

**ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN
OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS
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This study presents a stylistic analysis of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, a satirical play that explores political ambition, societal hypocrisy, and gender roles in post-colonial Nigeria. Through a detailed examination of language, dialogue, and characterisation, the analysis underscores how Rotimi employs humour, irony, and linguistic hybridity to critique socio-political realities. Rotimi's language is a hallmark of his dramatic style, blending Standard English with Nigerian Pidgin and indigenous expressions to create authentic, relatable dialogue. This linguistic hybridity mirrors the cultural and political tensions in Nigeria, reflecting a society grappling with modernity and tradition. The study focuses on how the interplay of linguistic registers enhances the comedic tone while foregrounding the thematic depth of the play. The characterisation of Lejoka-Brown, the protagonist, is a focal point of this analysis. His bombastic speeches, rife with malapropisms and exaggerated rhetoric, highlight the absurdities of his political aspirations and outdated views on gender. These stylistic choices not only generate humour but also serve as a critique of the unprepared and self-serving political elite in Nigeria's early post-independence period. Additionally, the play's dialogue is analysed for its satirical undertones, showcasing how Rotimi uses verbal irony and sharp wit to expose societal contradictions, particularly regarding the roles and expectations of women. The interactions between characters reveal the struggle for agency within a patriarchal system, highlighting the tension between traditional polygamous practices and emerging feminist ideals. This study concludes that Rotimi's stylistic techniques—rooted in linguistic innovation, satirical humour, and sharp characterisation—are central to the play's enduring relevance. By merging form and content, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* offers a compelling critique of post-colonial governance and social dynamics, solidifying Rotimi's place as a master of African dramatic literature.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language and literature are powerful tools for social critique, particularly in post-colonial African societies, where the complexities of governance, identity, and tradition often collide. In this context, African drama serves as a vibrant medium for examining societal issues through humour, satire, and cultural specificity. Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, first performed in 1977, and exemplifies this tradition, offering a biting critique of Nigeria's political elite and the intersection of modernity and tradition in gender roles and family dynamics.

While much scholarly attention has been devoted to the thematic exploration of Rotimi's work, particularly his critique of post-independence politics and gender inequality, fewer studies have focused on the stylistic elements that strengthen the play's comedic and critical power. The interplay between language, satire, and characterisation remains underexplored, leaving a gap in understanding how these elements contribute to the play's resonance with audiences across cultural and temporal contexts.

This study, therefore, aims to conduct a stylistic analysis of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, focusing on the use of linguistic hybridity, humour, and characterisation. By analysing how

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

these elements shape the play's tone and amplify its socio-political critique, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into Rotimi's dramatic artistry and his commentary on the Nigerian society. By focusing on the stylistic dimensions of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, this study contributes to the broader discourse on African literature and drama. It highlights Rotimi's unique ability to blend humour and satire with cultural specificity, offering a model for how language and style can be used to critique societal issues. The study deepens our understanding of the role of African drama in reflecting and shaping post-colonial realities.

This paper argues that the stylistic elements in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*—particularly its linguistic hybridity, humour, and sharp characterisation—are central to its effectiveness as a satirical critique of post-independence Nigerian society and its evolving gender dynamics.

Plot Summary of the Play

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is a satirical play by Nigerian playwright, Ola Rotimi. It humorously critiques the political landscape of post-independence Nigeria, focusing on the interplay between personal ambition, societal expectations, and cultural traditions.

The play revolves around Major Lejoka-Brown, a retired army officer who ventures into politics with grandiose ambitions but little understanding of governance or democracy. He represents the archetypal post-independence African leader—brash, self-centered, and overly reliant on outdated military strategies to navigate civilian political life. His lack of preparation and genuine concern for the people he seeks to govern becomes a central theme of the play.

Lejoka-Brown's chaotic personal life mirrors the disorder in his political aspirations. He practices polygamy, having inherited one wife, Mama Rashida, from his late brother, and marrying another one, Sikira, for his political ambition in addition to his modern, Western-educated wife, Liza, whom he married while studying in the United States. The arrival of Liza disrupts the fragile balance in his household, as her progressive values clash with the traditional roles expected of women in Lejoka-Brown's polygamous setup.

The domestic tensions escalate when Liza discovers that Lejoka-Brown has multiple wives. This revelation coincides with Lejoka-Brown's farcical attempts to present himself as a serious political candidate. He employs military-style strategies to rally support, but his comical and misguided efforts only highlight his ineptitude.

The play's climax unfolds when Sikira, initially portrayed as a docile traditional wife, decides to assert her agency by joining a women's liberation movement. This act of rebellion underscores the shifting gender dynamics in Nigerian society and challenges Lejoka-Brown's authority both as a husband and a political aspirant.

