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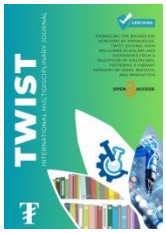

Disrupting Patriarchal Discourses: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gendered Resistance in Lara Owoeye's *Another Wives' Revolt* and *Kowode*

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Abstract
This study examines how gendered resistance is linguistically and discursively constructed within patriarchal Nigerian contexts, using Lara Owoeye's plays, *Another Wives' Revolt* and *Kowode.* Drawing on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the study interrogates how characters challenge hegemonic masculinity, negotiate power, and assert agency through strategic language use. The analysis focuses on key discursive features such as transitivity, mood and modality, revealing how patriarchy is discursively reinforced through traditional, religious, and cultural norms, and how it is simultaneously subverted through language use, collective protest, and discursive activism. Findings show that Owoeye's female characters resist their marginalisation not only through overt defiance but also through calculated linguistic strategies and collective feminist mobilisation. The study challenges the portrayals of women in African drama as passive or domesticated, offering instead a nuanced representation of women as discursive agents of sociopolitical change. This study contributes to feminist literary scholarship and highlights the emancipatory potential of language in confronting gender-based oppression.

Keywords
Patriarchal Hegemony, *Kowode, Another Wives' Revolt*, Gender representation, Feminism, Gender ideology

INTRODUCTION

It is observed that gender-related issues in recent times have attracted the interest of all and sundry. Many feel that the traditions and cultures that establish male gender as superior to female gender, thereby making female members of such an environment subordinate to their male should remain. They see nothing wrong with male dominance. Some view them (the traditions and cultures) as outdated and should be modified if eradication and/or replacement is impossible. The latter opine that such traditions and cultures relegate female members of the society to the background, making them (women in particular) live a stereotyped life whose relevance starts and ends at home as wives, mothers and caregivers. This has led to what Adebayo (1976) describes as "male hegemony". The traditional belief in male dominance, according to Eagly and Wood (2013: 34), perpetuates "inequality and reinforcing stereotypes".

It is equally observed that the acclaimed inequality between male and female members of society is brought about by the practice of the social system called patriarchy. It (patriarchy) is "a social system based on absolute authority of the father or an elderly male over the family group" (*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*: 200). Sasikanth and Paul (2020: 88) consider patriarchy as "male domination". The fallouts and the implications of this invested authority, particularly on women, coupled with the stereotyped life women are conditioned to live in a patriarchal atmosphere, led to discussions to rewrite the history of African women as obtained in many other patriarchal societies. Moreover, gender is perceived to be

socially constructed to allocate power, duties, responsibilities, statuses and roles (Butler, 1990) and has nothing to do with sex (biological) or human natural ability.

In many patriarchal societies, like Nigeria, the dynamics between genders are deeply embedded in cultural beliefs that often promote male superiority and female subordination. This is in agreement with the opinion of Cole (2018: 56) that cultural "norms often prescribe specific roles and responsibilities for women within the family and community…". Social systems and practices do not just uphold these beliefs; they also play out in daily communication among people in such societies. This suggests that language shapes and mirrors power dynamics. Consequently, discourse becomes a crucial battleground for either reinforcing or challenging dominant gender norms.

Over time, African literature, especially drama, has become a powerful medium for questioning and confronting patriarchal norms (Udom, 2019). In the post-colonial era, many African writers such as Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and Achebe attempted to apply patriarchal values in their narratives. However, many African writers have captured a good image of women in Africa and advocate for their rights. As feminism continues to gain momentum in Europe and more female playwrights emerge, African drama has also started to delve into important themes like women's rights, liberation, and gender equality. In recent times, African writers are increasingly weaving feminist ideas into their stories, pushing back against traditional norms and working to elevate the status and representation of women throughout the continent. Among the contemporary Nigerian playwrights is Lara Owoeye, who critiques gender-based oppression through her works. Her plays, *Another Wives' Revolt* and *Kowode*, highlight women's resistance to male dominance, providing rich material for a critical analysis of gendered power dynamics.

