



Madness, Power, and Political Satire in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*: A Textual and Theatrical Investigation

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Abstract: This study undertakes a comprehensive textual and theatrical investigation of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, exploring the intricate interplay of 'madness', power dynamics, and political satire within the context of post-independence Nigeria. Employing a qualitative methodology that integrates literary critique with performance studies, the research draws upon postcolonial theory, feminist/womanist criticism, and theatre semiotics. It analyzes how Rotimi's use of linguistic polyphony, structural farce, and character contrasts in the text, combined with embodied action, spatial dynamics, and audience engagement in performance, serves to deconstruct political and patriarchal authority. The findings reveal that 'madness' in the play operates as a performative logic of power, symbolizing a leadership detached from reality, while the domestic sphere emerges as the authentic political arena where female agency challenges patriarchal incompetence. Ultimately, Rotimi's satire is characterized as a syncretic, embodied, and communal ritual that fosters collective critique through shared laughter, offering a profound commentary on governance and societal health that remains profoundly relevant today.

Keywords Madness, Power, Political Satire, Textual, Theatrical Investigation

1. INTRODUCTION

Ola Rotimi's play, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977), represents a significant contribution to African literature as a notable Nigerian drama. This artistic piece effectively combines elements of farce, satire, and incisive socio-political critique, shedding light on the corrupt practices permeating Nigerian politics within both African society and the broader global context. Set against the backdrop of post-independence Nigeria, the narrative explores the personal and political turmoil faced by Major Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown, a retired military officer who has transitioned into politics but whose mental stability is called into question as he seeks power. Through Lejoka-Brown's character, Rotimi astutely critiques the absurdities, contradictions, and "madness" inherent in the pursuit of power that often culminates in moral decay. Esteemed scholars have placed this work alongside other significant pieces of Nigerian political satire by authors such as Wole Soyinka and J.P. Clark. Critics like M.J.C. Echeruo and Femi Osofisan have contextualized Rotimi's comedic approach as a serious aesthetic strategy with ideological implications.

The term "madness" in the title is seldom interpreted literally; rather, it serves as a metaphor for the irrationality, egocentrism, and performative absurdity characteristic of specific postcolonial political dynamics. Lejoka-Brown's ostentatious schemes and disorderly domestic life, caught amid three wives symbolizing varying aspects of Nigerian society (traditional values, modern education, and foreign influence), represent a microcosm of a nation grappling with its identity and governance challenges.

Other scholars, such as Chris Dunton and Mabel Ewrierhoma, have examined how theatrical components like exaggerated characterization, slapstick humor, rapid dialogue exchanges, and situational irony are employed by Rotimi to depict this political madness in both an amusing yet critically impactful manner. Recent analyses investigate the play's satirical perspective alongside its critique of societal norms while underscoring Rotimi's significance in contemporary discourse regarding power dynamics (Aremu, 2024; Ihugba et al., 2025).

This research aims to explore the interplay between 'madness', power dynamics, and political satire within Rotimi's work by analyzing how these themes are intricately woven together to reflect the societal issues present during Nigeria's post-independence period. The research further seeks to examine how these themes of 'madness,' power dynamics, and political satire are portrayed through the characters of Major Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown, Sikira, Liza, Mama Rashida, and Okwonkwo. Understanding these elements not only enriches literary studies but also invites readers to reflect on contemporary societal issues. The analysis aims to highlight the social commentary inherent in the play, revealing insights that resonate with modern audiences.

2. OBJECTIVE FOR THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to explore the interplay between 'madness', power dynamics, and political satire within Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* by analyzing how these themes are intricately woven together to reflect the societal issues present during Nigeria's post-independence period.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a comprehensive qualitative methodology that merges literary critique with performance studies to explore the dynamics of madness, authority, and political satire within Ola Rotimi's play. The approach is dual-faceted, considering both the literary text as a carefully constructed artifact and the performance text as a framework for physical expression. The methodology unfolds in three interconnected stages:

3.1. Theoretical and Contextual Framework

This stage sets up the critical perspectives through which the primary text will be examined.

3.2. Critical Theory Orientation

Postcolonial Theory: This section utilizes insights from scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha (hybridity, mimicry) and Frantz Fanon (psychology of power, national consciousness) to interpret the play's treatment of post-independence identity and the enduring influence of colonial frameworks in politics. An analysis will focus on Lejoka-Brown's imitation of military and Western political modalities as a manifestation of pathological postcolonial performance.