Ultimately, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* exposes the absurdities of self-serving politicians and critiques societal norms, using humour and satire to highlight the complexities of modern Nigerian life.

Themes

Politics

The major theme in this play is politics. Unarguably, politics has been one of the major themes in Nigerian literature since independence. Ola Rotimi uses this work to satirise politics as practiced in Nigeria, and in most African countries. For instance, the politics of Major Rahman Lejoka-Brown is very typical of Nigeria's variety of politics. All that governed politics at that period and beyond is selfishness.

Politics of selfishness is the bane of progress not only in Nigerian society but also in the entire African continent. The theme of politics with its negative expressions is portrayed with the character of Lejoka-Brown, a retired military officer who possesses every negative attribute of selfish military politicians—very arrogant and I-know-it-all attitude. He does not join politics because he loves to serve the people but because of what he is going to gain – money and fame. This is very true of Nigerian politics which is governed by self-interest. Even the emergence of Sikira as the flag bearer after Lejoka-Brown is dethroned is an indication selfishness as it is all about women empowerment rather than governance. Sikira, as it was, who knows nothing about politics, becomes the flag bearer just because her mother is the women leader who would mobilise more votes for the party.

This selfishness can therefore, be seen to go beyond personal or individual selfishness. It is also institutional as demonstrated in the party's allowance of Sikira's candidature. This allowance shows that the party is not also interested in governance, but rather in acquiring or maintaining power. For them, they do not mind Sikira being the flag bearer if it is the only condition for Madam

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

Ajanaku to mobilise women to vote for Liberation Party. This kind of institutional decadence affects the entire political terrain of a nation and the nation at large. Unfortunately, this is not far from what we experience in Nigeria today, where a party can do anything possible, including rigging an election, just to remain in power.

Rotimi acted like a visionary in this play. He foresees ex-military officers coming back to power as civilians. He presents a satire on military politics and the insincerity of the military or what one may call militocracy. He subtly cautions that the type of democracy these military officers would introduce would be close to dictatorship. Lejoka-Brown is the symbol of this dictatorship. This play, which was a caricature of the political landscape of Nigeria in 1979, is, indeed and unfortunately, a reality in Nigerian politics even in recent times as politics of selfishness is the order of the day.

Gender Inequality

There is also a theme of gender inequality in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. Lejoka-Brown thinks women have no intelligence until his foreign wife returns from America. In-between the humour in the play, there is gender conflict. As a Western woman, who believes that women are not in any way subservient to men, Liza mobilises her fellow wives to organise their own faction to stop the madness of their husband. What Rotimi seems to be saying is that politics is not only the preserve of the men? Speaking through Sikira, he makes this point clear: 'Men and women are created equal!' (Act 2 Scenes III). As a medical doctor and an experienced educated lady, Liza can compete favourably with any man. There is no doubt that sometimes women are used as puppets in order to fulfil men's ambitions. This is exactly what Lejoka-Brown wants to do with Sikira, but Liza does not think this is right. The play can also be said to have some feministic undertone because it subtly addresses some plights of women both at home and at the national level. And at the end, women triumphed at both ends.

Polygamy

Another theme explored in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* is polygamy and wife inheritance. This theme reflects in Mama Rashida's marriage to Lejoka-Brown. Mama Rashida is the first wife whom Lejoka-Brown inherits from his dead elder brother. This practice of wife fragmentation or wife inheritance is the major cause of polygamy in Africa. The irony of polygamy and perhaps what makes it continue to thrive in Africa is that even the women in some cases acquiesce to this patriarchal practice. Mama Rashida is a good example. Rather than resist being given as a wife to a man she does not know or love, Mama Rashida does not only feel comfortable with the relationship but also works tirelessly to maintain her rival wives. It can be said that polygamy will continue to thrive as long as a woman agrees to be a second wife.

Inter-cultural Marriages

The theme of cross-cultural relationship and marriage is portrayed in Lejoka-Brown's marriage to Liza who is a foreigner and is educated. Their marriage shows that the duo have gone past the mentality of racial and cultural segregation. In addition to that, we also see Madam Bambina Uchenna Ajanaku, an Igbo woman, married to a Yoruba man. Obviously, one of the ways to unite the world is through inter-racial or inter-cultural marriages and this is one of the things Rotimi preaches in his book, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*.

Superstition

The belief in the magical power of the snake which Lejoka-Brown keeps under his bed expresses the theme of superstition in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. Many critics have argued that any work which does not explore the issue of superstition may not be regarded as a true African or Nigerian work. This is because the issue of superstition and taboo are very rampant in Africa despite the advent of science and technology. It has become a popular rumour that African politicians are fond of using some supernatural means to gain and maintain power. This is exactly the reason why Lejoka-Brown keeps the snake. However, Lejoka-Brown's political crash before he reaches the pinnacle of his political dream puts a question mark on the assertion in the potency of some supernatural powers in winning an election or achieving success generally.

