



Patriarchal Supremacy and the Plight of Women in Two Contemporary Nigerian Plays

Ebifaghe O. FAWEI, PhD

Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Africa,
Toru-Orua (UAT)
Bayelsa State, Nigeria
ebifaghe.ogoh@uat.edu.ng, ebiwhite2come@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the subject of patriarchal supremacy and how unhelpful it is to women. Patriarchal supremacy as an ideology gives the impression of men superiority and control over women. Thus, results to dehumanising treatments ranging from oppression, abuse, seclusion, and denial of women's active participation in the domestic, social, political, and economic settings. Patriarchal orders perpetuate gender inequalities, often marginalising women. Thus, the paper looks at the plight of women specifically in African societies where patriarchal structures are ingrained into the fabric of society. The paper argues against women's suppressive laws and practices that promote male superiority in public and private domains of women's lives; characterised by experiences that gives suffering to women. The study is foregrounded on Spivak's Subaltern theory which contests for emancipation of oppressed group or individual in society. This theory is relevant to this study because it seeks to help the subaltern people to neutralise their forces of oppression and speak for themselves. It adopts the content analysis method to investigate the issue of patriarchal supremacy and women's plight in Salami-Agunloye's Sweet Revenge and Rotimi's Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again respectively. The paper submits that women are in serious need of emancipation from all forms of patriarchal strangulations. It concludes that patriarchal supremacy demands total control. Therefore, every gender based practices that promote inequality between the male and female genders should be discouraged. It recommends women's self development, rejection of inferiority, and resistance of oppressive patriarchal structures as a pathway to women liberation.

Keywords: Patriarchal supremacy, the plight of Women, inferiority, oppression, inequality.

I. Introduction

It is pertinent to examine the plight of women in society. Women happen to be operating from one end of the divide of society, specifically on the marginalised end of the divide. Over the years women are seen battling with laws that are unfavourable to them; laws that have made them victims of culture, politics, and even religion in many societies. As society evolves, women have fully become conscious of their plight. As such, they have learnt how best to tell their stories themselves; also, men concerned with women's experiences have lent their voices to the feminist movement, clamouring for women's freedom. Literary scholars have demanded for women's emancipation through their works as a result of the debasing treatment women have experienced in the past and those happening in recent times. As a matter that has raised serious concern, women literature dominates postcolonial drama; projecting different issues yet the practice of male superiority seems to be a recurring decimal. Patriarchy has been identified as being responsible for women's sufferings but in spite of patriarchal strangulations, women have struggled to remain aloof and be free of patriarchal suffocations. The indices put forward by Ogundipe-Leslie. (2007:555) states that:

...the struggle for African women is a result of colonial and non-colonial structures that often place African males at the apex of social stratification. Furthermore, the struggle African women face is also impart to the way they have internalised the patriarchy and have come to endorse the system themselves

While the assertion above accuses the patriarchy for being responsible for the struggle of women, it further highlights women's compliance with forces responsible for their struggle. It then means that for women to change their unfortunate situation, they must vehemently resist patriarchal



dominance which has become endemic, cutting across various stratum of society.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern postcolonial theory, which was developed to respond to the question of people who are voiceless, marginalised and occupy the silent space. Spivak, in her seminal essay christened, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" viewed the subaltern theory as an avenue to contest for the oppressed, whether as a group or individual. It emerged in order to help the subaltern people neutralise their forces of oppression and speak for themselves. This theory advocates freedom for the oppressed, to regain emancipation from exploitative individual, group and institutions as liberated people to speak their minds and articulate themselves as humans rather than the practice of being spoken for by the forces responsible for their oppression. This theory finds relevance in this study as it highlights women's struggles with patriarchal supremacy.