Feminist/Womanist Criticism: This lens draws upon Chikwenye Ogunyemi's concept of womanism and Helen Chukwuma's work to scrutinize gendered power dynamics. It will examine how female characters assert their agency within patriarchal confines, reinterpreting the domestic sphere as a site for political defiance.

Performance Studies & Theatre Semiotics: Utilizing Keir Elam's semiotic principles of theatre alongside Richard Schechner's performance theory, this analysis treats the play as a network of signs (gesture, costume, spatial arrangement, audience interaction) that convey meaning beyond mere dialogue.

Historical-Contextual Analysis: A historical overview focusing on Nigeria's political landscape during the 1970s, marked by post-civil war challenges, military dominance in governance, and varied democratic efforts, will be supported by political histories (e.g., Falola & Heaton) to ground the satire in concrete socio-political contexts. Additionally, situating Rotimi within the canon of Nigerian political satire (e.g., Soyinka, Osofisan) will highlight his unique voice and artistic methods.

Textual Analysis Methodology: This segment entails a meticulous reading of Rotimi's primary text (1977) following established analytical protocols.

3.3. Close Reading and Literary Stylistics:

Linguistic Analysis: A systematic review of language choices including diction, register variations, and code-switching. This involves categorizing dialogues based on character speech patterns (Lejoka-Brown's military language versus fractured English versus pidgin; Liza's standard English; Sikira's proverbial pidgin) to illustrate how language correlates with power dynamics.

Narrative and Dramatic Structure Analysis: Mapping out the play's progression as a farce - identifying elements such as complication mechanisms, crises, and climaxes. Particular attention will be given to how irony (dramatic, situational, verbal) serves to challenge authority.

Character and Motif Analysis: Analyzing characters as satirical archetypes while tracing recurring themes (the bell, uniformity, deception, invasion) to construct a coherent symbolic understanding.

Theatrical/Performance Analysis Methodology: This phase views the script as an instructional score for performance while examining its implied staging possibilities.

3.4. Performance Blueprint Analysis

Stage Directions as Text: A focused examination of Rotimi's stage directions viewed not merely as supplementary notes but essential components contributing to satire. This includes analyzing prescribed entrances/exits, gestures employed by actors, and prop usage, along with indications regarding tone or pacing.

Spatial Dynamics Mapping: Investigating how stage space utilization, including proximity, elevation changes, and movement, affects power relationships among characters. Diagrams may illustrate potential blocking in significant scenes (e.g., rallies), visualizing shifts between public/private spheres.

Character Embodiment Analysis: Interpreting how textual demands shape physical expressions, considering Lejoka-Brown's militarized stance contrasted with his wives' diverse body languages alongside slapstick movements related to concealment or revelation.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Critical Reception of Ola Rotimi's Works

Ola Rotimi's plays have been the subject of extensive scholarly analysis, with critics often focusing on his use of language, his engagement with political themes, and his exploration of Nigerian culture. Rotimi's style is characterized by a blend of Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous expressions, creating authentic and relatable dialogue. Some scholars have focused on Rotimi's critique of post-independence politics and gender inequality, while others have examined the stylistic elements that strengthen the play's comedic and critical power.

4.2. Themes of Madness, Power, and Political Satire

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again has been analyzed for its portrayal of political corruption and the absurdities of power. Critics have noted that the character of Major Rahman embodies the self-serving politician, more concerned with personal gain than with the well-being of the people. The play also explores the theme of gender inequality, with female characters challenging traditional roles and asserting their agency. Some critics have viewed the play through a feminist lens, examining how Rotimi portrays women's emancipation and their struggle against patriarchal norms.

4.3. Positioning Rotimi's Satire in Nigerian Drama

A consensus among various scholars positions Ola Rotimi's play within what Jeyifo (1985) refers to as "popular theatre," an intentional aesthetic that merges indigenous performance styles with Western dramatic forms to engage diverse audiences through socio-political critique. This framework is vital for comprehending *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, as Rotimi's use of farce transcends mere entertainment to act as what Gibbs (1991) describes as a "lethal weapon" against political folly. Emerging from a post-civil war Nigerian backdrop where society found itself in an "abyss of transition," according to Soyinka (1990), militarism, coupled with political ambition, created a grotesque environment ripe for satirical exploration. Dunton (1992) specifically situates this play within the rise of Nigerian political satire during the 1970s, highlighting how Rotimi's comedic style contrasts with Soyinka's more cryptic symbolism by utilizing accessible, humor-driven critiques.