Class

Ola Rotimi also subtly introduces Marxist ideology into the play. What makes *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* pass for a Marxist work is that there is a theme of class disparity in the play and at the end of the play, there is a revolt by the women folk which leads to the emergence of Sikira as

the flag bearer of the National Liberation Party. Lejoka-Brown, Okonkwo and Liza can be said to represent the propertied capitalist bourgeoisies while Mama Rashida, Sikira, Polycarp, Madam Ajanaku and other market women are the proletariats who are at the mercy of Lejoka-Brown.

Characterisation

Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown

Unarguably, characters usually mirror a period in history. Lejoka-Brown, a retired army Major, is a good picture of political disillusionment. He is the comic hero of the play invested with greed, strictness, rigidity and confusion which characterised the political landscape of Nigeria and Africa since independence. He is a very autocratic and chauvinistic protagonist in the play. Rahman Lejoka-Brown represents those politicians of then who can still be found now in the Nigeria's political terrain. He is gruff, grotesque, and corrupt and has all the negative attributes of politicians of a corrupt political regime. He is very indiscrete, arrogant and has no regard for women. No wonder the women unanimously boot him out of the office as their party leader.

Lejoka-Brown is not an intellectual but a military man with antagonistic mentality who sees politics as a do-or-die affair or a venture one should engage in as a means of making money. There is no doubt that he has no programme or manifesto for the people but only engages in politics for his selfish reasons; all he does is for material and personal gains. He does not marry Sikira because he loves her but because he hopes to gain more votes from the women.

It is a shame that Lejoka-Brown, a man with very poor communication skills, is lording it over other people including Liza, a qualified medical doctor. This is a sheer bastardisation of democracy. Over the years, I have seen retired and tired military officers whose educational qualification is questionable aspiring to lead Nigerian and African nations. Like many other military officers meddling into African politics, all Lejoka-Brown can boast of is his experience in the war in Congo. Arguably, it takes more than a college degree to be a person of education but college degree or its equivalent is a good starting point. One wonders if Lejoka-Brown has any academic qualification. By a blatant act of coercion and the money he has made from the cocoa business he inherited from his father, he is now a bourgeois who exploits other people to feed his ignorant ego.

Gideon Abednego Okonkwo

He is a fellow retired soldier and a friend of Lejoka-Brown. They both met each other while serving in Congo. Unlike Lejoka-Brown, he left Congo early enough to pursue his career in Law. He is used as a foil character to Lejoka-Brown in the play. He behaves in more humane and mature way than Lejoka-Brown. His approach to issues shows that he is more intelligent than his friend, Lejoka-Brown. As a civilian, perhaps Rotimi carefully casts him to draw a contrast between the character of a military officer and the so-called 'bloody' civilians. Like his friend, Okonkwo belongs to the bourgeoisie or elites class.

Gideon Abednego Okonkwo advises his friend, Lejoka-Brown, on how to navigate some difficult situations he plunges himself into. One of such situations is that of Liza's arrival. While Lejoka-Brown takes his advice in matters of romance, he does not listen to him in some other matters, especially in matters that concern politics. He is a very good friend of Lejoka-Brown even though he does not seem to support fully his political views and intentions.

Liza

Liza, a qualified medical doctor from the United States, married to Lejoka-Brown in Congo, is no doubt the architect of the family conflict in the play. After her studies in the USA, she returns to Nigeria unannounced and discovers that she is not the only woman in the life of Lejoka-Brown. As she cannot tolerate polygamy, she begins to revolt against it. In order to attack polygamy and make room for herself, she begins to give Sikira provoking ideas about what she calls 'women's lib' or women liberation while she advises Mama Rashida to expand and focus more on her business. Not quite long, she is able to sweet-talk Sikira into joining partisan politics and Mama Rashida leaves for the village to expand her chicken business. She now has Lejoka-Brown only to herself.

Liza is a prominent woman character. She is complex and very intelligent. She actually loves Lejoka-Brown, but she is not at home with his political obsessions. She is crafty in manner. As a typical Western woman, she is not ready to play the second fiddle in the life of Lejoka-Brown. Her education gives her an edge over her rivals. Her marriage to Lejoka-Brown in the first place shows that she has gone past the infantile attitude of racial and cultural segregation. Liza is the catalyst for

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

women political emancipation in the play. Unlike her rival wives, who can barely read or write, Liza is well educated and exposed.