Overview of Patriarchal Supremacy

Patriarchal supremacy is a rigid and oppressive system which entails the practice of male dominance in societal, political, and economic settings. Patriarchal orders perpetuate gender inequalities, often marginalising women. These structures have persisted over centuries, becoming deeply embedded in cultural norms, institutions, and legal systems, making it challenging to dismantle. Patriarchal ideals were spread and reinforced globally right from the period of European colonialism. "Colonialism contributed to the intensification of such oppressive patriarchal practices in Africa." (Yeisebo, 2017: 122). European colonisers imposed their own gender norms and societal structures on the indigenous populations they controlled. Thus, colonial systems prioritised the leadership of men and undermined the authority of women, particularly in societies where women had historically held more equal or even dominant roles (Enloe, 2000). This imposition of European patriarchal norms often led to the erosion of more egalitarian social structures in colonised regions like Africa.

Furthermore, with the advent of capitalism and industrialisation in the 18th and 19th centuries, patriarchal systems gained more force. Men became associated with wage labour and public life, while women were confined to unpaid domestic works. This division of labour reinforced the idea that men were the breadwinners and natural leaders, while

women's roles were limited to reproduction and care giving (Hartmann, 1979). The industrial revolution not only widened the gender gap in labour but also entrenched the perception of women as economically dependent on men. On the other hand, gender stereotyping laid the foundation for a system where men were seen as the "natural" leaders and women as "subordinates" (Lerner, 1986). This is why the patriarchal man believes that there is nothing injurious to ...women about strict adherence to rules (Yeisebo, 2017). Since rules were made by the patriarchy and in favour of men, they fail to recognise the calamities associated with it. More so, patriarchal supremacy is traceable to ancient civilisations. Societies like Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and India have patriarchal superiority deep-seated in their social and political fabric. Hence, Aristotle an ancient Greek philosopher without any equivocation expressed that men were superior by nature; thereby justifying male dominance of their female counterparts as being inferior. This mindset of superiority is what is basically wrong with the patriarchy as it encourage marginalisation.

This infers that, patriarchy as a social system approves of men's control over women mentally, emotionally, and physically. It reveals men's intention to exert control over women's bodies, lives, and opportunities. The supremacy of patriarchy is not just about men holding power but also about the systematic reinforcement of that power through institutions like religion, politics, and the economy (Lerner, 1986). Patriarchy manifests hierarchically and demands control in hierarchical systems, where men are privileged in many spheres, such as labour markets, politics, and social norms. In the exact words of El Saadawi (1980:575) "when patriarchy was established, monogamy was enforced on women so that father could be known..." Therefore, patriarchy is a repressive system that attempts to silence women through the enforcement of male hegemonic structures having women as victims. Patriarchal supremacy reveals the extent to which gender relations is affected given the dominant focus of men. Rather than a peaceful co-existence and collaboration towards human capacity development and national building, boundaries are set up. This creates global challenges which are prevalent in Africa and Nigeria in particular. One may think that with the success of feminist ideologies that stood against male dominance which often positioned men in roles associated with leadership, governance, and warfare, that patriarchal supremacy would have been dismantled or largely



suppressed but it continues to surface in different facets of human's activities even in recent times.

On this discourse of patriarchal supremacy, and the plight of women, contemporary Nigerian dramatists have written a number of plays that expose patriarchal practices that confines women to the margin. A prolific Nigerian dramatist affirms this in his statement on his creative works on social issues:

...I am always spontaneously drawn to social injustice and its victims. The way I was born and raised, I find all my reflexes conditioned to react with instant hostility to the dominant ideology of our postcolonial ruling classes, at the same time as my sympathies effortlessly flow to those confined to the margins of (official) history. Easily, I find myself in alliance with the struggling poor and helpless wretched of the earth. In a gerontocratic society, the suppressed women are my heroes (Osofisan cited in Adumati, 2020, 6-7)

Evidently, this thinking sharpened his creative muse towards the realities of women's sufferings as reflected in his plays. A suitable example of such plays by Sofisan is *Attine's wrath*. In a similar vein, Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge* and Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, readily comes to mind on the question of suppressed women as a result of patriarchal atrocities. Consequently, this study on patriarchal supremacy shall be anchored on these two contemporary Nigerian plays.

