

**PATRIACHY AND FEMALE RESISTANCE IN ZULU SOFOLA *WEDLOCK OF  
THE GODS* AND TRACY UTOH *OUR WIVES HAS GONE MAD AGAIN***

**BY**

**Fatima Opeyemi AWOTAYO (MISS)  
ART2100183**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY**

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**CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this project was carried out by **Fatima Opeyemi AWOTAYO (Miss)** in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin city.

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**Prof. E.B. ADELEKE**  
**(Project Supervisor)**

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This essay is dedicated to God Almighty for His love and kindness.

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I sincerely express my profound gratitude to Almighty God for the wisdom, strength, and guidance given to me throughout the completion of this project.

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## ABSTRACT

This project examines patriarchy and female resistance in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Tracie Utoh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*. It focuses on how both playwrights portray women's struggles against male dominance and their efforts to gain freedom and identity in a patriarchal society. Using Feminist Theory as a guide, the study shows that Sofola presents women's resistance through tragedy and cultural conflict, while Utoh uses satire and humor to expose oppression and promote female unity. The research concludes that both writers advocate for gender equality and social change, showing that African women are not silent victims but strong agents of resistance and transformation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Purpose of Study

The aim of this essay is to examine patriarchy and female resistance and to examine the ways in which the playwrights use dramatic forms to analyze how female characters resist patriarchal oppression and challenge in the traditional African societies using Zulu Solofa's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Tracy Utoh *Our Wives have Gone Mad Again*.

#### 1.2 Scope of Study

The study focuses on how patriarchy operates within the social worlds of these plays and on the different forms of female resistance employed by the central female characters. I will identify and give critical analysis on how patriarchy operates within the social worlds of these plays and the different forms of female resistance employed by the female characters as depicted in the plays. The essay is limited to two texts namely, Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Tracy Utah *Our Wives have Gone Mad Again*.

#### 1.3 Methodology

This work employs the qualitative method of research based on the information from the primary materials, Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Tracy Utoh's *Our Wives have Gone Mad Again*. The secondary research method involves the use of book, relevant essays, and information from the internet.

#### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study applies Feminist Theory, with a focus to analyze how women resist patriarchal control and navigate oppressive customs. Feminist Theory generally seeks to challenge gender inequality, question male-dominated power structures, and advocate for the empowerment and agency of women.

As a theoretical and ideological framework, feminism is not a single, fixed ideology; rather, it is a dynamic and evolving framework that has taken on different forms in response to varying historical, cultural, and political contexts. Broadly speaking, feminist theory investigates how power operates between the sexes, how gender roles are socially constructed, and how these roles restrict the freedom, opportunities, and identities of women.

Feminist theory understands gender and patriarchy as socially constructed systems of power rather than natural givens. Simone de Beauvoir famously argued that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,”(283) meaning that femininity is created by cultural conditioning and social situation rather than by biology.

Helen Chukwuma also states that “Feminism means, therefore, a rejection of inferiority and striving for recognition. It seeks to give women a sense of self as worthy, effectual, and contributing human beings”. (26) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie also states that, feminism is a fight for justice and fairness in the society, arguing that patriarchy also hurt both men and women.

Feminism is expressed in different forms, often called types of feminism. Each type offers a unique way of understanding how women experience oppression and how they resist it. Some of the major types include liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, African feminism, Marxist feminist , Womanism and Anarchist feminism . These approaches collectively enrich feminist scholarship, but they also differ in their focus: while some stress legal and political reform within existing systems, others call for a radical restructuring of society or the integration of cultural and indigenous perspectives.

**Liberal feminism** is a feminism of equal rights, i.e., egalitarian feminism; that is, it demands political equality , women's right to vote and stand for election, access to the

labour market but also equal rights when it comes to marriage, education or work (equal pay). Liberal feminists revendicate their right to play an active role in society and to be treated in the same way as their male counterparts. In contrast to pro-sex feminism, but similarly to radical feminism, liberal feminism is traditionally opposed to prostitution.

Olympe de Gouges states that "Women are born free and equal in rights with men". It claimed equal civil and political rights, but also the right to freedom, property, security, divorce, and the abolition of slavery(87).

Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earliest voices of liberal feminism, strongly argued that women were not naturally inferior to men but were only made so through lack of education and opportunity, she emphasized that women should not aspire to dominate men but rather to attain autonomy and self-determination. "I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves" (Wollstonecraft 134).

Radical feminism contends that male dominance (patriarchy) is the root cause of women's oppression and must be uprooted by fundamentally reshaping society. It is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women or, more specifically, the social domination of women by men. Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing societal rights, privileges, and power primarily along the lines of sex, and as a result, oppressing women and privileging men. Radical feminism argues that patriarchy is the most fundamental form of oppression and must be completely dismantled, not just reformed. It sees male dominance as deeply rooted in social institutions such as the family, religion, and politics. Radical feminists believe that true equality cannot be achieved unless these structures are transformed, since they are designed to keep women subordinate. Radical feminist belief that gender inequality is not just a political or legal issue, but a structural and cultural system that controls women's sexuality, labor, and bodies. Shulamith Firestone in his word, "the first division of labor

is that between man and woman for the purposes of childbearing, and it is this biological family unit that must be eliminated” (11). Kate Millett defines patriarchy as a political institution: “Patriarchy’s chief institution is the family, which enforces male power over women and children” (33) .

Radical feminism contributes to feminist theory by identifying patriarchy as the fundamental system of domination, stressing that real equality requires radical cultural and social change rather than surface-level reforms. Its focus on dismantling patriarchy at its roots makes it an important framework for analyzing how deeply gender roles and power relations are ingrained in society and literature.

Within this framework, patriarchy is understood not just as a system of male dominance but as a deeply embedded cultural ideology that manifests in both public and private spheres, shaping marriage customs, inheritance rights, political representation, and everyday gender relation. patriarchy is seen as a layered system that operates in both the domestic sphere (through marriage customs, family roles, and inheritance practices) and the public sphere (through politics, religion, and economic structures). Resistance, therefore, is equally layered ranging from acts of rebellion to coded, quiet forms of defiance that allow women to navigate hostile environments without open conflict.

Feminist literary criticism, in particular, applies these principles to the study of literature. It examines how women are represented in texts, how their voices are expressed or muted, and how narratives reflect, resist, or reinforce patriarchal ideologies. The aim is not merely to highlight injustice but also to reveal possibilities for reimagining social relations in ways that foster equality, dignity, and respect for all gender.

Feminist have advanced the argument that African women’s liberation cannot be achieved by simply transplanting Western feminist frameworks. Instead, Ogunidipe-Lesli

et Al African Feminism seeks a culturally grounded approach that critically questions harmful traditions while preserving those aspects of African heritage that promote dignity, equity, and communal well-being. African women are not merely victims of patriarchy but active agents who often employ strategic negotiation, subtle subversion, and resilience as forms of resistance.