4.4. Conceptualizing "Madness": From Pathology to Political Metaphor

The existing literature predominantly dismisses any clinical interpretation of madness within this play, instead viewing it through the lens of systemic dysfunctionality. Ewrierhoma (2013) posits that Lejoka-Brown's madness exemplifies "performative egotism," functioning as a satire on inflated self-importance prevalent among postcolonial politicians. This perspective aligns with Osundare's (1982) assertion that Nigerian satire typically portrays those seeking power as "victims of their own ludicrous illusions." Further enriching this analysis is Soyinka's (1990) notion of the "grotesque" concerning African leadership following independence: Lejoka-Brown personifies distorted reasoning within a system where military strength is misconstrued as political capability.

Recent studies, such as Nasiru's (2006) linguistic examination, illustrate how Lejoka-Brown's chaotic code-switching from military jargon to pidgin English, along with attempts at "polished" English, theatrically externalizes his cognitive dissonance and ideological confusion.

4.5. Power: Political Ambition and Patriarchal Authority

Critics' perspectives have delineated analyses regarding power within the play into public-political versus private-patriarchal spheres while revealing their interconnections:

Political Power: The narrative serves as satire on "the soldier-turned-politician syndrome," indicating how militarized thinking undermines democratic processes (Jeyifo, 1985). Lejoka-Brown's campaign embodies authoritarian theatrics reflecting Osofisan's (1999) recurring theme in Nigerian drama the "farce of power" amid emerging democracies.

Gendered Power: Feminist critiques provide essential corrections to initial interpretations neglecting women's subversive roles. Chukwuma (1994), along with Coker (in Gibbs 1991), argues that true contestation for political authority occurs within domestic settings where Liza's pragmatism, Sikira's traditional savvy, and Rashida's external viewpoint collectively undermine Major Rahman's dominance. Ogunyemi's (1996) "womanist" framework aptly illustrates how these women's actions extend beyond individual motives toward communal correction intended to expose patriarchal incompetence detrimental to societal health.

4.6. Satire as Textual and Theatrical Strategy

The mechanics behind Rotimi's satirical approach have been scrutinized through literary analysis alongside performance studies:

Textual Strategies: Scholars note Rotimi's adept manipulation of language for satirical purposes; Nasiru (2006) elaborates on how pidgin English emerges as a medium for "truth-telling" while revealing Lejoka-Brown's pretensions through fractured speech patterns. Echeruo (2013), although not specifically addressing this work directly, provides insight into understanding how Rotimi utilizes comedy structures - including mistaken identities or hyperbolic reversals - in ways resonant with indigenous narratives aimed at moral rectification.

Theatricality and Performance: Significant scholarly interventions occur here; Balme (1999) explicitly examines what he terms "theatrical syncretism," demonstrating how farcical elements integrate Yoruba 'alarinjo' traditions alongside folk comedy, rendering cultural relevance physically immediate throughout performance contexts. Elam's semiotic analysis helps decode meanings generated beyond textual elements: symbols like Lejoka-Brown's military attire paired with grandiose gestures signal authoritative presence combined with impending disintegration thereof amid chaotic domestic staging. Schechner's performance theory validates interpreting campaign depictions within this narrative cycle, akin to "restored behavior" or rituals representing authoritative power rendered absurd through theatrical framing techniques employed throughout the production stages. The critical synthesis articulated by Gibbs indicates that satirical content remains inseparable from performative expressions; thus, demanding physical embodiment, which reveals underlying abstractions related directly back to perceptions regarding notions tied inherently to "political madness."

5. CRITICAL GAPS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE CURRENT INVESTIGATION

Although existing literature is extensive, certain gaps provide avenues for this research:

- **Integrated Analysis:** Numerous studies focus on themes (such as madness, gender, and satire) or methodologies (textual and theatrical) in a fragmented manner. There is a need for a thorough investigation that cohesively integrates the thematic triad of madness, power, and satire through a combined textual and theatrical approach.
- **Performance-Centered Reading:** While Balme and Jeyifo touch on aspects of theatricality, few analyses offer an in-depth scene-by-scene examination of how particular stage directions, blocking choices, physical comedy elements, and techniques addressing the audience actively shape the satire and critique of power. This study aims to enhance the understanding of the performance semiotics within the play.