Synopsis of *Sweet Revenge*

Irene Isoken Salami-Agunloye is a scholar-artist, a Professor of African Expressive Literature, Women, and Cultural Studies at the Department of Theatre and Communication Arts, University of Jos, Nigeria. She is steadily emerging as one of the dynamic and phenomenal female Scholars and playwrights in Nigeria. She was first National President of the National Association of Women Academics (NAWACS) and the initiator of Street Care Africa and "Shade Tree" Theatre for street and working children. Her other published plays include: *Plays for Junior* (an anthology of nine short plays), *Emotan* (a Benin heroine), *Queen Sisters (Ubi and Ewere)* and *More than Dancing*. She recently concluded a Fulbright Scholarship and Visiting Professorship at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Sweet Revenge is divided into seventeen dramatic movements with actions which take place in six locations. The plot is simple and straight forward. The play has a non-classical or Aristotelian

breed of plot. This is because it has no plan for the classical unities of time, place and action. The plot is built around Aisosa a woman who suffers neglect, discrimination, laughter and divorce from her husband Dr. Sota Ojo. However, through hard work and celebration of her distinguishing qualities as a woman and mother, she rose from a state of neglect and divorce to a position of eminence as Senate President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The plot is conceived and drawn out by the playwright with a great aim to restore the rights of women, their dignity and their triumph in a universe dominated by male hegemony.

Sweet Revenge narrates a story around two characters, Dr. Sota Ojo and Aisosa, who are husband and wife. Sota Ojo leaves Nigeria for abroad to study, leaving his wife and children. He places his wife, a Gynaecologist, on a paltry ten thousand naira (₦10,000.00) per month to take care of the home front. While abroad, Sota Ojo could not sustain his promise to send money to his wife. This puts a very heavy burden on Aisosa, who gives all she has to keep the family going. Sota Ojo while in America meets Cheryl his American wife, who has no idea of him having a family back in Nigeria. Years later, Sota receives an invitation from his people to return to Nigeria for a senatorial seat. He returns home, becomes a senator but sees his Nigerian wife who has been faithfully waiting for his return as not meeting his standards. He constantly abuses her and calls her all sorts of names to demean her. He complains about her food, the house, the children and her manner of dressing, he even speaks of divorce, planning to bring his American wife Cheryl. The self centred Sota Ojo constantly treats Aisosa with contempt. Having power and money at his disposal, he turns his back on even the women of his senatorial district who voted him into power. Because faith has an uncanny way of giving justice to the oppressed, his secret of having a wife in Nigeria is exposed to Cheryl, who files for a divorce due to his marital insincerity. Cheryl partners with Aisosa and gives her the needed support to get back to her feet. Also, Sota Ojo is booted out of power by the women of his senatorial district and the senatorial seat is handed over to Dr. Aisosa Ojo.

The Plight of Women in Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge*

Sweet Revenge is made up of many themes. Apart from marital disharmony which seems to show at the surface, a deeper reading and appreciation of the text reveal that it has such



themes as feminism struggle, the triumph of motherhood, feminism and racial solidarity as well as the fall of the unappreciative man and divine punishment for men who do not reckon with women especially their wives. The play perfectly celebrates the struggle and triumph of women in a patriarchal world. The playwright explores the oppression of women by the patriarchal system and the attempt of women to subvert it. Critical issues such as motherhood by experience, power, female resistance, diasporic issues nationalism, sexism, empowerment, etc are all tackled in the play. In *Sweet Revenge*, the writer offers a new perspective to womanhood, privileging her, reconfiguring her image and moving her from margin to centre." –*This Day Newspaper*, Lagos, Nigeria

The plight of the woman in *Sweet Revenge* is portrayed in the character of Aisosa Ojo. Dr. Sota Ojo asks his Wife Aisosa to stop her work as a gynaecologist just to stay back home as a full house wife to take care of children on the promise that he will be providing for the family. A promise he never fulfilled. In a well-established home, such a sacrifice is necessary especially when everyone is working for the good of the family. In *Sweet Revenge*, the story is different. While the woman sweats and struggles to keep the family going, her husband, Sota Ojo hatches another plan resulting in the devaluation, rejection and divorce of his wife. With the sacrifice made, every sane mind would think that his wife, Aisosa, would be taken care of in the best way. Ironically, Senator Dr. Sota Ojo found it pleasant to turn his back on his wife. On his return from London, he divorced his wife because she looks haggard, faded. He says to her:

How much does it cost to look good Aisosa? Look at you; from your head to your toes, you are ugly. You nauseate me. Your hair is always hidden in scarves. You tie wrappers all the time like a village woman. (Salami-Agunyole, 2004: 25)

She no longer meets his standards. He is now really exposed and has assumed a position of superiority. Having mingled and dined with the whites, high and mighty. Thus, he constantly complains over everything related to Aisosa. She takes her time to prepare a meal out of the little she has yet again, he laments:

What is this? Do you call this horrible thing food? The salt in the food is enough to season a 100kg of meat. Since I arrived, I have not eaten any decent food. Its either there is too much pepper, too much water and oil, no salt at all or too much salt. Aisosa what happened to your culinary skills.... I have to complain. Things are not right here. Look at how lean the children are; see the tattered clothes

they are in. Yes, look at the house too, bushy lawn, old shaky chairs, torn curtains, faded walls. I wonder how you live in here. This is nothing but a pigsty. (Salami-Agunloye, 2004: 15)

This is not only a disregard for womanhood but a display of man's inhumanity to man. It is clearly, a case of relegating the woman to an inferior position. Aisosa, the once adorable and well-educated wife becomes an object of scorn, a caricature of a wife.

Besides the disgrace and rejection of Aisosa as wife, Dr. Sota Ojo, whose status has changed, whose political profile has risen geometrically, feels comfortable to replace his lawfully-wedded Nigerian wife with a white woman, Cheryl. Surprisingly, Aisosa is not aware that he has married another wife from London to replace her. In a conversation with his friend, Nosa, he states this:

...I don't intend to take Aisosa to Abuja. Nosa...I know what is good for me. I have plans well laid out and Aisosa does not fit in anywhere. She does not befit my new status. Remember I have Cheryl to consider too....I will be away to London for two weeks to make arrangements for Cheryl to join me here as soon as we are sworn in and given a house in Abuja. (Salami-Agunloye, 2004: 19-22)

In spite of his abandoning her and the children for a period of eight years, she remains totally committed to supporting him, and played a major role to his political victory. However, her sacrifices for resigning from her job, struggling to take care of his children, building a house in his name, and even mobilising for his political campaigns all amount to nothing.

Dr. Sota Ojo is a first-rate marital actor and double-dealer. Neither Aisosa nor Cheryl is aware of his marital tomfoolery. The philosophy of its man's world is at play here; a common practice in our society, where men act and think that everything in the world revolves around them. He neither informs Aisosa nor Cheryl of his actions. To Aisosa, she is the only wife and her space is not contested for. Also, to Cheryl, Sota Ojo has no other woman except her. Things remained that way until Cheryl finds out about his Nigerian wife.

Cheryl: ...By the way, why does the press address me as Mrs. Aisosa Ojo? I am not Aisosa, my name is Cheryl. Look at here in today's papers.

Sota: That's funny; there must be a mix up somewhere.

Cheryl: A mix up with whom? This is the second time I've noticed it. The other day, your friend also called me Aisosa.



Sota: My friend? You mean Mr. Saye? What a coincidence? Don't work yourself up over trivial matters like this, I will get my press secretary to put things in order...

Cheryl: Isi, do you know of any Aisosa...as his cousin, you are the most qualified person to tell me about Aisosa.

Isi: Oga wife Aisosa nai her bring me come here.

Cheryl: Oh my God! What? You mean Aisosa is oga's wife? Oga had a wife before me? (Salami-Agunloye, 2004: 37-39)

The plight of Aisosa as a victim of patriarchal supremacy portrays the situation of several women in African society. A number of women have been given this unpleasant surprise of having another woman coming into their homes to have them replaced. In fact, there are cases where the woman in the house remain in the home and continue to be discriminated by the husband who tries so hard to avoid bearing the name of sending his wife packing. Thus, separated but living together. It was rather unfortunate that after all the ordeals, sacrifices and backbreaking frustration Aisosa experienced which culminated into his becoming a senator, equal treatment could not be given. Overtly, Senator Dr. Sota's actions are a demonstration that the patriarchal believe that the world is dominated by them.