Mama Rashida

Mama Rashida is the first and senior wife of Lejoka-Brown whom he inherited from his late elder brother. She plays the role of a very traditional African wife who is submissive, patient and humble. Because of her very little or no education, she does not aspire to change her status. For this reason, she remains a flat character throughout the play. As a senior wife, she acts as a mother or patron to the younger wives. She sees nothing wrong with polygamy and for this reason, she does not seem to complain in any way. She even goes a step further to receive Liza with open arms despite the fact that she is her rival wife. Mama Rashida could be said to be a contradiction to the aspiration of modern women activists who attempt to 'liberate' women from what they see as exploitative grips of patriarchy.

Sikira

She is a young amiable daughter of Madam Ajanaku, the leader of the Market Women Union, and the second wife of Lejoka-Brown. He married her to woo the votes of the market women. Because of her age, Lejoka-Brown could successfully make Liza believe that she is a maid. As a character, Sikira is a symbol of impressionism. Unlike Mama Rashida, Sikira is an inquisitive and a dynamic character who is ready to learn. Initially, she thought that the presence of Liza, another rival wife, would make her subservient. This thought necessitated her initial repulsive behaviour towards Liza. Soon, however, she begins to develop a liking for her when she realised that Liza was more of an ally than a rival. Liza finally becomes a tool for her social consciousness and freedom. As the play ends, she outshines her husband by becoming the sole candidate of the National Liberation Party for the upcoming elections.

Madam Bambina Uchenna Ajanaku

She is the President of the National Union of Nigerian Market Women and the mother of Sikira. Although not well educated, she is no doubt an intelligent and fearless woman who will not hide her feelings when it comes to issues concerning her party. She is an Igbo woman but married to a Yoruba man in order to promote national unity. Like other less-educated characters in the play, Madam Ajanaku uses Pidgin English to express herself. Her emotion-charged speech at the emergency meeting of the party executives of the National Liberation Party brings about the dramatic resolution in the play in favour of the women folk. Although she has risen to the pinnacle of heading her fellow market women, Madam Ajanaku, by virtue of her very little or no education belongs to the exploited or proletariat class.

Polycarp

Polycarp is a domestic help in the household of Lejoka-Brown. Although an illiterate, he is very faithful to his status and his master. As a servant, he is not well-developed throughout the play. Polycarp is an illiterate who is not intelligent enough to discern things. For this reason, he is associated with poor communication skills. He represents the common people in the society with very low level of intelligence who cannot in any way contribute to nation building. At the same time, Polycarp represents the exploited and oppressed proletariat in Marxist ideology.

Stylistic Deployment in the Play

Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* is a comedy of errors that uses dialogue, humour, satire, and code-switching to critique postcolonial politics, gender relations, and class hierarchies. Rotimi's stylistic approach is highly selective and useful as he uses satire and dialogue-driven humour to address serious socio-political issues.

Language

Rotimi's language is a hallmark of his dramatic style. His use of different varieties or shades of language engenders language hybridity. This hybridity mirrors Nigeria's multicultural and multilingual society. It highlights tensions between tradition and modernity, urban and rural life, and local and global influences, while also offering a humorous critique of these dynamics. He uses Standard English, Pidgin English, local Nigerian language (Yoruba), military jargon and proverbs as well as idiomatic expression.

Standard English

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

This is primarily used by Liza to represent her status of modernity, education, and progressive values. It is also used by Lejoka-Brown when he wants to speak to Liza and his friend Okonkwo or at the party.

Pidgin English and Codeswitching

Spoken by characters like Sikira, Mama Rashida and Polycarp, it reflects the everyday speech of ordinary Nigerians, adding humour and authenticity to the play. It also bridges gaps between social classes. Lejoka-Brown codeswitches from Standard English to Pidgin when he wants to talk to these low classes but switches to Standard English when he wants to speak to those he considers being elites.

Local Nigerian Languages

Incorporating Yoruba expressions brings authenticity to the play. It registers the play in its Nigerian cultural context, emphasizing tradition and community wisdom.

Military Jargon

Lejoka-Brown's speech is peppered with military terms, symbolising his outdated worldview and inability to adapt to civilian and domestic life.

Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Rotimi uses proverbs and idioms to anchor the play in African oral traditions. The deployment of proverbs often contrasts characters' philosophies, such as Lejoka-Brown's traditionalist views against Liza's progressive ideas. These expressions serve both as wisdom and as comic relief. Examples include:

"The hen that lays the golden egg does not know its own value." This metaphor reflects the undervaluation of women, despite their crucial roles in society.

"A snake that moves without its head will soon run into trouble." This proverb criticizes disorganized leadership.

It is worthy of note that language is the effective use of language is found in almost every aspect of the play. It is a viable vehicle with which Rotimi drives his message; it runs through the play. Language is used to drive dialogue, humour, and the central preoccupation of the play as a satire.