- **Madness as Theatrical Spectacle:** Although madness has been explored as a metaphor extensively, it has not been sufficiently analyzed as an intentional theatrical spectacle - a dramaturgical device designed to influence audiences and critique norms. How does the representation of madness on stage differ from its narrative portrayal?
- **Contemporary Resonance:** Recent academic work has not thoroughly investigated the play's relevance in today's context, where populist political spectacles and "strongman" leadership resonate with Lejoka-Brown's comedic portrayals.

The literature above concludes that current literature positions *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* as a nuanced piece where political commentary is delivered through the combined forces of textual cleverness and theatrical creativity. Madness is depicted as a societal performance; power emerges as a tenuous façade; and satire serves to dismantle both constructs. This investigation seeks to expand upon this groundwork by providing an integrated analysis sensitive to performance aspects, positing that the play retains significant impact by transforming the stage into a compelling observer of unchecked ambition's folly while highlighting the healing potential found in shared humor. By bridging thematic interpretation with performance poetics, this research will reinforce Rotimi's work as an essential pillar of political theatre whose methodological complexity aligns with its ideological richness.

6. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

6.1. Textual Investigation of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*: Deconstructing Power through Language and Structure

This textual investigation examines how Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* operates as a sophisticated literary construct where form, language, and narrative design systematically deconstruct political and patriarchal authority. While the play is renowned for its theatrical energy, its satirical potency is fundamentally encoded in Rotimi's textual strategies. This analysis moves beyond plot summary to dissect how dialectical language, character contrast, structural farce, and symbolic naming collaborate to create a scathing critique of postcolonial Nigerian politics.

6.1.1. Linguistic Polyphony and the Politics of Language

Rotimi's most powerful textual weapon is his orchestration of linguistic registers, creating a verbal battlefield where power is contested.

- **The Pidgin of Subversion:** Nigerian Pidgin English functions as the play's democratic and truth-telling tongue. It is the primary language of the household staff, market women, and Sikira. When Liza, the educated wife, employs Pidgin (e.g., in her confrontations with Lejoka-Brown), it signifies a strategic descent from elitist discourse to the language of practical reality and popular will, undercutting the Major's pretensions. Pidgin becomes the medium for the play's sharpest satirical barbs and its grounding in social authenticity.
- **Lejoka-Brown's Fractured Register:** The Major's speech is a textual performance of ideological confusion. He oscillates clumsily between:
 - **Military Jargon:** "Operation Win Election," "tactical manoeuvre," "field marshal." This language, inappropriate for civilian politics, satirizes the militarization of governance.
 - **Pretentious "Oxford" English:** His mangled attempts at sophisticated diction ("I am a man of considerable magnitude!") reveal intellectual insecurity and a colonial mindset.
 - **Explosive Pidgin:** He reverts to Pidgin in moments of uncontrolled rage or frustration, exposing the thin veneer of his cultivated persona. This linguistic inconsistency textually mirrors his "madness" - an inability to coherently inhabit a single, stable identity, whether as husband, politician, or modern citizen.

6.1.2. Character Constellation as Textual Critique

The characters are not just individuals but textual functions within Rotimi's satirical apparatus.

- **Major Lejoka-Brown as "Composite Absurdity":** Textually, he is an amalgam of satirical types: the Braggart Soldier ('Miles Gloriosus') from classical comedy, the "Trickster" who becomes the tricked, and the "Would-Be Tyrant" of domestic and political spheres. His every pronouncement

and boast in the script is designed to be undercut by subsequent actions or other characters' dialogue.

- **The Triangulation Of The Wives:** The three wives are textual foils representing different societal forces vying for influence in the new Nigeria:
 - Sikira (Traditional/Popular): Her textual role is anchored in proverbs, market-trader shrewdness, and claims of traditional wifely rights. She represents the persistent, adaptable power of indigenous culture.
 - Liza (Modern/Intellectual): Her dialogue is the vehicle for feminist critique and political savvy. She is the textual conscience, articulating the failures of the new male elite.
 - Mama Rashida (Traditional/Cultural): Her lines are marked by cultural ignorance and a transactional view of relationships. Their collective textual function is to enact the dispersal of the patriarch's authority. The Major's monologic commands are systematically fractured by the women's dialogic retorts and independent scheming. The Chorus Figures (Police Aide, Party Members): Characters like the sycophantic police aide serve as textual amplifiers of the Major's folly. Their exaggerated agreement and literal-minded interpretations of his absurd orders (a technique from classical farce) are written into the dialogue to heighten the satire.