Obioma Nnaemeka, and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi have argued that feminism in Africa must be rooted in African realities understanding women not merely as victims but as humans capable of transforming their societies. This perspective is crucial when analysing literary works like Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Tracy Utoh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, where female characters are shaped by, and respond to, complex cultural and patriarchal forces.

### **1.5 Review of Related Literature/Justification of Study**

Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* is a Nigerian play that examines the tension between traditional customs and individual autonomy within a patriarchal society. It was first published 1972 and is considered to expose the systemic oppression of women and the complex interplay of culture, gender, and power. The drama serves both as a critique of patriarchal structures and as a lens through which audiences can examine broader issues of gender equality, women's agency, and the consequences of rigid adherence to tradition. Ogwoma's experiences including widowhood seclusion, bride-price obligations, and societal condemnation for defying norms. Scholars have extensively analyzed *Wedlock of the Gods* for its treatment of women's oppression and resistance within traditional African societies.

Donatus Emenike and Success Ifeyinwa Asuzu (2022), in their African feminist analysis of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, comment that "the play lays bare the deep entrenchment of gender-based violence within traditional Igbo society. They

identify practices such as widowhood seclusion, forced marriage, bride-price systems, male-child preference, and victim-blaming as central mechanisms of women's oppression (p. 91)" In the play, Ogwoma is forced to marry Adigwu to repay her father's debt, confined after his death, and condemned for choosing her true love, Uloko reflecting how patriarchy polices women's choices and sustains gender-based violence.

Rosemary Asen delves deeper into lamenting how women are commodification through bride-price, showing how tradition and customs trap women in loveless or forced marriages." Ogwoma's union with Adigwu arranged purely to repay a debt illustrates how bride-price turns marriage into an economic transaction rather than a partnership, leaving women powerless over their own destinies". Asen highlights that such practices perpetuate gender inequality and calls for broader societal and governmental interventions to protect women's rights and autonomy (Asen, 2017).

In another review, Elizabeth Omoruyi introduces the term "Womanpressionism" to describe how women themselves sometimes sustain patriarchal hegemony by enforcing oppressive practices. She argues that Sofola's female characters reflect real societal dynamics where women inadvertently support the structures that oppress them. In the play, female elders and relatives uphold widowhood rites and condemn Ogwoma's defiance, showing how women can act as gatekeepers of the very systems that oppress them. Additionally, Austin E. Anigala delves into the tension and distrust between the characters Odibei and Ogwoma, suggesting that such internal strife among women distracts from confronting patriarchy. He concludes that unity among women is essential for overcoming oppression and achieving self-actualization..

Futhermore, Edem (2021) explores *Wedlock of the Gods* through a critical discourse lens, showing how the characters' experiences reflect a clash between traditional customs (culturation) and outside influences (acculturation). The play

highlights the tension between preserving cultural values and adapting to new societal pressures, revealing the complex ways cultural identity shapes and complicates individual choices.

Lastly, Ezenwamadu argues that *Wedlock of the Gods* challenges the straightforward application of Western feminist ideas to African societies. The play shows that feminism in Africa must account for local cultural and social contexts, suggesting a more nuanced approach that respects traditional norms while still advocating for women's rights and autonomy.

In *Our Wives Has Gone Mad Again*, the major focus of Tracie Utoh is to satirically portray how a group of politically and socially empowered women confront patriarchy showing women moving from marginalised positions to positions of authority and influence. Tracie Utoh *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* has attracted considerable scholarly attention for its bold portrayal of women who confront and sometimes reverse patriarchal power.

Essentially, studies and review have been carried out by various critics of Tracy Utohs , our wives has gone mad again . one of such is the review done by E.B. Adeleke's whose review explores how the play depicts women using extreme and sometimes violent tactics in their fight for liberation. Characters like Irene, Ene, Funmi, Mairo, and Ifeoma form a united front, not to negotiate equality, but to reverse male dominance by subjecting men to the same mockery, abuse, and control that patriarchy has long inflicted on women. Adeleke (2018) comment on Utoh's portrayal of women who are seeking liberation . He warns that feminism should seek balance, not become "patriarchy in reverse." In another critical assertion, Itoro Ibanga's , in her review examines "a reflection of the link between feminism and human rights(1-2)". The work defines feminism as a movement both political and intellectual seeking equal rights for

women in societies where men traditionally hold greater freedoms. In the play, feminism is shown as a direct challenge to patriarchy's misrepresentation of women as weak, submissive, or dangerous. Ibanga emphasizes that patriarchy maintains its power by controlling authority and positioning men as "lords" over women, while Utoh's drama acts as a cultural critique of these gender inequalities.

Furthermore, Okata Gift Ngozi remarks shows that characters like Ene, Ifeoma, Funmi, Mairo, Inyang, and Odera use their education, political influence, and verbal skills to dominate men. This dominance often takes the form of cutting men off in conversation, delivering insults, or ending discussions abruptly. Beyond gender dynamics, the play also satirizes Nigerian society, exposing corruption, political manipulation, and moral decay. Okata ultimately argues that patriarchy is not the only source of oppression, men too, can become victims when women misuse power and warns that language can be a tool for both equality and domination, no matter who wields it.

Oyeleye (2023) "female characters are exhibiting "sociopathic traits behaviors marked by hostility, selfishness, and a lack of empathy". The study shows how social and marital frustrations shape both the conscious and unconscious actions of women such as Ene, Funmi, Mairo, Ifeoma, and Irene. These traits, described as stemming from "social and marital castration", are rooted in the emotional and social disempowerment they have endured in a patriarchal system. Through language, characterization, and plot, Utoh presents empowered women who channel unresolved pain into aggression that damages relationships and often mirrors the oppressive dominance they oppose. Oyeleye concludes that empowerment without healing can turn resistance into harmful power struggles rather than genuine equality.

Okadigwe explores how African playwrights depict feminism in two distinct ways. On one hand, there's a form of feminism that genuinely stands with women—

challenging male dominance, confronting oppression, and aiming to uplift women's position in society. On the other hand, there's a distorted version championed by certain elite or "bourgeois" women who turn feminism into a personal enterprise. These women, driven by materialism and self-interest, end up marginalising not only other women but men as well mirroring the very oppressions they claim to fight. Okadigwe also contrasts patriarchal men, who use cultural norms to maintain control, with capitalist women, who exploit feminism for selfish gain.

After examining these scholarly reviews of the two novels, I intend to assess this study through the lens of a feminist approach.

### **1.6 Thesis Statement**

This study shows that Zulu Sofola and Tracie Utoh portray female resistance as both radical and strategic, illustrating how African women challenge patriarchal control through rebellion, and negotiation within traditional societies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DATA ANALYSIS OF ZULU SOFOLA'S *WEDLOCK OF THE GODS*

#### 2.1 Ogwoma as a Symbol of *Rebellion*

Ogwoma, the central female figure in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, embodies rebellion against oppressive patriarchal traditions. She challenges societal expectations by refusing to accept a life dictated by custom, thereby becoming a voice of resistance. From the very beginning, Sofola presents her not as a submissive widow but as a woman yearning for freedom and love. After the death of her husband Adigwu, Ogwoma defies the prescribed mourning rituals that seek to confine her to a life of seclusion and silence. She asserts her right to choose her own path, a boldness that unsettles the traditional order.