Dialogue and Humour

Rotimi's use of dialogue is central to the play's critique of postcolonial politics. The characters often engage in rapid exchanges filled with wit, humour, and irony, which serve to expose the absurdity of the postcolonial ruling class. For instance, the protagonist Lejoka-Brown, a former military man, declares: "Politics is war by other means." And in another instance he said, "I have fought many wars... and politics na war too! Me, I go conquer this one!" Also, during one of their meetings, Lejoka-Brown said:

Gentlemen, our election campaign plans must follow a pattern of military strategy known as surprise and attack. Now what is surprise and attack? Surprise and attack, Gentlemen, is "to catch the enemy off-guard, and wipe out his power before he can mobilise enough force to launch a counter-attack." Are you there... now, how do we apply this strategy to our campaigns? Now listen... we shall concentrate our early campaigns on the outskirts....

These statements, delivered with unintentional humour, reveals Lejoka-Brown's gross misunderstanding of politics, as he mixes up governance with warfare. His reduction of politics to warfare is a clear reflection of the postcolonial critique of how many African leaders, particularly former military officers, and approach governance as an extension of military power rather than a democratic institution. His reliance on such militaristic language mocks the authoritarian tendencies that pervaded post-independence politics in Nigeria.

Humour is also deployed to reveal gender dynamics. A feminist reading can be seen as Sikira revolts against the husband, Lejoka-Brown, when he tried to control her, forcing her to change her dress. Her statement "Men and women are created equal!" is blamed on Liza which results to a fight between Liza and Lejoka-Brown as the former pursues the later with a broom around the entire house while the latter defends himself with a lid of a trash can which he handles as a shield. This scenario is very humourous. Furthermore, when Lejoka-Brown's wives argue about their roles in the household, their banter becomes a humorous critique of polygamy and traditional gender roles. For example, Sikira complains about her lack of power as the second wife: "Na dis small power I want, I go take am and rule you!" These comedic dialogues and actions reveal the underlying feminist

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

tension, as the women subtly contest their subordinate roles in the patriarchal household. Through humour, Rotimi critiques the ways in which women are expected to conform to patriarchal expectations in postcolonial African society.

The use of humour in Rotimi's satire serves to make these critiques more accessible to the audience. By employing exaggerated characters and absurd scenarios, the playwright invites laughter while simultaneously prompting reflection on serious societal issues. The absurdity of Lejoka-Brown's leadership style elicits both amusement and discomfort, forcing audiences to confront the often ridiculous nature of political realities in their own contexts (Fisher et al., 2022). This blend of humour and critique allows the play to engage audiences effectively, encouraging them to question the status quo.

Satire and Social Critique

Rotimi's play is heavily satirical, using exaggeration and absurdity to critique both postcolonial leadership and gender relations. Lejoka-Brown's incompetence as a politician is satirised throughout the play, particularly in scenes where he attempts to apply military tactics to political problems. The extract below captures this absurdity:

LEJOKA-BROWN: Gentlemen, our election campaign plans must follow a pattern of military strategy known as surprise and attack. Now, what is: surprise and attack? Surprise and attack, Gentlemen, is "to catch the enemy off-guard, and wipe out his power before he can mobilise enough forces to launch a counter-attack." Are you there... now, how do we apply this strategy to our campaigns? Now listen... we shall concentrate our early campaigns on the outskirts...

[Indicates on map with a cane]

In the villages... in the tiny fishing suburbs... and so on. Like a very busy husband who cannot afford a direct clash with a difficult wife, at the moment, we must steer clear of a face to face meeting with our political enemies in the big towns we keep our hands off the cities. For the time being mark you. For the time being. One rat at a time; you chase two, you miss both.

[Mumbling... whisperings: reactions by other members]

ONE MEMBER: S-i-l-e-n-c-e!

[Quiet prevail again]

LEJOKA-BROWN: Now then. About one month before election day, we launch a sudden two-pronged drive from the small towns and villages right into the big towns and cities. Our political enemies are...SURPRISED.

[Clears his throat]

Then the ATTACK...

[More ardently]

From city to city, we run over the whole State with a heavy artillery of campaign speeches. And, brothers, by the time our enemies rally together to put up a resistance

[Throws his arms up]

...all over. We carry Ibadan... Abeokuta falls under our feet... we uproot Ilesha... Oyo trembles into our open arms... we welcome Ogbomoso... Ilorin opens up the door, and we're in the north, Gentlemen. Once there, an arm of our propaganda brigade crosses over to Jos, Jos to Oturkpo, heading south... Enugu puts up a tough fight, we hop over Enugu... march through Port Harcourt...sweep Calabar... we begin campaigning in Onitsha... cross over the bridge, dance through Asaba, shake up Benin, hop over to Warri and fullstop.

[Dramatically mops the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief]

Well... Gentlemen... any query so far?

[No answer]

Gentlemen, I said any que...