The ongoing marginalisation of women in African societies has sparked a lively tradition of feminist literature aimed at amplifying the voices of the unheard and reimagining women's roles in both public and private life. While many literary scholars have explored gender themes in African drama, few have taken a detailed linguistic approach, especially Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to reveal how language serves as a means of either resistance or oppression within these dramatic works. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining how Owoeye's female characters in *Another Wives' Revolt* and *Kowode* utilise language to push back against patriarchal systems and assert their agency in oppressive settings. It investigates how male dominance is linguistically represented and how women's resistance is strategically expressed. The objectives include: 1. to identify and analyse the discursive strategies that depict male chauvinism and female subjugation; 2. to explore how female characters push back against and navigate patriarchal ideologies through their use of language; and 3. to explain how Lara Owoeye's language use in these plays enrich feminist discourse within Nigerian literature. This study adds to the ongoing conversation in feminist and linguistic studies by showcasing how African women playwrights utilise discourse as a means of resistance. It offers a deeper insight into how language can both uphold and challenge gendered power structures, particularly in societies where patriarchy is firmly established. Additionally, it presents a linguistic perspective that allows literature to be viewed as a catalyst for social change.

GENDER DISCOURSE IN AFRICAN DRAMA

African drama has always been a powerful tool for social commentary, especially when it comes to gender issues. In the early days of postcolonial theatre, many plays tended to reinforce traditional gender roles, mirroring the patriarchal values prevalent in African societies. The bad representation of women was a common feature in African literature. Most playwrights tend to focus on the inactive women, the timid women, and the dumb women in society rather than the active ones. Yeseibo (2013) notes that women are often portrayed as sex objects and submissive mothers and wives with no autonomy or sense of awareness in Nigerian drama. In early Nigerian drama, female characters were not given significant roles in plays. Osofisan (2021: 4) suggests that this conscious motif in African drama may be a form of propaganda when he says:

> As far as the women are concerned, the bulk of our literature is secretly a weapon of male propaganda, of an agenda to keep the female under perpetual dominance… works like Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel, Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Clark's Song of a Goat, Wale Ogunyemi's The Divorce and so on, as examples of this sexist agenda

However, more contemporary works by female playwrights have started to challenge these portrayals, using their art to question and disrupt the prevailing ideas about womanhood, marriage, and power dynamics at home. Scholars like Florence Stratton (1994) and Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (2007) have pointed out that African literature, particularly when penned by women, provides a counter-narrative to the dominant male-centric discourse, showcasing women as active participants rather than mere victims. The aim is to reposition the image of African women and re-affirm their pre-colonial relevance which according to Amadiume (1987: 56) were "disrupted" by "colonial policies" that "undermined women's autonomy and perpetuated stereotypes of African women as inferior and backward". Ama Ata Aidoo (1992) is of the view that African women do not mainly write about their personal experiences, but rather the realities that serve as a focus for their existence. While some critics claim that female playwrights focus on fantasies rather than the realities of their time, Aidoo challenges this view by emphasising that both men and women endured the hardships faced by Africans. She advocates for African dramatic literature to reject portrayals of male superiority and urges male dramatists to depict women in a more positive and empowering light. Additionally, she calls on women to take the lead in advocating for their cause and advancing gender equity through the arts. (Aidoo, 1992)

The representation of women in modern African drama differs positively from that of the early dramatic works. Although some women are still portrayed as weak and docile, more writers are beginning to depict women as powerful and resourceful, whose responsibilities should go beyond the home. The influence of feminism and feminist literary criticism has greatly inspired African writers to uplift the status of women in their society. As rightly observed by Mbilinyi and Allen (2021: 156) that African women remain resilient and resourceful, organising grassroots movements, advocating for gender equality and driving social change across the continent. However, it seems that the aim of African women writers is not to deconstruct their male counterparts but to provide fresh perspectives on a wide range of issues which are either being ignored by men or are being treated in half measures. Okonjo Ogunyemi (2007: 7) succinctly articulates this mission, stating that African women are:

> [...] concerned with the state of the family, women, nation and the continent, the writers, in a post-colonial, recuperative effort, transplant women to participate in operating the system. Their intention is for women's contribution to be heeded in governance.