6.1.3. *Structural Architecture: Farce as Ideological Form*

The play's narrative structure is not neutral; it is the engine of its satire.

- **Rising Chaos:** The text meticulously builds from individual deceit (the Major hiding his wives from each other) to systemic breakdown (the collision of a political rally and domestic crisis). This structural escalation textually mirrors how personal moral failings of leaders precipitate public catastrophe.
- **The Climactic Convergence:** The rally scene is the structural and ideological climax. Here, all plotlines, linguistic registers, and social spheres (public/political, private/domestic) violently intersect. The text orchestrates this convergence so that the domestic truth literally invades and dismantles the political fiction. This is the core satirical statement: the private character of public figures is not separable from their civic function.
- **Circularity vs. Resolution:** The play ends not with a tidy resolution but with ongoing chaos. Lejoka-Brown's final, unheeded bell-ringing is a textual symbol of his impotent, repetitive authoritarianism. This structural refusal of a neat comic ending is a deliberate textual choice, suggesting the political farce is cyclical, not easily resolved.

6.1.4. *Symbolism, Irony, and Nomenclature*

- **Symbolic Names:** "Lejoka-Brown" itself is a textual joke - a hybrid name suggesting a confused identity (African and colonial). "Liza" (resonant with "Eliza," independent and intelligent), "Sikira" (with potential roots in local languages for patience or strategy), and "Mama Rashida" (typical traditional mother figure that resonates with respect) are carefully chosen textual tags.
- **Dramatic Irony:** The script is saturated with dramatic irony, where the audience knows more than the characters. Every time Lejoka-Brown boasts of his control or his political destiny, the text has already shown the audience the precarious house of cards he inhabits. This irony is the primary textual mechanism for generating satirical laughter and critical distance.
- **The Bell and The Uniform:** While theatrical props, their symbolic weight is established textually through repeated references. The bell is an explicit textual symbol of the Major's demand for servile attention. The military uniform is constantly cited in dialogue as a costume of authority that he is unwilling to shed, textually marking his inability to transition to civilian-democratic life.

6.2. **Theatrical Investigation of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*: The Stage as a Political Arena**

6.2.1. *From Text to Embodied Satire*

While the textual analysis reveals Rotimi's satirical blueprint, the play's full subversive power is only unlocked in performance. This theatrical investigation examines how embodied action, spatial dynamics, audience complicity, and the physicality of farce transform the written script into a visceral

critique of power. The stage becomes a laboratory where the “madness” of political ambition is not just described but demonstrated through the actor’s body, the manipulation of objects, and the direct engagement of the spectator’s laughter.

6.2.2. The Actor’s Body: Performing the “Mad” Politician

Lejoka-Brown is not merely a literary construct but a physical spectacle. His characterization depends entirely on performative choices that externalize his internal disorder.

- **The Militarized Body:** The actor must embody a parody of military discipline - a stiff, chest-thrust posture that constantly breaks down. The humor and critique emerge in the gap between the rigid, saluting, parade-ground physicality he attempts and the flailing, chaotic movements that erupt under pressure. His walk should be a strut that devolves into a stumble; his commanding gestures should become wild, uncoordinated flailing during the rally’s collapse.
- **The Body in Crisis:** Key comic and critical moments are physical. The actor’s performance during the hiding of the wives - crawling, frantic whispering, exaggerated tiptoeing - is pure slapstick that visually translates political duplicity into childish panic. During the climactic rally, his body must visibly fragment: his voice cracks, his uniform becomes disheveled, and his authoritative pose disintegrates as he is pulled in multiple directions by the wives. This physical breakdown mirrors the breakdown of his political facade.
- **Contrasting Corporality:** The wives’ physical performances offer critical counterpoints.

Liza’s body language should convey controlled, intelligent authority - steady eye contact, purposeful movement. She is the still, rational center of the domestic storm.