[Seven members pop up instantly, speaking simultaneously]

The satire here lies in the absurdity of his belief that military solutions can solve political issues, a reflection of the broader critique of military dictatorship in postcolonial Africa.

Similarly, Rotimi uses satire to critique gender relations. Lejoka-Brown's sexist attitudes are lampooned when he tries to impose traditional gender roles on his modern, educated wife, Liza. His frustration with Liza's refusal to conform to his expectations becomes comic but pointed out feminist critique of the rigid gender roles imposed by patriarchy. When Liza responds to Lejoka-Brown's attempts to control her with, "I am not one of your soldiers, Lejoka!", her line serves as a feminist rejection of patriarchal dominance.

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

Rotimi's play employs satire as a powerful tool to critique postcolonial leadership and gender relations, illuminating the absurdities and failures of contemporary political figures. Through exaggerated characterisations and absurd scenarios, the play sheds light on the incompetence and corruption that often plague political leaders in postcolonial contexts (Geva-May et al., 2020). One of the most prominent figures in this critique is Lejoka-Brown, whose misguided approach to governance serves as a focal point for Rotimi's satirical exploration.

Lejoka-Brown embodies the archetype of a military-minded politician, showcasing a fundamental misunderstanding of the complexities of political governance. His frequent attempts to impose military discipline on civilian matters highlight the absurdity of his perspective. For instance, his declaration, "I will make them march! Left, right, left!" signifies not only his belief in the effectiveness of brute force but also his detachment from the realities of political dialogue and negotiation (Robinson, 2022). This satire emphasises the ridiculousness of applying military logic to political issues, revealing a broader commentary on the legacy of military dictatorship in postcolonial Africa (Johansson & Henriksson, 2020).

The play also critiques the gender dynamics present in society, particularly through the interactions between male and female characters. The portrayal of women in Lejoka-Brown's world reveals a patriarchal structure that is both absurd and detrimental (Baden et al., 2022). Women are often depicted as either subservient or marginalised, illustrating the societal expectations placed upon them. For example, female characters may be relegated to the background, expected to support male leaders without any real agency of their own. This dynamic not only serves as a critique of gender relations but also underscores the need for a more equitable society (Figueroa et al., 2020).

Moreover, the absurdity of Lejoka-Brown's actions often extends to his interactions with female characters, which further exemplifies the play's satirical tone. His attempts to assert authority over women through outdated gender norms highlight the folly of his leadership style. When he dismisses female opinions as irrelevant or frivolous, it becomes evident that his political ineptitude is compounded by a patriarchal mindset (Gu et al., 2021). This critique of gender relations is not merely an ancillary theme but is intricately woven into the broader tapestry of social commentary that Rotimi crafts.

Additionally, the play's reliance on satire creates a safe space for discussing sensitive topics. By exaggerating the flaws of leaders and the absurdities of societal norms, Rotimi opens up a dialogue about postcolonial governance and gender relations without alienating the audience (Heinrich et al., 2022). This method of critique enables readers to reflect on their own experiences and societal structures, fostering a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. In this way, satire becomes not just a tool for entertainment but a means of instigating social change (Takahashi et al., 2023).

The play's satirical nature also invites comparisons between the characters and real-life political figures, reinforcing the notion that such incompetence is not limited to fiction. Lejoka-Brown serves as a caricature of various postcolonial leaders who exhibit similar traits of arrogance, ignorance, and a penchant for militaristic solutions (Pournader et al., 2021). By presenting these figures in an exaggerated manner, Rotimi critiques not only the individual but also the systemic issues that allow such leadership styles to persist in society.

This aggressive use of satire in Rotimi's play not only entertains but also serves as a clarion call to action, urging audiences to confront the absurdities of their own political and social realities. The interplay between humour and critique fosters a deeper engagement with the themes presented, making the play a significant commentary on the challenges facing postcolonial societies today (Tal, 2024).

In conclusion, Rotimi's play serves as a powerful satire that critiques both postcolonial leadership and gender relations through the lens of absurdity and exaggeration. Lejoka-Brown's character exemplifies the failures of applying military logic to political governance, highlighting the broader issues of incompetence and corruption in postcolonial Africa (Mwango, 2024). The play's exploration of gender dynamics reveals the absurdity of patriarchal structures, calling for a re-evaluation of societal norms (Winston, 2023). Through humour and satire, Rotimi invites the audience to reflect on these pressing issues, ultimately advocating for a more equitable and just society.

Code-Switching and Class Consciousness

Rotimi's use of code-switching—moving between Pidgin English and formal English—is not just a stylistic device, but also an indicator of class distinction, social mobility, and cultural identity. For

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

instance, when Lejoka-Brown speaks to his wives or subordinates, he frequently uses Pidgin English: "Make we dey go, no time to waste!" However, when he addresses fellow politicians or tries to assert his social status, he uses more formal English. This reflects his internalised colonial mentality, where the use of formal English signifies power, prestige, and authority, while Pidgin English is used among the lower classes and among close allies.