It is reasonable to argue that the women are asserting their identity as Africans by rejecting the unfavourable aspect of the European concept of feminism. Perhaps, this explains attempts at domesticating the concept by using such terms as 'African feminism,' 'positive feminism,' 'womanism,' and 'motherism' in order to concentrate on exploring the nature of the female world and outlook rather than pay undue attention to attacking male versions of the world.

Lara Owoeye's plays are an example of this feminist movement. Her works capture the real-life experiences of Nigerian women while also highlighting their resistance against the societal structures that hold them back. Notably, plays like *Another Wives' Revolt* and *Kowode* delve into how women navigate and push back against patriarchal norms within their families and communities. *Another Wives' Revolt* is the story of the women of Atunse town who employ strategic means of leaving their husbands in their quest for equitable treatment in political, financial and domestic matters. *Kowode* is mainly the story of how peer pressure, lust for money and excessive idiocy connive together in the making of a plutomanic. The play is also a lesson on the peculiar nature of the female gender, which makes it desirable for money perverts. Despite the depth gender gender-related themes in these texts, adequate attention has not been paid to the linguistic analysis of these texts, particularly from a discourse analysis standpoint. This study aims to bridge that gap by exploring the intersection of drama, gender, and language. While the body of African feminist drama is expanding, there is still a lack of research on how language is strategically used in these dramatic texts to resist patriarchal norms. This research seeks to fill that void by investigating how Owoeye employs discourse to challenge and undermine patriarchal ideologies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly drawing on Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), to highlight the interplay of language, power, and gender, which connects text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) digs into how language plays a role in shaping gender identities and perpetuating power dynamics between genders (Lazar, 2005). FCDA goes beyond just looking at how women are portrayed in texts; it also explores how language is used to push back against and redefine their roles. This method is especially effective for analysing plays that showcase women's resistance to patriarchal standards. FCDA allows researchers to investigate the ways language interacts with cultural practices, traditions, and gender beliefs. For example, it is interesting to look at how female voices are often silenced or pushed to the margins in domestic settings by examining linguistic strategies like transitivity patterns, mood and modality choices, and word choices. On the flip side, Acts of defiance—like challenging authority, rejecting traditional roles, or reshaping the concept of womanhood—as powerful strategies of empowerment can be analysed. This study uses FCDA to delve into how Owoeye's female characters confront the systems that aim to silence them. Feminist CDA, as outlined by Lazar (2005), introduces a gender-focused perspective that highlights how discourse shapes, sustains, and challenges gender-based power imbalances. This is especially relevant in dramatic texts where gender dynamics unfold through dialogue.

To support this discursive focus, Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is applied. This framework allows for a fine-grained analysis of how agency is linguistically encoded—who performs actions, who is acted upon, and what processes are used (material, mental, verbal, etc.). It offers critical insight into how female and male characters are positioned in relation to power and resistance. Ultimately, this research underscores the significance of language in either sustaining or subverting patriarchal ideologies. The combination of FCDA and SFL helps to highlight how Nigerian drama can function as a discursive space for gender justice and transformation.

METHODOLOGY

The plays *Another Wives's Revolt (AWR)* and *Kowode* are purposively selected for their thematic emphasis on women's resistance to patriarchy and other social vices. Both plays present domestic and socio-political contexts where women confront gender-based oppression and attempt to renegotiate their identities and roles. The choice of these two texts is strategic in offering complementary perspectives on gender dynamics in the Nigerian context. Purposive sampling is used to select specific scenes that involve dialogues between male and female characters that expose power asymmetries; moments of confrontation or resistance by female characters; linguistic expressions that reveal gender ideologies. Data is

subjected to linguistic and critical discourse analysis to assess agency and role allocation, lexical analysis and intertextuality and interdiscursivity to explore cultural and traditional references. The findings are situated within the broader Nigerian sociocultural context, focusing on how patriarchal ideologies are embedded in and resisted through discourse. The plays are read not only as artistic expressions but as cultural texts that engage with ongoing struggles for gender justice in Nigeria.