Sikira’s physicality is rooted in traditional expressiveness: hands on hips, emphatic gesturing, a grounded stance that communicates resilience and popular wit.

Mama Rashida’s movements might be marked by a local/traditional woman, whose appearance is slightly detached elegance that becomes increasingly awkward in the chaotic Nigerian setting.

Their collective physical encroachment on Lejoka-Brown’s space throughout the play is a silent, powerful choreography of his diminishing authority.

6.3. Spatial Dynamics: Staging Power and Its Disintegration

The use of stage space is a direct metaphor for political and domestic control.

- **The House as a Contested Territory:** The set is not a neutral backdrop but a battleground. Initially, Lejoka-Brown might dominate the space, occupying center stage, issuing commands from an elevated position (a chair like a throne). As the play progresses, the wives increasingly invade and claim space. They enter rooms unannounced, stand between him and his audience (the Party Man, the Aide), and physically surround him during the climax. The blocking visually charts the transfer of power from the solitary patriarch to the collective agency of the women.
- **Public vs. Private Collision:** The rally scene demands a brilliant theatrical solution for the collapse of boundaries. An effective staging might have the domestic space (the living room) literally be invaded by the public rally - supporters pouring in from the wings, banners interrupting the domestic set. Alternatively, the house might transform or be pushed aside, exposing the private farce to the public gaze. This spatial collision is the core theatrical metaphor: the personal is political, and the private scandals of leaders cannot be contained.
- **Props as Extensions of Power:** The Bell: On stage, the bell is not just a symbol but a sonorous instrument of tyranny. Its jarring ring must shatter the scene’s peace, a physical assault on the audience’s and characters’ ears. The comedy and critique lie in the diminishing returns of its use; by the final scene, its ring should be met with visible indifference, a theatrical demonstration of eroded authority.

The Uniform: As a costume, it is a second skin he cannot shed. The actor’s relationship to it is crucial. Does he preen in it? Is it uncomfortably tight, constricting his civilian movements? When disheveled, it becomes a clown’s costume, visually reinforcing that his authority is a ridiculous performative act.

6.4. Audience Engagement: Laughter as Complicity and Judgment

Rotimi's theatre is inherently communal, and the audience's role is active, not passive.

- **Direct Address and Complicity:** Moments where characters, particularly Lejoka-Brown or the Aide, speak directly to the audience are crucial. They invite us to be co-conspirators in his schemes or confidantes in his complaints. This breaks the fourth wall and implants us within the satirical mechanism. Our laughter at his asides makes us momentarily complicit in his folly, only to have that laughter turned against him (and us) as his plans unravel.
- **The Politics of Laughter:** The director and actors must orchestrate the type and target of laughter. Is it the nervous laughter of recognition? The cathartic laughter of seeing the mighty fall? The robust laughter at pure physical farce? The play's success hinges on guiding the audience from laughing with Lejoka-Brown's buffoonery to laughing at his absurdity, and finally to a more thoughtful, critical silence as the implications of the satire settle. The shared, communal act of laughter in the theatre becomes a form of collective judgment.
- **Farce as a Democratic Form:** The exaggerated, physical comedy (slapstick, rapid exits and entrances, mistaken identities) is a profoundly accessible theatrical language. It ensures the satire reaches a broad audience, democratizing the critique. Theatrically, this aligns with Biodun Jeyifo's concept of "popular theatre," where intellectual critique is delivered through the visceral, immediate medium of the body and situation.

6.5. The Syncretic Stage of Satire in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

This analysis merges textual and theatrical examinations to assert that Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* establishes a syncretic satirical stage - a domain where literary composition and physical performance converge to critique the irrationality inherent in postcolonial power. The play's lasting impact stems from its dual functionality: it serves as a carefully constructed literary work dismantling authority through language and structure, while simultaneously acting as an inherently theatrical framework that necessitates a communal, embodied critique. This discussion unfolds through three interconnected insights.

6.5.1. Madness as Performative Logic, Not Pathological State

The analysis reveals that "madness" within the play is not portrayed as a medical issue or mere irrational behavior; instead, it represents the operational logic of a power structure disconnected from reality. Textually, this is illustrated through Lejoka-Brown's linguistic schizophrenia - his fluctuation between authoritative military commands ("Operation Win Election"), aspirational yet distorted English ("man of considerable magnitude"), and the raw Pidgin reflecting his frustrations. This inconsistency is not a flaw but rather Rotimi's deliberate technique; each linguistic register fails to effectively engage its intended audience (his wives, voters, aides), highlighting a stark disjunction between the leader's self-perception and societal truths.