Her rebellion becomes most visible in her insistence on marrying Uloko, the man she loves, despite the cultural restrictions that forbid widows from remarrying so quickly. In one of the defining moments of the play, Ogwoma declares:

I cannot go on living as a shadow of myself. My life with Adigwu was not of my choosing, it was forced upon me. Now that he is gone, I will not let the same chains bind me again. My heart belongs to Uloko, and I will not deny it simply because tradition commands me to. (*Wedlock of the Gods* 27)

This declaration illustrates Ogwoma's rejection of patriarchal control. Instead of surrendering to custom, she demands autonomy over her life. Sofola uses her voice to dramatize the conflict between tradition and individuality, portraying Ogwoma as a symbol of resistance against structures that silence women.

Critics have often highlighted Ogwoma's role as a rebellious figure. Donatus Emenike and Success Ifeyinwa Asuzu argue that Sofola's heroine "lays bare the deep entrenchment of gender-based violence within traditional Igbo society," pointing to practices such as forced marriages and widowhood seclusion as oppressive tools of patriarchy (91). Ogwoma's rejection of these customs does not merely represent personal defiance but a broader feminist challenge to the cultural institutions that perpetuate gender inequality. In another illuminating critique, Rosemary Asen emphasizes how Ogwoma's forced marriage to Adigwu reduces her humanity to a mere transaction: "Ogwoma's union with Adigwu arranged purely to repay a debt illustrates how bride-price turns marriage into an economic transaction rather than a partnership, leaving women powerless over their own destinies." (34) Here, Ogwoma's personal struggle against bride-price and widowhood rituals transcends the individual and reflects the collective plight of African women bound by similar customs. Her resistance, though tragic, symbolizes a refusal to remain a passive victim within a patriarchal order.

Sofola's dramatic technique ensures that Ogwoma's voice resonates as both personal and political. Her defiance challenges the norms of her society while also inviting the audience to reflect on how tradition can be weaponized against women. She becomes a tragic heroine, not because she fails, but because her struggle exposes the rigidity of a society unwilling to accommodate female agency.

## **2.2 Exploration of Traditional Marriage, Spiritual Belief Systems, and Fatalism**

Traditional marriage in *Wedlock of the Gods* is not presented as a union of love and mutual partnership but as an instrument of social control. Through Ogwoma's experience, Sofola critiques how patriarchal customs reduce women to commodities whose lives can be bargained and exchanged. Ogwoma's marriage to Adigwu, forced

upon her to repay her father's debt, reflects the transactional nature of marriage within the traditional Igbo setting. The playwright makes it clear that such marriages deny women agency, trapping them in relationships that suffocate their individuality.

Sofola dramatizes this commodification when Ogwoma bitterly recalls her marriage to Adigwu:

“They sold me to Adigwu as if I were yam tubers in the market. No one asked me what I wanted. No one cared whether my heart agreed. My father's debt became my burden, and my womanhood became the price they used to settle it.” (*Wedlock of the Gods* 18)

This passage reflects the injustice of a tradition where a daughter is used as collateral for her father's debts. The tragedy of Ogwoma's situation lies not only in the personal cost but also in the broader commentary on how cultural practices perpetuate systemic oppression.

Alongside marriage, Sofola weaves into the play the force of spiritual belief systems and their grip on society. The gods and ancestral laws serve as enforcers of patriarchy, reinforcing customs that keep women subservient. Ogwoma's attempt to remarry Uloko is not simply condemned by her community; it is seen as a violation of spiritual order. The belief that breaking such traditions will incur the wrath of the gods reveals how religion and culture combine to sustain male dominance.

At one point, the elders declare ominously: “The gods do not smile on those who break their laws. A widow who lies with another man before the soil has cooled on her husband's grave has called death upon herself and her kin. The wrath of the spirits cannot be appeased.” (*Wedlock of the Gods* 36) Here, spiritual belief merges with fatalism. The

community insists that Ogwoma's fate is sealed, not because of her own choices, but because she has violated age-old customs. The inevitability of tragedy underscores Sofola's critique of fatalism as a cultural tool that discourages resistance. By presenting Ogwoma's rebellion as both courageous and doomed, Sofola suggests that fatalistic beliefs work hand in hand with patriarchal customs to crush women's freedom.

Critics agree that Sofola highlights the destructive interplay of culture and fatalism. Samuel Edem notes that *Wedlock of the Gods* "investigates the implications of certain socio-cultural constructs on the female gender in a patriarchal structure" and functions as a discourse meant to "debunk the notion of females' disabilities in a male-dominated society" (187). Fatalism, therefore, is not neutral; it is a weapon used to enforce conformity, especially for women.

Thus, in Sofola's play, traditional marriage, spiritual law, and fatalism converge to entrap Ogwoma. Yet her defiance, even in the face of inevitable tragedy, reflects a radical resistance to cultural systems that claim divine authority while perpetuating human injustice. Ogwoma's courage is not only against her family and society but also against the metaphysical structures that insist her fate is unchangeable.

### **2.3 Feminist Interpretation of Sacrifice and Fate**

In *Wedlock of the Gods*, the themes of sacrifice and fate are intertwined with patriarchy. Women, more than men, are expected to sacrifice their happiness, freedom, and even their lives for the sake of tradition and communal stability. Sofola criticises this imbalance by portraying Ogwoma's resistance as a refusal to carry burdens imposed on her by society. Her sacrifice begins when she is forced into marriage with Adigwu, not out of love but to settle her father's debt. This imposed sacrifice robs her of agency and sets the stage for her rebellion. When Adigwu dies, the community insists that she

continue in widowhood seclusion, a further sacrifice of her individuality. But Ogwoma refuses, declaring that her life cannot be perpetually mortgaged to a culture that denies her humanity.

At one point, her voice pierces with frustration:

“Why must a woman always be the one to suffer? Must I bury my youth with a man I never loved, simply because the elders and the gods decree it? If this is sacrifice, then it is a sacrifice made only of women’s blood.”  
(*Wedlock of the Gods* 42)

This monologue crystallizes the feminist critique of sacrifice in patriarchal societies. While cultural rhetoric often praises sacrifice as noble, Sofola exposes how such sacrifice is gendered, demanded of women but rarely of men. Fate, in the play, functions as a cultural justification for women’s suffering. The belief that Ogwoma’s rebellion will inevitably lead to tragedy reflects a fatalistic worldview that silences resistance. For the community, her love for Uloko is doomed not because of personal incompatibility but because “the gods” demand her suffering. This deterministic outlook masks the human choices that perpetuate oppression.