SYNOPSIS OF THE TEXTS

Another Wives' Revolt is set in the western region of Nigeria and centres on the collective uprising of women in the town of Atunse. The revolt is sparked by a controversial proposal to allow only the male leaders of clans and households to distribute a political cash gift of 250,000 naira. The money, donated by Senator Kayode Owonbe, who is seeking a fourth term in office, was intended for "every human being in Atunse." The town's monarch, Kabiyesi, announces the donation during the annual Atunse Day celebration and calls for a fair method of distribution. However, titled men such as Balogun, Otun, and Osi insist that the money be distributed through male heads of families. The women, recognising the senator's inclusive language as a subtle nod to their political relevance, challenge the proposal. Led by Iyalode, they argue that the suggested method would exclude women, particularly widows and divorcees. A heated exchange ensues, with Iyalode refusing to back down despite demands for an apology. Kabiyesi attempts to mediate by adjourning the meeting, but both sides return more determined. In response, Iyalode calls a women's meeting. Teacher, one of the more educated members, proposes a strategic resistance called "tegilism," emphasising unity and clarity of purpose. The women agree they are fighting for equity, not mere equality, and relocate to the nearby town of Ikosi to make their absence felt. After three weeks, during which the men feel the impact of the women's absence, Kabiyesi sends emissaries to negotiate peace. The delegation informs the women that the men have agreed to a 60-40 sharing ratio in favour of the men. The women, satisfied with the concession, return home in triumph. In the final scene, even Balogun concedes, stating, "to be honest, Kabiyesi, the world is not complete without women." The play is set in a traditional Nigerian community where male authority dominates both public and private life. Women are expected to conform to roles defined by custom, religion, and patriarchy. However, a group of women, tired of being excluded and oppressed, organised a subtle but powerful rebellion against the systems that suppress their voices.

Kówódé unfolds the tale of an impatient man named Kowode, who, in a society consumed by the relentless chase for instant wealth, chooses divination over diligent labour. Kowode comes across as an indolent individual who, disregarding his wife Kofo's counsel to work hard, sets out on a quest for quick riches. He blames Kofo for his financial woes, particularly after his unsuccessful attempt to "Japa"—to migrate to Europe. Consequently, Kofo becomes the family's sole provider. Seeking a shortcut, Kowode turns to his wealthy friend, Feranmi, who leads him to a herbalist. The herbalist demands the blood of a virgin as a prerequisite for sudden wealth. Subsequently, Feranmi shockingly suggests that Kowode sleep with his own young daughter to ensure he lies with a virgin. Initially repulsed by the idea, Kowode eventually contemplates this horrific act. Meanwhile, the women of the village stage protests against the pervasive mistreatment of women, who frequently become victims of rape and ritual killings fueled by the desire for money rituals. The drama vividly portrays women as an endangered group, reduced to objects of male desire or mere requirements for the oracle to fulfil materialistic greed. Ultimately, the play delivers a powerful feminist message, underscoring the critical need for women to unite and resist the growing threats that seek to marginalise and endanger them in a world where everyone deserves the chance to prosper based on their capabilities.

The resistance portrayed in *Another Wife's Revolt* and *Kowode* operates on both individual and collective levels, illustrating a multifaceted struggle against patriarchal domination. Female characters confront male authority through a range of strategies, including wit, assertive language, grassroots activism, and strategic solidarity. Rather than outrightly rejecting cultural traditions, the women in these plays skillfully reinterpret and repurpose traditional norms, turning them into instruments of subversion and empowerment. This tactical engagement allows them to challenge the overt expressions of male dominance and the deeper, systemic structures that sustain it. In doing so, the plays extend their critique beyond individual male figures to expose the complicity of social institutions, such as family, religion, and political systems, that normalise and perpetuate gender inequality. Through these layered forms of resistance, Owoeye positions her female characters as agents of both social critique and transformation, advocating for a reimagined social order grounded in equity and justice.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis examines the linguistic and discursive strategies through which female characters challenge traditional gender norms, assert agency, and negotiate power within socio-cultural structures. The analysis highlights how Owoeye disrupts dominant patriarchal ideologies and reconfigures gendered subjectivities. This reading reveals the texts' emancipatory potentials but also situates them within broader struggles against gender-based oppression in Nigerian society. The analysis of the two texts is done together under each theme.