This stylistic choice can be read through a Marxist lens, where language becomes a tool for class division. The characters' ability to switch between languages mirrors their navigation of social hierarchies, reflecting how linguistic control is linked to power. Rotimi's strategic use of language reveals how class distinctions remain deeply embedded in postcolonial Nigerian society, even after independence. The switching between formal English and Pidgin English also symbolises the struggle between the colonisers' influence and the indigenous culture's resilience: a theme central to postcolonial analysis.

Humour and Satirical Dialogue as Critique of Patriarchy

Rotimi's deft use of humour and satirical dialogue drives the social and political commentary in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. His reliance on dialogue-heavy scenes imbues the play with a fast pace and reveals the ridiculousness of the male characters, particularly Lejoka-Brown, who is the play's central figure of ridicule. For instance, the dialogue and scene that happens at the airport when Lejoka-Brown and his friend Okonkwo go to receive Liza and take her to a rented apartment just to keep her away from the other women at home is not just humorous, but also ridiculous. It brings "the superman", which Lejoka-Brown claims to be, to ridicule. The climax of this scene is when he receives the message that Liza has already arrived and is at home with the other women. This scene is also the climax of the humour in the play. The extract below captures this climax:

OKONKWO: That must be her plane now!

[They start moving off.]

POLYCARP: [louder]. Major!

[Polycarp bursts in urgently, panting.]

POLYCARP: Beg to report sah!

[The men turn, facing him.]

Di 'yawo done come for house, sah!

LEJOKA-BROWN: Hunh?

POLYCARP: Di madam - from America.

OKONKWO: Come where?

LEJOKA-BROWN: [masking his fright]. Are you listening to the crazy idiot?

[Threatens to strike POLYCARP]

When did I become your joke-mate?

POLYCARP: Na true Oga Major – I no craze yet.

LEJOKA-BROWN: But she said 5 o'clock!

OKONKWO: Maybe her plane arrived ahead of schedule.

LEJOKA-BROWN: [to POLYCARP]. You mean she has entered our house...

on... her own two feet?

POLYCARP: I swear, master, make God hammer me for head if say na lie I...

LEJOKA-BROWN: Lai lai!

OKONKWO: And she saw... the other women?

POLYCARP: Sah?

LEJOKA-BROWN: Liza take eye see Mama Rashida?

POLYCARP: Yes, Major, she see Mama Rashida well-well.

LEJOKA-BROWN: What about Sikira?

POLYCARP: She see 'am gaan* - dem two.

[Slowly, speechlessly, LEJOKA-BROWN begins to sink down absently, ending up in a vulgar squat - the way one does over a pit toilet. OKONKWO watches him curiously then beckons to POLYCARP]

OKONKWO: [with impish delight] Here boy.

[Hands POLYCARP a coin.]

Looks like your master needs toilet paper!

[POLYCARP stands confused.]

Hurry, go buy some!

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

[POLYCARP takes off.]

LEJOKA-BROWN [peremptorily]: Hey! What's the matter? Hunh?

[POLYCARP halts.]

Madman, where are you going?

POLYCARP: I dey go buy toilet paper sah.

LEJOKA-BROWN: I see...for who?

POLYCARP [respectfully]: For you sah.

LEJOKA-BROWN: Ehen? I see... Na so your papa dey take shit? Hunh? Answer. When your papa wan go latrine, he go take shokoto put for nyash; he carry damask agbada cover body, take cap knock for head finish, then he come butu dey shit for International Airport?

POLYCARP: Sorry sah!

[LEJOKA-BROWN cast a malevolent glance in the direction of OKONKWO who is rolling on the bench, delirious with laughter over his friend's discomfiture.]

Satire as a Feminist Critique

Rotimi's use of satire also extends to gender relations, particularly in his portrayal of Lejoka-Brown's polygamous household. His sexist attitudes, particularly toward his modern, educated wife, Liza, are mocked throughout the play. Liza's feminist sensibilities, shaped by her time abroad, stand in stark contrast to the traditional expectations Lejoka-Brown holds for women. When Liza questions her role and the purpose of her marriage, she asks, "Is this what you call marriage, Lejoka?" Her disbelief and growing defiance form the core of the feminist critique, as she rejects the patriarchal structures that attempt to confine her.

Through the character of Liza, Rotimi critiques not just the postcolonial male figure but also the broader patriarchal systems that undermine women's rights and autonomy. Liza's resistance to Lejoka-Brown's control serves as a feminist counterpoint to the absurdity of the male characters, offering a critique of how women are expected to conform to subservient roles in a postcolonial patriarchal society. With the presence of Liza in the house, the women there gained their freedom: one, financial freedom, and the other freedom from patriarchal dominance.