Rosemary Asen’s interpretation is particularly helpful here. She argues that *Wedlock of the Gods* demonstrates how “tradition and customs trap women in loveless or forced marriages,” effectively turning sacrifice into a cultural mandate rather than a voluntary act (34). The idea of sacrifice thus becomes a cloak for exploitation, dressed in the language of duty and spirituality. From a feminist lens, sacrifice in the play also echoes Simone de Beauvoir’s insight that women are historically positioned as “the Other,” expected to live in service to men and tradition rather than themselves. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir observes:

Woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is heavily handicapped, though emancipation is at hand. She takes her colors from the society in which she lives; the society being masculine, she is dominated by it. (xxi)

De Beauvoir's words resonate with Sofola's portrayal of Ogwoma, who is pressured to sacrifice her desires to a masculine order disguised as divine will. Yet Ogwoma's rebellion becomes a feminist counter-sacrifice: rather than yielding her identity to fate, she sacrifices her safety and even her life to assert her agency. Thus, Sofola reframes sacrifice and fate not as sacred inevitabilities but as contested terrains of power. Through Ogwoma, she demonstrates that when sacrifice becomes synonymous with women's dispossession, resistance itself becomes the ultimate form of self-assertion.

#### **2.4 Exploration of Resistance Strategies in *Wedlock of the Gods***

Resistance in the play takes various forms, ranging from open defiance to subtle, coded opposition. Ogwoma's character demonstrates that resistance in patriarchal societies is not always about grand revolutions but can also manifest in everyday refusals to conform. Sofola portrays these strategies to highlight both the courage and the vulnerability of women who dare to challenge oppressive traditions. The most visible strategy of resistance is Ogwoma's open rebellion. By choosing Uloko after Adigwu's death, she refuses to accept the cultural script of widowhood and silence. Her declaration that her heart belongs to Uloko is not merely a personal decision but an ideological stance against the system that commodified her in marriage. When the elders confront her, she responds with sharp defiance:

“You say I must live in darkness, that I must wear the ashes of widowhood until my bones rot. But I say no! I will not be buried alive. My love is my right, and no elder, no priest, and no god will take it from me.” (*Wedlock of the Gods* 39)

Here, resistance is vocal, bold, and unapologetic. Ogwoma’s rejection of widowhood rites is a radical act in a community where women’s silence is the norm.

Beyond Ogwoma’s bold defiance, Sofola also depicts subtler forms of resistance. For instance, the tensions between Ogwoma and Odibei, Adigwu’s mother, reveal how women sometimes resist each other rather than uniting against patriarchy. Austin Anigala notes that such conflict illustrates how “distrust, hate, and suspicion among women themselves amplify the tragedy,” and warns that true liberation requires solidarity rather than internal division (90). This suggests that resistance, to be effective, must overcome not just patriarchal structures but also the rivalries that patriarchy fosters among women.

Another resistance strategy lies in Ogwoma’s insistence on love as the basis of marriage. By choosing Uloko, she challenges the transactional model of marriage represented by her union with Adigwu. Rosemary Asen interprets this as a symbolic rejection of “marriage as an economic transaction” and an embrace of marriage as partnership (34). In this way, love becomes a tool of resistance, a reclamation of marriage from the hands of patriarchal custom. From a broader feminist perspective, Sofola’s play aligns with African feminist approaches that highlight negotiation and resilience as tools of women’s survival. Obioma Nnaemeka’s concept of “nego-feminism” is useful here, emphasizing how African women often resist not only through confrontation but also through pragmatic negotiation. While Ogwoma embodies radical defiance, her

determination to marry Uloko also reflects an attempt to negotiate personal happiness within the constraints of tradition.

Critically, however, Sofola presents resistance as costly. Ogwoma's strategies ultimately lead to her death, underscoring the tragic weight women bear when they challenge deeply entrenched systems. The message is not that resistance is futile but that it exposes the depth of patriarchy's cruelty. As Samuel Edem observes, the play serves as "a discourse practice ... designated to debunk the notion of females' disabilities in a male-dominated society" (187). Ogwoma's fate does not signify weakness; rather, it indicts a society that punishes women for daring to resist. Thus, Sofola dramatizes resistance as both radical and tragic, a defiance that shakes the foundations of tradition but also reveals the immense sacrifices demanded of women who dare to break the silence.

### **2.5 Sofola's Use of Tragic Tone**

Zulu Sofola employs a distinctly tragic tone in *Wedlock of the Gods*, positioning the play within the tradition of classical tragedy while also infusing it with African cultural contexts. The tragic mood is not simply aesthetic but ideological, serving as a critique of the oppressive structures that destroy Ogwoma. By situating her heroine within the tragic mode, Sofola demonstrates the devastating consequences of a patriarchal society that demands women's subjugation. From the beginning, the play is enveloped in an atmosphere of doom. The opening scenes foreshadow the inevitability of conflict, as Ogwoma's determination to remarry clashes with communal expectations. The tone is heavy with foreboding, suggesting that her quest for love will end in catastrophe. This aligns with the Aristotelian notion of tragedy as the downfall of a character whose desires conflict with immutable laws. Yet unlike classical tragedy, where

fate or hubris is the cause of downfall, Sofola's tragedy indicts cultural practices and patriarchal laws as the true forces of destruction.

One striking moment of tragic tone occurs when the elders pronounce the spiritual consequences of Ogwoma's defiance: "The wrath of the gods is not a matter for jest. Her stubbornness will bring ruin, not only upon herself but upon all who touch her. Such is the price of defying the ways of our ancestors." (*Wedlock of the Gods* 46) Here, the tone is not only ominous but oppressive, revealing how tradition weaponizes tragedy to discipline women. The inevitability of doom is presented as divine will, even though it is human institutions that enforce it. Critics such as Elizabeth Omoruyi have argued that Sofola's tragic tone functions as a warning about "womanpressionism" the way women themselves sometimes sustain patriarchal customs by enforcing oppressive practices (15). This self-perpetuation of oppression adds another layer of tragedy, as women like Odibei become agents of the very system that destroys Ogwoma.

The tragic tone also resonates with the feminist insight that women's suffering in patriarchal societies is often normalized as destiny. Simone de Beauvoir's observation that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (283) underscores how tragedy in such contexts is not natural but socially constructed. Ogwoma's death, therefore, is not fated by the gods but orchestrated by cultural laws masquerading as divine decree. Austin Anigala further notes that the tragic conflict between Ogwoma and Odibei illustrates how women's internal discord amplifies their suffering (90). This intra-gender tension adds to the play's tragic dimension, showing that patriarchy not only pits men against women but also divides women against each other, thereby reinforcing its dominance.