Sota's anti-women vision was dramatically narrated in a flash back by the women of his constituency represented by Power and Madam Executive. Conscious of the atrocities Sota Ojo has done against Aisosa, Cheryl takes some far-reaching decisions. She declares her space vacant in the marital life of Dr. Sota Ojo. She gives her child to Aisosa and hands over the money Sota Ojo paid into her account to Aisosa. Aisosa, through the effort of Cheryl, bags a world award from the United States for living and leading an exemplary life in the face of adversary as a mother and woman. She is proclaimed the best mother and best wife through the effort of Cheryl. Cheryl undertakes these steps to liberate Aisosa from her plight.

The play, *Sweet Revenge*, is crucial to our discussion on the plight of women in the domestic space as it reveals a common excuse patriarchal society make for their act of infidelity and disloyalty to their marital vows as we would find out in present times. My wife is lazy; she is not being supportive; she is disrespectful; not sharing in my dreams; not educate; barren, and unproductive. These and more are the excuses of patriarchy to make right a wrong action. An interesting dimension to this study on the plight of women is that women in this play make frantic effort to dismantle patriarchal supremacy.

Seeing the ideology of domination in Dr Sota Ojo, the political space he occupies at the Senatorial district was reclaimed by the same women who gave him their mandate. . This establishes the fact that women are politically active. They are a significant force and factor in elections, particularly, the senatorial election. It was out of their goodwill they suggested, approached Dr. Sota Ojo and elected him into the senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Dr Sota Ojo in his preconceived ideology of Patriarchal dominance display outright contempt for women. He attempts to silent their voice and agency in this already established political space. Dr. Sota Ojo the senator representing their constituency disown, denies, and arrests women for disturbing his peace when they approached him to make some vital demands as their senator. These women become further infuriated with the news of Sota Ojo's divorce of his hard-working wife and his marriage to a white lady. Dr. Sota Ojo is a symbolic representation of men who see women as inferior human species. He made this patriarchal position clear in his conversation with Nosa, "...what can women do in Nigerian politics? They can't do anything. The men are still in charge" (Salami-Agunloye 20). He is one of such men who think that women are important as voters and beyond that they are inconsequential politically. The playwright displays a great dose of social realism.

Synopsis of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

Ola Rotimi is a well-known dramatist of the first order in Nigeria. He has written plays based on many aspects of human life. He has plays that are culturally grounded. Plays like *The Gods are not to Blame*, *Oba Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*, *Kurunmi*, and others, are grouped as cultural plays that treat the concept and subject of tragedy while his *Hopes of the Living Dead* and *If... The Tragedy of the Ruled* is social realist plays that discuss the society. We have also seen *Man Talk Woman Talk* as a satiric drama and *Holding Talks as* dramas belonging to the Absurd tradition. Ola Rotimi was elevated to the rank of a professor of Playwriting and Dramatic Literature in 1977 at the University of Port Harcourt. Emmanuel Gladstone Olawale Rotimi, popularly known as, Ola Rotimi, was born on Wednesday, 13th April, 1938, at Sapele, in present day Delta State, Nigeria. His father, S.G. Rotimi, was a Yoruba from Ogun State while his mother was an Izon (Ijaw) from Nembe in Bayelsa State. *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* was first produced in 1966 and re-published in 1977. It is one of his most popular plays.