Representations of Male Authority

In the two texts, male authority is represented, as male characters are consistently positioned as dominant figures through their use of imperative mood, deontic modality, and assertives. For instance, the husband character often employs

imperative structures and high modality to assert control. These linguistic choices reflect a discourse of male entitlement and patriarchal authority.

1. **Kofo**: Hard work, honesty and planning. Or, do you think if you travel abroad, you will sleep all day and dollars will be attracted to you like vultures to a carcass?
   Kowode: **Don't discourage me with your runny mouth. Just give me something to spend today**. (*Kowode*, Pg 18)
2. Igbalode: What are you up to?
   Titilola: Nothing special, dear. I have been frying and cooking.
   Igbalode: frying and cooking?
   Titilola: Yes, is anything wrong with that?
   Igbalode: No, but now, **come and serve me my food**. Since you have been frying and cooking, **I want to eat**. (*AWR*, Pg. 26).

In example 1 above, Kofo is positioned as the rational voice of responsibility, promoting values such as hard work and planning. Kowode, however, rejects this counsel, using a dismissive and derogatory tone, "your runny mouth", which reasserts male authority through discursive control and silencing of the female voice. The assertive mood, "just give me something to spend", reflects entitlement and positions the male speaker as someone who expects compliance from the wife. Again, Kofo uses interrogatives and declaratives, reflecting a reasoned attempt to engage in discussion, while Kowode uses imperatives, asserting control. This reveals how male speakers can undermine female rationality and assert control through verbal dominance. The dialogue in example 2 shows how domestic labour is naturalised as the responsibility of the woman, while male entitlement to the product of that labour is reinforced. The material processes, "frying" and "cooking", place the woman as the actor of these processes. Igbalode's final imperative, "come and serve me my food", is another material process, but with the male as the recipient/beneficiary of the woman's action, further illustrating institutionalised patriarchy, where cooking is not only the woman's duty, but servitude is expected. Igbalode exemplifies everyday patriarchy where the woman's labour is not only expected but also directed by male instruction. The interaction reflects hegemonic masculinity, using language to legitimise control over women's actions. Both examples reveal how language reproduces male dominance, entitlement, and the marginalisation of female voices.

Resistance to male authority

While male authority is often reinforced through linguistic structures and cultural norms, it is not without contestation. Within patriarchal discourses, female characters may subtly or overtly challenge male voices, resisting their expectations, commands, or assumptions. This section explores how women navigate, negotiate, and resist male authority through language in the texts. These moments of resistance, whether in the form of questioning, sarcasm, deflection, or outright defiance, reveal the complexities of gendered power relations and the potential for subversion embedded within everyday interactions.

3. **KOWODE**: There is no way you can take all these money to the market when I don't have singbai in my pocket
   KOFO: **says who?**
   KOWODE: I'm saying it.
   KOFO: **Okay, I'm saying no. All the money you see here is for restocking my shop**. (*Kowode*, pg.16)
4. **OSI**: Otun, Balogun, why are you pecking at each other like hens? It is obvious to everyone that the kabiyesi cannot be distributing money to every indigene of Atunse one by one. If he does that, he will not know who has not collected from who has collected twice. So, distribution will have to be by heads of clans, families and households. This, I think is the summary of Balogun and Otun's submissions. And that seems to be the general opinion, since that has been our traditional way of sharing things in Atunse…
   IYALODE: **lailai! Impossible! Kabiyesi**, something is wrong here. If the money is given to the men as family heads, what will happen to the women? Or, are they not parts of the human beings that the senator spoke about? **Kabiyesi, it cannot be, it can never be!!!** (AWR, pg. 9)