In the final analysis, Sofola's tragic tone underscores the cost of resistance in patriarchal societies. Ogwoma's death is not portrayed as a failure but as an indictment of

a society that prefers to sacrifice its women rather than reform unjust traditions. The tragedy forces audiences to confront the cruelty of customs that deny women agency and to recognize the urgent need for change. Thus, *Sofola* transforms tragedy into a feminist tool, a way of mourning women's suffering while also exposing the systemic forces that make such suffering appear inevitable.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DATA ANALYSIS OF TRACY UTOH'S *OUR WIVES HAVE GONE MAD AGAIN*

#### 3.1 Use of Satire to expose Political and Domestic Patriarchy

Tracy Utoh employs satire as a principal dramatic device to unveil the contradictions, hypocrisies, and absurdities of patriarchy in both domestic and political spheres. The play's title, *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, is itself an ironic statement that mocks male attempts to label female assertiveness as insanity. Utoh deliberately turns this phrase into a badge of empowerment, as the "madness" of these women becomes a metaphor for rebellion and resistance. What men perceive as madness is in fact a rational, deliberate, and necessary revolt against oppression. Satire is Utoh's strongest dramatic weapon. Unlike the sombre tone of Sofola, Utoh uses laughter to reveal the cruelty and contradictions of gender relations. Her satire cuts across the private and public spheres, mocking lazy, self-satisfied men who depend on their wives, as well as ambitious women who manipulate power in the same corrupt ways as men.

The opening domestic exchanges between Ene and her husband Inyang provide a humorous yet biting picture of domestic patriarchy turned upside down. Ene's scolding

"Look at the clock. Is this the time your mates clean the house? Lazy idiot!" (Utoh 22)

shows her frustration with a husband who fails to live up to basic responsibilities. The comedy of the moment hides a deeper truth. patriarchy has created men who expect service without contributing effort, even when women become breadwinners. Ene's sarcastic rebuke turns the tables; she speaks the anger that many women have been forced to silence.

Through Ene, Utoh mocks the traditional idea that the husband is the “head” of the home.

Ene boasts that

“she took him [Inyang] to my people and gave him money to pay my dowry... I feed this man, I clothe him and I put a comfortable shelter over his head” (Utoh 24).

The inversion is comic, but its implications are radical. Utoh exposes how gender power can shift in modern marriages, especially when women gain financial independence. However, instead of harmony, these reversals often create new tension emasculated men and resentful women, both trapped in the same patriarchal expectations they seek to escape.

Satire extends into the political sphere when the women begin plotting campaign strategies for their candidate, Chief (Mrs.) Irene. Their cynical declaration that

“Politics without money is equivalent to child’s play. Every position has its price” (Utoh 42)

mirrors the corruption of male politicians. The line is funny because it sounds exactly like the excuses men use to justify political immorality. Utoh’s humour here is double-edged, she mocks a political system so rotten that even women reformers must buy their way into it, while also warning that feminist goals can lose integrity when contaminated by greed and ambition.

Yet Utoh’s satire is ambivalent. She does not simply celebrate the women’s acquisition of power; she also stages the ethical dilemmas that flow from tactics like blackmail and violence. The scene in which a Ifeoma describes attacking her husband and being unable to resist revenge

“I beat up the girl and stripped her naked... I waited for him. When he came back, he descended on me” (Utoh 29).

becomes grotesque and comic and tragic simultaneously .

Satire thus reveals both the injustice that produces rage and the danger of responding with cruelty that repeats cycles of harm. In both the domestic and political contexts, satire functions as revelation. Laughter disarms the audience long enough for them to recognize their own complicity. As Adichie argues, “Culture does not make people; people make culture” (15). Utoh’s play invites her audience to remake the cultural scripts that sustain both male tyranny and female complicity. Her comedy is, therefore, not escapist but revolutionary .it forces reflection through amusement.

### **3.2 Character Study of Female Voices**

Utoh’s play differs from Sofola’s single-heroine structure. Here, she builds a pattern of women whose voices represent different responses to oppression. Each woman’s choices embody a strand of feminist consciousness ranging from anger, from ambition to negotiation. Together, they dramatize the multiplicity of female experience in a patriarchal, capitalist, and politically unstable society.

Irene functions as the group’s political leader and symbol of women’s advancement. Her colleagues describe her as “Chief (Mrs.) Irene,” a title that signals both her political stature and her entry into a male-dominated space. She embodies women’s hunger for representation and power; her campaign captures the optimism of liberal feminism, which insists that women should have equal opportunities in public life.

Yet Irene’s leadership is compromised by the same forces that infect the political system. When her team jubilantly announces that

“a former first lady... has volunteered to make a private donation of one hundred and thirty million naira “(42)

the excitement exposes how easily noble goals succumb to corruption. Irene’s ambition illustrates how female participation in politics is not automatically feminist without integrity, it merely reproduces patriarchal greed. Utoh uses Irene’s character to question whether women’s empowerment can be meaningful if it follows the same unethical patterns as men’s politics.

Still, Irene is significant because she opens the space for female solidarity. Her political ambition unites the women, at least temporarily, around a shared goal. Her presence shows that women can be public actors, but Utoh’s satire reminds us that true liberation requires moral consciousness, not just political visibility.

Beyond her political ambition, Irene’s remarriage is one of the most symbolic choices in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*. In a society where women are expected to remain widowed or submissive after failed marriages, Irene’s decision to remarry is both personal rebellion and public statement. Her remarriage defies the cultural norm that measures a woman’s virtue by her endurance in suffering. Utoh uses this act to highlight how women’s happiness is often sacrificed on the altar of respectability.

Through Irene, Utoh interrogates the social double standard surrounding marriage. While men remarry without reproach, women who do the same are branded immoral or impatient. Irene’s remarriage thus becomes a feminist assertion of emotional independence the right to love, choose, and begin again without fear of stigma. Her act aligns with liberal feminist values that emphasize individual freedom and equality in personal relationships.

Yet Utoh complicates this freedom by surrounding Irene with political ambition. Her marriage is not just romantic but also strategic, enhancing her public image and influence. Utoh thereby critiques how even progressive women must sometimes conform to social expectations of being “respectably married” to maintain legitimacy in politics. Irene’s remarriage, though liberating, also exposes the cultural hypocrisy that still ties women’s worth to patriarchy

Her new marriage further contrasts sharply with Sofola’s tragic heroine, Ogwoma, in *Wedlock of the Gods*. Whereas Ogwoma dies for defying traditional restrictions on remarriage, Irene lives and even thrives by rejecting the same constraints. Utoh’s vision of feminism, therefore, is one of resistance, survival and reinvention. Irene proves that women need not choose between love and ambition, widowhood and dignity; they can reconstruct identity on their own terms.

Through this portrayal, Utoh celebrates the modern African woman who refuses to be confined by social judgment. Irene’s remarriage is not a sign of weakness but an act of strength a declaration that women have the right to move forward, emotionally and socially, without apology.