Theatrically, this notion of madness materializes as a physical spectacle. The actor must embody the disintegration of these various registers. A pretentious declaration in "Oxford" English may be undermined by an abrupt, exaggerated gesture; what starts as a strategic initiative ("tactical maneuver") spirals into chaotic slapstick (hiding under tables). Thus, "madness" is vividly enacted as the inability to sustain a coherent performative identity. Importantly, this chaos extends beyond the individual level; the tumultuous rally where personal truths violently disrupt political fiction depicts societal madness: a collective body politic willing to accept leadership from such an individual. Consequently, audience laughter becomes an analytic tool that isolates and elucidates absurdity during performance.

6.5.2. The Domestic Sphere as the True Political Arena

A key finding from this integrated analysis is that the play systematically challenges the bourgeois division between private and public spheres. The household emerges not as an escape from politics but rather as its most authentic microcosmic stage. Textually, Rotimi employs the motif of the "impossible household" (the polygamous family led by a deceitful husband) as an allegory for the "impossible state" one founded on false promises, rival factions, and unstable foundations.

This theatrical exploration amplifies those themes spatially: Lejoka-Brown's initial control over domestic space (issuing commands from his central chair) gradually diminishes over time. The entrances and movements of his wives orchestrate a silent coup. Sikira's grounded presence occupies cultural significance; Liza's rational movements exemplify modern critique; Mama Rashida's awkward positioning underscores traditional intrusion. At their climax, they do not merely argue with him; they physically encircle him, tugging him in various directions until they command center stage themselves. Their agency manifests not just through dialogue but also through action. This theatrical victory posits that political transformation often germinates within overlooked "private" revolts against localized oppression. The play suggests that one can assess the health of society by examining power dynamics within its households.

6.5.3. Satire as a Syncretic, Embodied, and Communal Ritual

The research illustrates that Rotimi's satire derives its distinctive strength from its syncretic character; it embodies elements neither solely intellectual nor purely comedic in nature. Textually, it incorporates structures typical of Western farce (mistaken identities, rapid pacing, exaggerated reversals) while infusing them with uniquely Nigerian linguistic patterns, the logic found in markets, proverbs' weightiness, polygamous politics, and military legacies.

Theatrically speaking, this syncretism proves essential; the play requires elements drawn from 'alarinjo' (traveling theatre) traditions, direct audience engagement, broad physical comedy, as well as immediate responsiveness to achieve its popular resonance. The bell serves not just symbolically; rather, its jarring ring acts like an auditory assault reminiscent of unreasonable, authoritative demands. Meanwhile, uniforms become constricting costumes that render actors' movements into struggles between rigid tradition and fluid contemporary realities.

Most significantly, though, is how audience participation completes this satire. Rotimi crafts a complicit relationship through his script where moments arise when Lejoka-Brown shares confidences with viewers, aligning us momentarily with his perspective. Our ensuing laughter at his downfall mirrors our own fleeting gullibility, transforming the theatre into an active communal ritual aimed at correction rather than passive observation alone - a collective judgment expressed publicly through shared laughter that models democratic critique absent within the characters' world inside the play itself.

6.6. Synthesis: The Textual-Theatrical Dialectic

Ultimately, this analysis concludes that the brilliance of 'Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again' lies within its self-reinforcing dialectic, linking text with performance.

The text offers ironic frameworks alongside linguistic precision, establishing coherence for satire. Conversely, theatrical imperatives impart visceral emotional responses, creating social relevance for said satire.

For example, when Lejoka-Brown proclaims "I am field marshal of this household," there exists textual irony (he lacks actual control). That irony finds realization only if delivered by an actor frantically retreating before advancing wives or struggling against furniture snagging his uniform comically, thus setting traps for arrogance whilst performances trigger them effectively!

7. SUBJECT MATTER AND CHARACTER ANALYSIS

7.1. Major Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown

7.1.1. Madness Representation

Major Rahman embodies the subject matter of madness, often portrayed in a humorous yet tragic light. His eccentricities represent the absurdities present in a corrupt political environment. For instance, his 'madness' often serves as a critique of the irrational behaviors exhibited by political leaders.