The story of the play revolves around Major Lejoka-Brown and his family. Major Lejoka - Brown is a retired army officer who after his retirement ventured into cocoa business and is doing well but later developed interest in politics. He leaves his business and finally joins politics with the plans of making quick and large sum of money. Lejoka-Brown has been married to Mama Rashida; his elder brother's wife while serving in Congo. Two days later, he married an American woman Lisa. At his arrival to Nigeria, he married Sikira whose mother is the president of the market women union, in order to get the endorsement of the women. He treats his wives with disdain and pride himself as one who has arrived. Lisa returns to Nigeria only to discover that she is not the only wife of Lejoka-Brown. Lisa sees Lejoka-Brown's actions as deceitful and disrespectful to womanhood. Thus, she makes frantic effort to sensitise Sikira and succeeded in creating the awareness on women liberation in Sikira and with Lisa's support, Sikira joins active politics. Seeing the insincerity of Lekoja-Brown, Members of the National Liberation Party handed over the political mandate to his wife Sikira. His other wives Lisa returned to the states while Mama Rashida leaves for her village. Lekoja-Brown's once domineering and powerful life crumbles with no wives, political position or business to fall back on.

The Plight of Women in Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

This play is best seen as a farcical comedy but its satiric bit is also visible. This position is based on the fact that Rotimi appears to be critical of the ills of politicians and politics. He makes scornful fun of the hero of the play Lejoka Brown and portrays the callousness of the political class in the Nigerian society. Lejoka brown tells Okonkwo that politics is the thing... you want to be famous? Politics. You want to chop life? No no you want to chop a big slice of the national cake? Na politics. (Rotimi, 1999: 4). It is very glaring from these dramatic lines that Lejoka Brown's intention of becoming a politician is not based on service to humanity or inspired by patriotism but for self aggrandisement. This is a satiric portrayal of the type of politics and politicians that populate the Nigerian political and democratic space, politicians that have always believed that politics is a means to personal enrichment and not for the emancipation of the masses.

Besides the self-enrichment factor, Ola Rotimi also satirically explores and exposes Lejoka Brown as a character that represents the Nigerian

politicians who are intellectually weak, ideologically backward and too clownish to offer themselves as leaders of the Nigerian nation. It is a well-known tradition that most characters who find their way into politics are not well educated people. For instance, a gubernatorial aspirant who eventually emerged as the winner in one of the states in Nigeria, during one of his campaigns said, 'Let me assure you that, there will be insecurity in the state when I become the Governor' in a bit to assure the people of security. Politics today has become a game played to the advantage of people who are violently greedy. These violent and corrupt people take elective positions and offices by force. A despicable political tradition and foundation laid by the Nigerian actors of politics and democracy in Nigeria. This repulsive character that Nigerian politics has assumed in recent times constitutes the strong focus of Rotimi's laughter of Lejoka Brown in the play. Lejoka Brown is presented as a greedy, selfish and pleasure hunting leader in Nigeria. He states in clear terms "Politics is war, I am taking no chance this time I took things slowly and easy what happened? I lost a bye election to a small crab." (Rotimi, 1999:7)

Beyond its farcical content, Rotimi dramatises patriarchal supremacy over women both at the cultural and political fronts. The study therefore, attempts to examine the challenges of women due to patriarchal supremacy in this text in a bid to liberate women from this practice. First, we experience some silent and submissive women made inactive by low-esteem accorded to the dialogue by Lejoka-Brown, the polygamous husband. Lejoka-Brown assumes the position of a god and operates patriarchal culture with air of bravado. His orders are as compelling and as ultimate as those of the divinities. The women are rendered voiceless in their marital home headed by Lejoka-Brown. His words are law and order; and that means no other opinion counts in his home. He was such a villain of a husband. The status of mama Rashida and Sikira are comparable to people of minor status like house girls or slaves, made so by Major Lejoka-Brown, the self centred husband. Lejoka-Brown as a patriarchal man denigrates the women in his home in every action and statement made. The ex-military man, who becomes a political gladiator, prides himself as being more judicious in the management of his wives and home than his father. Women have no place of importance and recognition in the marital ring of Lejoka-Brown. Thus, he marries as many women as he wished to be in his control. While he inherited Mama Rashida from his brother, Sikira was married to gain political favour because of her



mother's influential position in the market. Realising that Sikira is the daughter of the President of the Nigerian Market Women Union, he marries her to secure the votes of the women's association. This is corroborated by Grimke, who avers that: All history attests that man has subjugated woman to his will, used as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasure, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired her to that rank she was created to fill. (Cited by Adebayo, 2002: 129)

Women in the hands of Lejoka-Brown are toys meant to be degraded. He is not psychologically concerned and connected to them as a good and committed husband. To him they mean nothing martially. Their position as wives has no depth; hence, he does not see them as wives of his heart. They are portrayed as objects of scorn. Mama Rashida and Sikira were not even introduced to Lisa as Lejoka-Brown's wives when she came to the house. She had a wrong impression of the women of the house. This indicates lucidly that those women have no space in the home of Lejoka-Brown. Thus, they are objects and victims of male dominance.