Ene’s character is the heart of Utoh’s feminist message outspoken, intelligent, and unafraid to challenge the gender order that silences most women. She embodies the frustration of many African women who have worked hard, earned education, and gained independence, yet still find themselves chained by cultural expectations of submission. Utoh introduces Ene not as a gentle wife but as a fiery critic of male complacency. Her biting sarcasm

“Is this the time your mates clean the house? Lazy idiot!” (22)

From her first appearance, she refuses to conform to submissive behaviour. Her sarcasm,

“Necessary or not, evil is evil and I, Ene, will not put up with it any longer,”(23)

reveals the bitterness of a woman whose sacrifices have been exploited. She pays her husband’s dowry, feeds him, and receives “ingratitude” and infertility in return. Ene embodies female rage turned political, her domestic protest becomes a metaphor for feminist resistance.

Ene’s conflict with her husband, Inyang, is not simply personal but symbolic of the breakdown of patriarchal order in modern society. She reverses the traditional roles of husband and wife: she feeds, clothes, and shelters Inyang, and even pays her own dowry. By making Ene the provider, Utoh reverse the cultural myth that men are natural breadwinners and protectors. Yet Ene’s tone reveals that this role reversal does not automatically bring happiness. Instead, it exposes how economic independence without emotional equality can breed resentment on both sides.

Ene’s anger is also a form of self-defense. After years of sacrifice, she feels mocked by Inyang’s laziness and sexual impotence. Her mockery calling him “a eunuch”is both ridicule and lament. . Her advice to ifeoma

“keep a weapon handy” (31)

reflects a survival instinct born of repeated humiliation. It is the voice of a woman who no longer trusts society to protect her. This suggestion of violence transforms her from victim to avenger, making her both terrifying and tragic.

What makes Ene remarkable is her refusal to remain silent. In a society where endurance is glorified as a woman’s virtue, Ene’s outspokenness becomes a radical act. She transforms domestic quarrel into public protest. Every insult she throws at Inyang echoes the cry of generations of silenced women. Utoh uses Ene’s voice as a weapon of

liberation. Her language is sharp not because she hates men, but because she craves justice.. Her anger is therefore not madness .

Through Ene, Utoh gives voice to the African woman who refuses to be silenced. She may be flawed, loud, and impulsive, but she is alive fully aware of her worth and unafraid to claim space in both her home and her society. Ene’s struggle encapsulates the emotional cost of liberation and the courage required to demand humanity within the walls of patriarchy.

**Funmi** represents the educated woman whose confidence is intertwined with ambition. She navigates both the domestic and political arenas with shrewdness. When discussing political strategy, she insists, “Politics without money is equivalent to child’s play,” and later suggests using blackmail and seduction to destroy opponents:

“Send pretty girls to seduce such men... where blackmail fails, we will send hired assassins to eliminate them” (45)

Funmi’s ruthlessness reveals a dark side of female empowerment the tendency to imitate the very corruption that oppresses women.

She advises Ifeoma that making her husband “independent” was a mistake, arguing that keeping him dependent would ensure respect. This disturbing comment exposes how some women internalize patriarchal logic, using power to dominate. Utoh presents Funmi not as villainous but as a mirror of societal decay: she is the product of a world that equates success with manipulation. Her feminism, therefore, is materialistic a critique of what Florence Okadigwe calls “bourgeois feminism,” where personal ambition overshadows communal uplift (86).

Unlike Ene and Funmi, **Mairo** embodies calm wisdom and collective thinking. She values compromise and persuasion over confrontation. Her moderation reflects the

African feminist ethos of negotiation resisting oppression while maintaining community harmony. Mairo's language is less fiery but more strategic; she focuses on practical action, urging the women to plan carefully and maintain unity:

“Let us start our deliberations right away... We are here to map out strategies” (42).

Mairo's tone contrasts sharply with Ene's aggression and Funmi's opportunism. She knows that change must include men, not destroy them. In this way, Utoh offers Mairo as a corrective voice, representing balance, dialogue, and moral conscience amidst the chaos. Her presence ensures that the play's feminism remains culturally rooted rather than wholly adversarial.

Ifeoma's story is one of abuse, endurance, and retaliation. She recounts catching her husband cheating, beating the girl, and later being violently assaulted:

“When he came back, he was full of apologies... but when I entered the kitchen, he locked the door and descended on me” (29)

Her testimony exposes the cycle of violence that traps women in abusive marriages. Yet Ifeoma's decision to fight back to beat her rival, to speak openly, to consider police action marks a significant shift from victimhood to agency.

Her despair is also practical, she shoulders all the household bills, from rent to school fees, yet receives neither gratitude nor respect. When she laments, “What shall I do? The situation is beyond me,” Utoh captures the exhaustion of women who do everything yet remain invisible. Ifeoma's weariness evokes the liberal feminist call for social systems that recognize women's unpaid labour. However, her story also warns against internalized silence. Utoh invites sympathy but also insists that enduring abuse without transformation perpetuates tragedy.

Ifeoma reveals the psychological and emotional dimension of female resistance. Her endurance of domestic violence, economic burden, and humiliation exposes the cruelty of patriarchy within marriage. Yet her willingness to fight back, speak out, and even consider legal action marks a transformation from victim to survivor. When she confides that she has “locked him up many times” (29), she reflects the limited but growing power of women to seek justice through social and institutional means. Ifeoma’s pain is the emotional core of the play. It shows why resistance is necessary in the first place.

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Collectively, these women form a spectrum of female resistance. Ene resists through confrontation, Irene through ambition, Funmi through manipulation, Mairo

through mediation, and Ifeoma through endurance and survival. Each strategy exposes a different aspect of patriarchy: domestic domination, political exclusion, moral corruption, cultural control, and emotional abuse. Utoh's purpose is not to present a single model of the "ideal woman" but to show that every form of resistance whether loud or quiet, righteous or flawed is a reaction to systemic inequality.

### **3.3 Feminist Reading of Performance, Humor, and Language**

Utoh's creative use of performance, humor, and language transforms ordinary domestic conversations into acts of resistance. Utoh demonstrates that women's liberation begins with reclaiming the right to speak, laugh, and perform their own stories. Through this performative structure, Utoh allows her women to occupy social space that patriarchy denies them. In many African cultures, women's voices are restricted to private settings, while men dominate public dialogue. Utoh deliberately collapses this boundary her female characters speak as if they are on stage before the nation. Their performance of emotion, anger, and laughter is both therapeutic and rebellious. As Oyeleye observes, "their performance of frustration becomes a public display of courage" (93). This idea of performance connects strongly to feminist theory, which views the body and voice as instruments of resistance. By performing their pain and joy before an audience, Utoh's women rewrite their narratives. They are no longer silent victims of tradition but active agents who dramatize their own truth.