Figures of Speech: Hyperbole, Irony, and Metaphor

Rotimi uses hyperbole and irony to great effect, particularly in the characterisation of Lejoka-Brown. His grandiose claims about his abilities as a leader are often laughably overblown, highlighting his incompetence: "I will lead this country to greatness with my military experience!" This exaggerated self-perception becomes a symbol of the delusions of grandeur that many postcolonial leaders possessed, believing they were uniquely suited to govern simply because they had fought in the independence struggles or held military positions.

Irony runs through much of the play, particularly in the depiction of Lejoka-Brown's belief in his own superiority, juxtaposed against the realities of his incompetence. His attempts to assert control over Liza, a woman clearly more competent and educated than he is, are met with ironic consequences, as she continuously outsmarts him, leaving him floundering. This irony highlights both the feminist critique of male dominance and the postcolonial critique of incompetent leadership of men in the African context.

Significances of Rotimi's Dramatic Techniques as Observed by Different Authors

Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* employs a lighter, more satirical tone that serves to critique societal expectations surrounding marriage and gender roles in contemporary Nigeria. The comic elements in his narrative highlight the absurdities of daily life, allowing readers to engage with serious themes without the heaviness often found in more dramatic narratives. Rotimi's use of humour is not merely for entertainment; it is a strategic approach that invites readers to reflect critically on their cultural norms (Mackrell, 2024). By weaving comedy into his storytelling, Rotimi positions his work within a broader discourse of contemporary African literature that seeks to balance criticism with accessibility, thereby appealing to a diverse readership.

Rotimi uses domestic spaces and everyday objects as symbols of the characters' social roles and expectations. The interplay of these symbols not only enriches the narrative but also invites readers to interrogate the significance of their cultural practices and beliefs (Akudo, 2021).

Rotimi's characters challenge traditional gender roles through comic situations that reveal the absurdity of societal expectations, providing a refreshing take on masculinity and femininity in

ANALYSING THE USE OF STYLE IN OLA ROTIMI'S OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

modern Nigeria. This contrast underscores the diversity of feminist narratives in African literature, reflecting the varying approaches to gender representation (Martyanov, 2021).

The socio-political contexts in which this work is situated further inform his stylistic choice and thematic explorations. Rotimi's work engages with contemporary issues such as urbanisation, globalisation, and the impact of modernity on traditional values. His style reflects the tensions between tradition and progress, highlighting the cultural shifts occurring within Nigerian society (Tal, 2024).

Additionally, the interplay between language and style in the play offers insight into the author's cultural identity. Rotimi employs a more colloquial style, reflective of contemporary urban vernacular. This choice not only enhances the accessibility of his narrative but also mirrors the linguistic dynamism of modern Nigerian society, making his work relatable to a broad audience (Bekers et al., 2022).

The author's engagement with theme of family and society further underscores his stylistic ingenuity. Rotimi presents family as a source of both conflict and humour, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of relationships in the face of societal pressures. This exploration of community dynamics reflects a broader narrative trend in contemporary African literature, where the family unit is often depicted as a site of negotiation and transformation (Fisher et al., 2022).

Summarily, Rotimi employs a varied dramatic approach, incorporating multiple perspectives and voices that enrich the story's comic landscape. This stylistic choice enables him to present a more comprehensive view of the societal issues at play, reflecting the multifaceted nature of contemporary Nigerian life (Ghidotti, 2022).

II. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the stylistic elements in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, highlighting how linguistic hybridity, humour, and characterisation contribute to the play's satirical critique of post-independence Nigerian society. By blending Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous idioms, Rotimi crafts an authentic and relatable linguistic landscape that mirrors the cultural and political complexities of the time.

The character of Lejoka-Brown, with his exaggerated rhetoric and comedic flaws, embodies the absurdities of political ambition and societal expectations, allowing Rotimi to expose the shortcomings of unprepared leadership. More so, the interplay of humour and irony not only enhances the comedic tone but also sharpens the critique of societal norms, particularly those governing gender roles and the evolving position of women in a patriarchal society.

This analysis underscores the importance of style in shaping meaning and enhancing thematic depth in African drama. Rotimi's ability to merge form and content demonstrates the power of language as a vehicle for social commentary, making his work both timeless and relevant.

While this study focuses primarily on stylistic features, future research could explore comparative analyses with other African plays that use satire to critique post-colonial governance. Such studies would further illuminate the role of drama in reflecting and shaping societal consciousness across diverse cultural contexts.

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again exemplifies the potential of African drama to entertain and educate, using style to bridge the gap between humour and criticism. Rotimi's work remains a testament to the enduring power of literature to engage with societal issues and provoke meaningful reflection.

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