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English and literary studies.

The presentation of gender and sexuality in Efua Sutherland's 'The marriage of Anansewa', and Ola Rotimi's 'Our Husband has gone mad again'

In recent times the society has been plagued by different divergent issues, one which is Sexism can be understood as the degradation, prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. It is also called gender discrimination in which there is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can affect either gender, but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles, and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another of the opposite sex.

Sexism in language is an offensive reminder of the way the culture or society sees women. So therefore in this respect Ola Rotimi in his 'our husband has gone mad again', aims at the arrest of this societal ill, it laughs at its futility, although especially from a feminist point of view.

In this text Ola Rotimi arrests this issue as regards the protagonist Major Lekoja-Brown, prominent among the various approaches adopted by Nigerian playwrights in their representation of Feminism is Ola Rotimi's farcical cum comical approach in his play *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again*. In the early part of the play before the emergence of Lisa, Ola Rotimi presents a group of dumb, docile women who are rendered inactive not by an express command of the gods as in 'men', but by a long period of subjugation under patriarchal culture that has made their oppressed state to look like a natural way of life. This group of women can be illustrated with Ola Rotimi's play *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* before the intervention of Liza in the play. The man of the family, Rahman Lejoka - Brown, is the god of his own household. His orders are as potent and as final as those of the gods. The ex-military-man-turned-politician prides himself as being more prudent than his father because he (Lekoja-Brown) acquires as many women as he can "handle" unlike his father who had a hundred and fifteen of them. In fact, he "handles" them as perfect as he does his other possessions. His is a traditional African family that is anchored in the culture of his people and the exigencies of the time. His marriage to the two wives at home is a testimony to his prudence. He acquires Mama Rashida, "a well-mannered, quiet, well-bred African pigeon", from his late elder brother. "Mama Rashida was the oldest of my late brother's wives", he explains to his friend Okonkwo, "My elder brother died in a train accident my father had married her off to me". In this way Ola Rotimi satirizes the dehumanising rules and laws of marriage and the conformity of the society to this ill. In addition to the "well bred pigeon", he marries Sikira to meet the demands of his political ambition. Being in need of

women's vote and realising that Sikira is the daughter of the president of the Nigerian Union of Market Women, Lejoka-Brown acquires her for electoral victory. While he has planned to settle her with money and send her away after the election.

Though they live together under the same roof as husband and wives, the man is far removed from his wives emotionally and otherwise, and this is evident in his relationship with them. His communication with the wives are mostly in the form of commands and orders to which they unreservedly respond "Yes, my Lord". The women have neither voice nor choice; neither ambition nor power and are completely dependent on their husband. Lejoka-Brown is their mouthpiece. The house is "peaceful" because patriarchy - that obnoxious belief that man must be on-top of woman (whatever that phrase means) -- is maintained. The women are complacent about their subservient position. For them, it is a natural state. They do not agitate for another state because they are unaware of an alternative way of life for wives within a traditional family. It has to take someone from outside with a different way of life to rouse the women from their slumber, and Liza is the one and at this juncture Ola Rotimi consciously mocks the insatiability of the masculine gender.

Liza, a Kenyan lady, a medical doctor and the only one who Lejoka-Brown has married for love, is a different woman. Before she enters Lejoka-Brown's family, Lejoka-Brown is thoroughly agitated, feeling completely insecure.

The fact emanating from this passage is that Lejoka-Brown is restless because he knows that Liza, the American-trained medical doctor, is a different woman from the "two little crickets" of wives in his family. At least she is not "a cricket" but "a canary". In this text lekoja brown becomes or represents the society of men who are afraid of the edge of the feminine gender who are suppressed. It is undeniably because Liza unlike the other wives is empowered by formal education. She is trained as a medical professional with a Kenyan scholarship. Liza is therefore intelligent, powerful, independent and assertive. She knows what to say and how to achieve her aim. She is a totally different woman from Mama Rashida and Sikira. She is a symbol of an empowered, modern African (Nigeria) woman.

Finally Ola Rotimi laughs as she exposes futility and inability of men, as Madam Ajanaku prevails over Major lekoja brown, at the elections.

In the same respect Efua Sutherland, armed with her, 'the marriage of anansewa', arrests the shortcomings of her society, its ills and their conformity to it as a norm.

Exploring the way Efua Sutherland portrays Ananse in The Marriage of Anansewa, showing its significance in the play; Efua Sutherland's hilarious and interesting play, The Marriage of Anansewa, is about a Ananse's cunning arrangements for his daughter's marriage, at the same time, using the bride prices to turn round his financial difficulties. I intend to explore how Efua T. Sutherland portrays his character and its significance in the play.

Efua Sutherland first mocks the societal conformity of child marriage. How women are coerced as a lesser gender. She exposes the modes women are used to alleviate financial conditions. Mr. Ananse is cunning and also a deceitful person when he deceives his daughter into typing letters that she did not know was for her own marriage in Act 1. We can note how Ananse succeeds in convincing Anansewa in typing for him while she wants to go out. He intentionally complains about the world and hardships in life in order to make her feel sad and eventually agree to type. From this, we can observe that one of tactics that he uses in cunning people is by making people feel bad using psychological means to remind his victims about undeniable difficulties that they are facing and talking about the negative consequences. An example of this is how he often asks Anansewa questions such as; "will your fees be paid by the time you return home? and will the leaking ceiling be fixed by the time you return? Its significance to the play is that, it is the first event that Sutherland uses to portray of Ananse's cunning and deceitful character as means of addressing the use of women under duress, and its nature of normalcy. Another act that Sutherland uses to portray the

suppression of women is seen through mr. Ananse when he lies to his mother and aunt about the burning farm in order to drive them away.

In a final note, Efua Sutherland's book highlights the degradation of the feminine gender in an African society. How women are subdued and marginalized, and the society's conformity to it.