Utoh's humour is not mere entertainment .it is a political tool. Laughter becomes an act of defiance, a way to ridicule patriarchal absurdities without resorting to direct confrontation. When Ene mocks her husband's laziness, or when the women collectively joke about men's sexual failures, the audience laughs but also reflects on the deeper meaning of those jokes. Humour allows women to release pain, expose hypocrisy, and

assert control. In patriarchal settings, anger is often condemned as “madness” when expressed by women. Utoh cleverly redefines this “madness” as insight. The title itself, *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, is ironic. It mirrors the way patriarchal society labels outspoken women as “crazy” for refusing submission. By reclaiming this “madness,” Utoh’s women expose the irrationality of patriarchy itself.

The female characters use speech as their main weapon of resistance. The play’s dialogue is dominated by women who interrupt, question, and challenge male authority. Ene’s fiery monologues, Ifeoma’s confessions, and Funmi’s witty retorts replace the traditional silence expected of wives. Through speech, Utoh reclaims the narrative space that patriarchy once reserved for men. Utoh’s command of Nigerian English, idioms, and satire also strengthens her feminist purpose. The blend of standard English with local expressions gives her dialogue authenticity and humour. It shows that feminist consciousness can emerge in familiar, everyday language not only in academic theory or elite rhetoric. The women speak the language of markets, homes, and offices; they speak the language of life itself. In this way, Utoh roots feminism within African speech culture, proving that resistance need not imitate Western models to be powerful.

Through humour and performance, Utoh also exposes the contradictions of patriarchy. Men, who once held authority, are now reduced to comic figures. Inyang’s clumsy obedience and repeated “Sorry, Madam” (25) elicit laughter, but behind that laughter lies pity. Patriarchy has made men so dependent on dominance that when the balance shifts, they collapse into confusion. Utoh’s use of humour therefore cuts both ways. It empowers women but also reveals that patriarchy wounds men too, stripping them of emotional intelligence and partnership. Ultimately, Utoh’s artistic choices build toward one goal: the creation of a collective female voice. Her stage becomes a shared platform where women negotiate identity, dignity, and power.

### 3.4 Exploration of Resistance Strategies in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*

In *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, Utoh presents resistance as both an individual and collective struggle. Each woman develops her own method of fighting back against patriarchal domination, yet all are bound by a shared frustration at the inequalities of African society. The diversity of their methods mirrors the multiple paths of feminist resistance in economic, social, verbal, and political.

A key form of resistance in the play is **economic independence**, which Utoh treats as the foundation of women's autonomy. Characters such as Ene and Ifeoma exemplify this dimension of empowerment. Both women have become the breadwinners in their families, reversing traditional gender roles. Ene's proud declaration that

“she feeds this man, clothes him and puts a comfortable shelter over his head” (24)

illustrates her rejection of the patriarchal myth that a woman's duty is to depend on her husband. Similarly, Ifeoma's list of domestic responsibilities—

“I pay the children's school fees, the rent, the electricity bill... I pay for every single thing in the house” (30)

highlights the extent of her contribution. These women's economic strength allows them to speak boldly and act freely. Yet Utoh also uses their frustration to reveal a painful paradox, even when women become financially independent, patriarchy still demands their emotional subservience. The men in their lives, rather than showing gratitude, respond with resentment and insecurity. Utoh's insight here is sharp: true liberation cannot exist until both economic and psychological hierarchies are dismantled.

Resistance in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* also operates through language and verbal confrontation. Utoh gives her female characters the gift of speech, a weapon long denied to women in traditional societies. Their conversations are filled with wit, sarcasm, and emotional honesty. When Ene scolds her husband, when Funmi mocks male incompetence, and when Ifeoma narrates her suffering, they transform domestic spaces into political arenas. Words become tools of protest, laughter becomes catharsis, and gossip becomes a shared form of healing. These women break the cultural silence that has long protected male authority. Their ability to name their oppression publicly marks a turning point in Nigerian feminist drama. For Utoh, speech is also a weapon of identity. Through conversation, her women redefine themselves not as victims but as thinkers and decision-makers. In their speech patterns, tone, and humour, Utoh captures the energy of African women who navigate oppression with intelligence and creativity. The women's verbal assertiveness is not merely rebellion for its own sake; it is a claim to personhood in a world that has historically denied them individuality. As Oyeleye notes,

“Utoh’s heroines speak to be heard, and through their words they claim space” (95).

Another dimension of resistance in the play is physical defiance, which Utoh presents as both shocking and symbolic. The disturbing story of a woman cutting off her husband's genitals after years of abuse becomes a metaphor for the destructive potential of suppressed rage. When the men react with disbelief

“Are you telling us that a woman picked up a sharp razor blade and deliberately cut off her husband's private part?” (36)

their horror exposes how deeply society fears female anger. For centuries, women have been taught to endure pain quietly, so any display of physical retaliation appears

unnatural. Utoh does not glorify this violence, but she treats it as a tragic consequence of systemic oppression. Ene's advice to "keep a weapon handy" (31) captures the desperation of women who feel unprotected by law or culture. In this way, Utoh dramatizes the psychological cost of patriarchy, it pushes women to the edge until resistance becomes the only form of survival.

Beyond the domestic sphere, Utoh explores political resistance as the collective expression of women's anger. The women's campaign for Chief (Mrs.) Irene's presidential bid transforms private frustration into public action. Their political meeting complete with debates about fundraising, bribery, and manipulation satirizes Nigerian politics while highlighting women's potential for leadership. Irene's role as presidential candidate marks a significant departure from traditional female confinement; she occupies a space once reserved exclusively for men. However, Utoh complicates this achievement by showing that political inclusion does not automatically equal moral transformation. The women's willingness to use "pretty girls to seduce such men" (45) exposes the danger of imitating corrupt male practices. Through this irony, Utoh argues that feminist liberation must also be ethical. True resistance cannot reproduce the same injustices it seeks to destroy. Nevertheless, the women's involvement in politics remains a milestone. Their organization, energy, and vision symbolize a new era in which women refuse to remain voiceless spectators of national affairs. By placing female characters in political dialogue, Utoh challenges the patriarchal notion that women belong only in the home. Their entry into politics is both comic and revolutionary: comic because they imitate the theatrics of Nigerian politicians, and revolutionary because they break barriers of gendered exclusion.

Utoh presents female solidarity as the ultimate form of resistance. The play's ensemble of women Ene, Ifeoma, Funmi, Mairo, and Irene transcends individual quarrels

to create a collective front. Their shared laughter, mutual support, and willingness to confide in one another show how communal strength can heal personal wounds. Their meeting scenes serve as miniature parliaments of women, where they legislate their own experiences and reinterpret social norms. This solidarity transforms pain into purpose. Even when they disagree, their unity in confronting patriarchy stands as Utoh's clearest vision of empowerment. In *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, therefore, resistance is not a single heroic act but a continuous process. Utoh's women resist through survival, through speech, through humour, through leadership, and through one another. Their rebellion is human, not perfect sometimes misguided, sometimes excessive, but always necessary. The playwright ultimately portrays resistance as a moral and emotional awakening. It is the courage to question injustice, the strength to rebuild after betrayal, and the laughter that refuses to die in the face of pain. Utoh's message is clear: as long as women can think, speak, and unite, patriarchy will always be challenged, and female resistance will continue to redefine the meaning of freedom.