Lejoka-Brown is exposed as a dishonest man who uses the polygamous institution to deceive, exploit and vitiate women. He sees them as weak and enslaved marital partners. The very idea that Sikira is married to him because of election victory and to be settled after election and kicked out of the house is symptomatic of the fact that women are used wrongly in the marital home of Lejoka-Brown. This action of Lejoka-Brown reminds us of the type of marriages politicians in contemporary Nigeria contracts. The play is indicative of the fact that some Nigerian men marry and set up polygamous homes for various reasons, ranging from marriage of convenience and exploitation, marriage imposed by culture and marriage for love. Women are treated as commodities. The ex-major uses his women to stoke his ego. *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* presents women as passive, voiceless, exploited, marginalised and commoditised objects, "...playing role of mere shadows and pleased to live with their men and carry out a lot of household duties that come under the category of unpaid labour" (Spivak, 1988: 248).

Lejoka-Brown's marriage to Sikira is equally done for financial and economic gains; the very reason why he chose Sikira, the daughter of the president of the market women union. Lejoka-Brown succinctly captures it in his statement "that woman's case is only for necessity, anyway, temporary measure. We need women's votes' man,

if we must win the next elections" (Rotimi, 1999: 6). It becomes apparent that the women of the house are means to an end. As a politician, Lekoja-Brown's grand plan is to use them to win elections. Before the arrival of Lisa, the love of his life, they were politically subjugated. The women have neither a space in their home or in the political affairs of the society. Lejoka-Brown's intention is to keep them perpetually redundant and disconnect them from the centre of relevance. Women are labourers in the political farmland of Lejoka-Brown. The women are decorative accessories who are denied their worth and humanity to add value to the political vision of their society.

True to the saying that 'beside every successful man, there is a woman', in spite of Lejoka-Brown's brutality to his other wives, Lisa appears to be the love of his life. He has plans to present her to the world as his beautiful and prestigious wife. Obviously, Lisa's educational status earns her that little respect from Lejoka-Brown. He sees an independent and self-reliance woman in her. As such, he only stands to receive praise and commendations for having her as a wife. She compliments and completes him. Thus, sees her as an asset. The point deduced from his action shows that education and self development is a weapon against patriarchal supremacy. The Ex-military man combined both literate and illiterate wives in his marital home for deception and relegation. He claims that as an African husband he could marry as many wives as he could, using the African culture as an avenue to suppress women. However, through the help of Lisa who is already enlightened, The docile women of Lejoka-Brown's home are transformed into women of political activism. The women did not take their subjugation as a faith to comply with anymore. They re-examined their status and found themselves worthy of doing what men can do. Women's subjugation in the political space is a long-known experience. Very active and practising politicians in Nigeria and in the African country know this fact. This perhaps is the reason Azbug (1989:461-2) states that:

... another gender gap remains firmly entrenched in the political structure of our nation. It is in fact, more than a gap. It is a wide and deep chasm that separate two contradictory realities. Women are a majority of the population, yet they hold only a pathetically small percentage of elective and appointive offices. Women... do not occupy the seats of power where the real decisions-about how we are to live, and how we may die-are made



The aforementioned account speaks of African women's plight; but it is even more related to women in Nigeria in assessment of the Nigerian political situation. Sikira's elevation to the position of a party flag bearer in opposition against Lejoka-Brown is a bold effort to puncture the masculine ego and pomposity of Lejoka-Brown. Like the political women of Salami-Agunyole's *Sweet Revenge*, they strongly oppose and uproot patriarchal domination. Like Attine in *Attine's wrath* by Femi Osofisan, where the subaltern women suddenly break their silence, speak and act to restore their capacity and dignity. Thus, the silent space of the women in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* gained voice. Often times, the play text is seen by critics as a farcical comedy but the fact cannot be contested that drama has nested identities. It can be farcical; it can also be a serious comedy. It is a play with enormous satirical energy. The subject of the play has link with African women's reality. Eyoh (1986:110). Submits that:

[African] Literature deals with reality-political and economic realities... literature is a very important weapon in the ideological struggle, in the battle for images, a battle for how we perceive ourselves- in the struggle for communal and individual self-definition

It is these very obvious realities that the dramatist portrayed in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, to express his displeasure in the Nigerian political landscape which is mostly dominated by men. Indeed, drama transcends a mere performance; it reflects social realities hence, Bagu, (2015:121) observes that:

In contemporary Nigerian society, drama is a very fundamental tool that the literary artist employs to comment on issues within his society... every dramatist, therefore, strives to achieve this objective in his works because he is a member of the of the society. So, naturally, his artistic sensibilities are shaped and sharpened by the socioeconomic contradictions and political happenings of his time

For the literary work to achieve this feat "a writer must be in tune with the politics of his nation. He must penetrate the deep social political terrain of his nation in order to lay bare the inherent contradictions that encapsulate society" (Obadiogwu, 2003: 94). Ola Rotimi's construction of women in *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* has dialectical link with society. Rotimi proficiently displays his skills as a social realist playwright. Akorede (1993:52) rightly points out that:

For the playwright to be effective in the society, for him to be effective in the society, for him to be the peoples' teacher, and to produce

works that are socially relevant, he has to portray and interpret the historical, sociological, political, economic and cultural issues of his time

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again is one of such works that present social, political and cultural realities of our time. Lejoka-Brown's space of indignity, and voicelessness prepared for the women of his home turned the oppressed women into bulwarks of their emancipation. The women transited from lack of refinement to refinement, unawareness to awareness, from lack of vision to vision, from fear to courage, from purposelessness to purposefulness. Okpeh (2002:1) strongly asserts that:

Women in Nigeria are discriminated against, they are marginalised, oppressed and exploited and above all abused. These tendencies also define their place in society, what they should or should not do, who they are and in fact what or who they can aspire to be in society

At the end of the play, Lejoka-Brown is adequately informed that his party has a new candidate, Sikira.

Sikira: [*declaiming*]. Rise up! All women of our land! Rise up and vote for freedom, or forever be slaves!

Lejoka-Brown: Who is that crab?

Okonkwo: [*looking out of the window*] come have a peep Major.

Sikira: Vote... vote for me! It is true I am a woman, but that does not matter. It does not matter, because why? Because...

Lejoka-Brown: A woman?

Sikira: MEN AND WOMEN ARE CREATED EQUAL!

Madam Ajanaku: No more, no less! (Rotimi, 1999: 76).

This play seems to have influenced the writing of Salami's *Sweet Revenge* because of the semblance of the women's rise to the top from muted positions and spaces, it is apparent that the dialogue of the play is unambiguous about Ola Rotimi's endorsement of women taking up active and great roles in politics. Thus, the marketable ideology espoused by Rotimi in the play is women participation in politics. The essence is to activate women's political space in public affairs; a fundamental vision fought against by patriarchal hegemony.

II. Conclusion

This paper has examined the question of patriarchal supremacy. It affirms that, patriarchal authority is deeply embedded in cultural, political, and economic structures, and it continues to shape societies across the world. The study has highlighted



the plight of women in patriarchal societies. It went further to disclose overwhelming challenges that oftentimes accompany patriarchal practices. Through the analysis of two contemporary plays; Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge* and Rotimi's *Our husband Has Gone Mad Again*, we saw the effect of the gory aftermath of patriarchal dominance on women. Allegorically, the complexities of male superiority boarders on African women; our women are repressed and oppressed in private and public spaces due to overlapping patriarchal systems. The position of this paper therefore, is that Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, should heed to the clamour for egalitarianism which is utterly devoid of superiority versus inferiority claims and ideologies.

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