7.1.2. Symbolism

Major Rahman symbolizes the struggle against societal oppression and the search for identity amidst political turmoil. His character serves as a vehicle through which Rotimi comments on the failures of leadership.

7.2. Sikira

7.2.1. Role in the Play

Sikira, as Rahman's wife, navigates the complexities of her husband's madness and the societal expectations placed upon her. She often acts as a voice of reason, challenging Major Rahman's erratic behavior and highlighting the absurdity of their situation.

7.2.2. Power Dynamics

Her character exemplifies the often-overlooked strength and agency of women within male-dominated narratives. Sikira's assertiveness contrasts sharply with Rahman's erratic character, bringing a balance to their relationship.

7.2.3. Liza

Liza represents the concept of loyalty and sacrifice within marriage. Her actions often reflect the societal pressures women face and how they must navigate personal desires against family responsibilities.

7.3. Mama Rashida

7.3.1. The Maternal Figure

Mama Rashida embodies the traditional female archetype, acting as a stabilizing force in the chaotic environment. Her perspective on madness and family dynamics provides critical commentary on societal norms.

7.3.2. Wisdom and Insight

Her character offers wisdom and guidance, often reflecting on the patriarchal society and providing a critical voice on social issues.

7.4. Okwonkwo

7.4.1. The Antithesis of Madness

Okwonkwo serves as a foil to Major Rahman, representing the conventional masculine ideals of strength and stability. His approach to life contrasts sharply with Rahman's madness, highlighting differing responses to societal pressure.

7.4.2. Power Struggles

Okwonkwo's interactions with female characters often underscore the struggles for dominance within relationships, showcasing the challenges posed by traditional gender roles.

7.5. Theatrical Elements

7.5.1. Stage Directions and Settings

The domestic settings in the play reflect the interior lives of the characters, emphasizing the absurdity of their situations. The juxtaposition of political chaos against personal life enriches the comedic aspects.

7.5.2. Performance Aspects

The depiction of characters by actors amplifies the humor and the poignant critique inherent in the narrative. Physical comedy and timing play crucial roles in delivering lines and actions that enhance the satirical elements.

8. CONCLUSION

This study has conducted an extensive textual and theatrical analysis of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, illustrating that the play represents a complex dramaturgical framework where themes of madness, authority, and political satire are intricately intertwined through performance. Our examination affirms that Rotimi's brilliance transcends the creation of a mere political farce; he crafts a syncretic satirical apparatus that functions on both literary and performative dimensions.

We have identified that the "madness" at the heart of the narrative serves as a performative logic of power, a purposeful construction in text and performance, evident in Lejoka-Brown's fragmented language, his physical collapse under duress, and the chaotic structure surrounding his political aspirations. This madness is not accidental or pathological; it symbolizes the unavoidable fallout from

authority built on deceit, militarism, and patriarchal pride. The play adeptly illustrates that when leadership becomes a spectacle detached from reality, the resulting dissonance elicits both humor and tragedy.

Our exploration indicates that power within Rotimi's universe is inherently theatrical and significantly fragile. The domestic realm emerges not merely as a private space but as the truest political arena where authority is challenged and overturned. Through careful textual contrasts and intentional staging choices, Rotimi reveals how power transitions from an isolated, ostentatious patriarch to a collective and pragmatic female agency. The uniform becomes a comical disguise, the bell an ineffective tool, and political rallies transform into stages where personal truths dismantle public narratives.

Crucially, this study posits that Rotimi's satire derives its strength from its embodied and communal essence. By merging Western farcical elements with indigenous performance traditions, such as direct audience engagement, proverbial expressions, physical humor, and market logic. Rotimi constructs a theatre that is intellectually incisive yet accessible to broader audiences. The laughter elicited from viewers is not incidental but fundamental to the satirical mechanism at play; it converts theatre into a forum for collective scrutiny and cultural critique.

In conclusion, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* persists because it offers more than mere historical reflection; it presents a dramaturgical framework for identifying political folly. Rotimi conveys that the absurdities of power are best revealed not through solemn discourse but via the illuminating, physical, and communal medium of theatre. In this space, bodily truths can unveil mental deceptions while politicians' performances invite discerning laughter from their constituents.

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Madness, Power, and Political Satire in Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*: A Textual and Theatrical Investigation

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