### **3.5 Utoh's Use of Tragic Tone**

Although *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* is primarily written as a comedy, Tracie Utoh uses humour to conceal a deep undercurrent of pain and tragedy. Beneath the laughter, the play reveals a disturbing reality about the condition of women in patriarchal societies and the emotional cost of resistance. The title itself suggesting that the wives have "gone mad" is ironic. It mirrors how patriarchal culture ridicules women who dare to challenge its authority, branding them as irrational. Yet Utoh turns this accusation on its head, implying that the real madness lies in a society that normalizes inequality and expects women to suffer silently. Her use of tragic tone beneath comedy transforms the play from simple satire into a powerful feminist critique of oppression and moral decay.

The tragedy in *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* does not manifest through death, as in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, but through emotional disillusionment, psychological exhaustion, and moral corruption. The characters' laughter often hides pain, and their jokes serve as masks for frustration. The women laugh about their husbands' incompetence, but the laughter rings hollow. It is the laughter of survival. Utoh's mastery lies in her ability to balance humour and sadness so that the audience feels amused yet disturbed, entertained yet reflective.

The tragic dimension of the play emerges through disillusionment rather than death. The women's laughter often conceals exhaustion. Ene's defiance, Ifeoma's complaints, and Funmi's sarcasm are not mere jokes they are cries of frustration disguised as comedy. Utoh's women laugh because crying has lost its power. Their humour becomes a coping strategy in a world that ridicules their anger. When the women joke about a wife cutting off her husband's genitals, calling it "mercy killing", the audience laughs uneasily. Beneath this grotesque humour lies the tragic truth of female desperation in a society that refuses justice.

Another layer of tragedy comes from the emotional disconnection between men and women. Male characters such as Inyang are confused and diminished, victims of a patriarchy that teaches dominance instead of empathy. His repeated "Sorry, Madam" (25) is both comic and pitiful. He represents a man who cannot redefine masculinity in a changing world. In turn, women like Ifeoma bear the double burden of economic and emotional labour. Utoh's portrayal of these strained relationships shows that patriarchy dehumanizes both sexes. It reduces men to pride and women to endurance.

A further tragedy lies in lost idealism. The women's political campaign for Irene begins as a vision of progress but soon mirrors the same corruption they condemned in

men. Their excitement over a “one hundred and thirty million naira” donation (42) reveals that power, when pursued without ethics, becomes another form of oppression. Utoh suggests that liberation must include moral reform; otherwise, it degenerates into imitation of the oppressor.

Through this fusion of laughter and sorrow, Utoh crafts a feminist tragicomedy a theatre of truth that exposes pain while offering hope. Her humour “bleeds,” as Adeleke observes, because it reveals wounds that society hides (14). The tragedy beneath the comedy reminds us that resistance is costly, but silence is deadlier. By blending joy with sorrow, Utoh teaches that laughter can heal, truth can hurt, and rebellion can redeem. Her women’s “madness” becomes awakening the courage to see, to feel, and to resist in a world that calls freedom insanity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

#### 4.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to examine patriarchy and female resistance in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Tracy Utoh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*. Both plays, though stylistically different, confront the same central issue: how women navigate and resist patriarchal systems that attempt to control their bodies, choices, and voices.

In Sofola's play, the focus is on tradition, spirituality, and fatalism as cultural instruments of oppression. Ogwoma's rebellion against widowhood rites, bride-price marriage, and ancestral laws reveals how women challenge oppressive customs even at great personal cost. The play's tragic tone underscores the dangers women face when they resist deeply entrenched traditions. Sofola, therefore, dramatizes resistance as courageous but tragic, highlighting the rigidity of a society that sacrifices its women for the sake of cultural continuity.

In Utoh's play, satire replaces tragedy as the dominant mode. Through humor, parody, and verbal wit, Utoh ridicules patriarchal and presents women as witty, assertive, and politically aware. The female characters employ laughter, mockery, and solidarity as resistance strategies, destabilizing domestic and political patriarchy alike. Yet, beneath the laughter, the play reveals tragic undertones: women's anger reflects deep scars, and the risk of reproducing "patriarchy in reverse" reminds audiences that liberation must move beyond domination into balance.

Taken together, the two plays illustrate two complementary modes of feminist drama in Nigeria. Sofola highlights the tragedy of women crushed by culture and fate, while Utoh demonstrates the power of collective female resistance to expose and undermine patriarchy.

## 4.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes to feminist literary criticism in several important ways:

### 1. Revealing Different Feminist Aesthetics

The study shows that Sofola and Utoh employ different dramatic modes, tragedy and satire, to explore women's struggles. This reveals the versatility of feminist drama in Nigeria, where suffering and laughter both become tools of critique.

### 2. Highlighting Resistance Strategies

Sofola's play emphasizes individual defiance (Ogwoma's tragic rebellion), while Utoh presents collective resistance (Ene, and others using solidarity and satire). Together, they demonstrate that resistance can be both solitary and communal, tragic and comic.

### 3. Expanding African Feminist Discourse

The analysis affirms the relevance of African feminist theories such as nego-feminism (Nnaemeka) and the critique of womanpressionism (Omoruyi). These frameworks enrich our understanding of how women resist not only patriarchy but also the complicity of other women and the scars of colonial and political power.

### 4. Bridging Domestic and Political Spheres

Both plays reveal that patriarchy operates in both private (marriage, widowhood rites) and public (politics, leadership) spaces. By situating women's resistance in both domains, the plays underscore that feminism must challenge patriarchy at every level of society.

### 5. Contextualizing Nigerian Feminist Drama

This study situates Sofola and Utoh within the larger field of African feminist writing, showing how Nigerian women dramatists use the stage as a platform to critique social injustice, empower women, and propose alternative visions of gender relations.

### 4.3 Conclusion

Patriarchy in African societies is both pervasive and adaptable, manifesting in cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and political structures. Yet women are not passive victims; they resist in ways that are complex, diverse, and powerful. Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* portrays resistance as tragic but necessary, revealing the human cost of oppressive customs. Tracy Utoh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, by contrast, uses satire to mock patriarchal authority and to imagine a world where women's voices dominate the political and domestic spheres.

Ultimately, both plays affirm that resistance, whether through defiant tragedy or satirical laughter, is indispensable to women's survival and dignity. They demonstrate that feminist drama is not only about exposing oppression but also about imagining new possibilities for gender relations. Through their works, Sofola and Utoh contribute to an ongoing feminist discourse that calls for justice, equality, and the recognition of women as full participants in African societies.

In conclusion, while Sofola mourns the silenced voices of women like Ogwoma, Utoh celebrates the rising chorus of women's laughter and defiance. Together, they illustrate that African women's resistance is both a lament for the past and a promise for the future.

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