously, he allows his followers to see the reality of their situation.

In seeing reality it is up to the individual to use the knowledge gained, suffering the consequences of their choice. Through out the poem we see Shango for who he is, his dirty linen is aired freely for all who wish to examine it. We know his qualities, we are aware of his character type, yet he appeals to women and is highly respected, as seen in stanza four. This is very typical in our society as many men who reflect Shango's traits do not try to cover their great flaws but openly portray their shady characters without apology for their behaviors.

Knowledge is said to be power but it seems, though we are equip with the knowledge of these men and their practices, we still hold them on a pedestal. We see these types of men in our community everyday fathering children upon children to women who are friends and family, women who are quite aware of their distasteful personalities. Throughout the poem Shango is repetitive of the fact that he speaks only once, this points to stubborn nature

of stereotypical Caribbean men and them wanting things down a particular way.

It can also be taken as a warning for the wrath that follows when you disobey such a man. Lastly, in a legend on Shango, we hear of Oran his wife fighting side by side in battle with him becoming cunning and a warrior just like he was. In Stanza seven we are given advice by the persona to "...act tough that is what he respects, work yu brains not sweat but cunning win the fight learn sweet-talking be smooth...". Stereotypical Caribbean men in their governing of women seem prefer to women of strength who do not want to cling to them, but stand as individuals.

Despite this may not be the female's base emotion, hiding their feminine emotions and becoming an independent woman is openly welcomed preferred. Yemoja: Mother of Water represents deity of women (especially pregnant women). It is said that she was there at the beginning at that all life and all Orisha sprung from her. Her name means mother whose children are like fishes; this represents the vast nature of her motherhood, her fecundity and her reign over all living things. In the beginning of Yemoja: Mother of Water, we are given characteristics of Yemoja Orisha and what she symbolizes in African religion.

It also reflects characteristics of a woman. Stanza fours speaks of a typical Caribbean woman " Always something cooking in your pot", it is a common sight to see a mother or grandmother stirring the pot preparing a meal for their loved ones. " This also reflects the nurturing nature of Yemoja. " Always something blueing in your vat", this refers to one of Yemoja's color, always

something blueing as well as it hints towards doing the washing, it is common practice to add what is colloquially known as “ blue” to whites. Always something growing in your belly” Yemoja is known as the mother of life, the water in the stomach of a pregnant woman, this hints to the cycle of pregnancy seen in women of the region.

“ Always something moving on your waters”, Yemoja is the ruler of the seas but this also relates to the troubles women in our region face. The repetition of these lines throughout the poem point to a woman we all know, hard working, sheltering her family, tirelessly nurturing them to the best of her ability. These lines embody mother of all living things, Yemoja as well as the dedicated woman we can all identify.