The exchange in example 3 reveals Kofo's resistance to economic and verbal control asserted by Kowode. Kowode's opening statement assumes financial entitlement and attempts to block Kofo's autonomy. However, Kofo resists using the interrogative, "Says who?", a rhetorical challenge that questions Kowode's authority, turning his assertion back on him. Kofo's interrogative mood undermines the declarative certainty of Kowode's assertion, introducing doubt. Her final statement uses a declarative mood to reaffirm control and ownership over the money. She reclaims agency and explicitly rejects male control. This is an example of a woman refusing to submit to male economic entitlement, asserting her decision-making power and economic independence. Example 4 is a confrontation of institutionalised male authority, especially the assumption that men alone are heads of clan and represent families. Iyalode uses the interrogative mood to challenge both tradition and exclusion, highlights dehumanisation, and reclaims the human status of women. The repeated use of emphatic exclamatory denial, "Lailai! Impossible!" and "it can never be!!!", signifies vehement resistance. Iyalode's exclamation would be interpreted as a challenge to gendered systems of distribution, a powerful discursive moment where a woman refuses cultural silence and confronts symbolic and material exclusion. Iyalode uses exclamatives and declaratives to express outrage and conviction, emphasising a strong emotional stance and certainty.

Her speech is a bold political act, disrupting the patriarchal logic of communal sharing via male heads, calling out gender exclusion, and asserting women's right to recognition and access.

Traditional and Religious Norms and Discursive Hegemony

In many patriarchal societies, language plays a crucial role in reinforcing traditional gender roles and maintaining discursive hegemony. In the Nigerian cultural settings, male authority is often legitimised through appeals to tradition, lineage, and communal structures that position men as natural leaders and decision-makers. This section examines how traditional norms are discursively constructed and sustained through linguistic choices in the selected texts. Male characters frequently invoke proverbs and religious references to legitimise control over women. These intertextual discourses reinforce patriarchal ideology by aligning male dominance with cultural norms.

5. Osi: When they said women should be given a seat in the council of chiefs, we knew this is what it would bring. **Our elders have said it, any family that allows women to be vocal will see the abnormal growth of the wild Arere tree inside the house**. AWR, 9.
   Balogun: **eewo!! Eeemo**!! This assault on constituted authority is unprecedented. Kabiyesi, this cannot go unpunished.
   Otun: What rudeness! What cheek! Impudence! Disrespect! Lack of obsequiosity! **Abomination**!
   Balogun: Every woman is wife, daughter or sister to some men, can't you see that?... AWR, pg. 9-19.
   Otun: Kabiyesi, it is time to act. It is wrong for women to fight for equality with men. Do they want to upturn the **order of God**?
   Asipa: it's witchcraft. My late father told me that every woman is a witch.
   Osi: Yes, there is no woman who is not a witch. My father told me so too. (AWR, 32)
6. Speaker: You mean you cannot dispel a group of indolent women? Or, are there men among them? I can only hear feminine voices.
   Speaker: Okay, I'm not going to allow a group of irate women disrupt a very important meeting. Go out there and tell them I will consider their requests and then disperse them. (Kowode: page?)

Excerpts 5 and 6 offer insights into how traditional norms and discursive hegemony are linguistically constructed to maintain male dominance and silence female dissent. Example 5 illustrates discursive hegemony, where tradition is invoked to delegitimise female participation in public affairs. Osi's remark, "Our elders have said it…", draws on proverbial wisdom, a common strategy in patriarchal discourse to legitimise exclusion (Adegbola, 2021). The metaphor of the "wild Arere tree" growing in the house metaphorically frames women's speech as a threat to familial and societal stability—an ideological tool for silencing dissent. Balogun and Otun's responses escalate this resistance into a moral panic with phrases like "assault on constituted authority," "abomination," and "impudence", linguistically constructing the woman's voice as not only deviant but sacrilegious. Balogun's final statement, "Every woman is wife, daughter or sister to some man", is a relational identifying process reducing women to relational identities and denying them personhood or autonomy. This enforces the idea that women are subsidiary beings whose identity is only valid through their connection to men. Otun's interrogative, "Do they want to upturn the order of God?" reveals how religion is also used to naturalise hegemonic masculinity. These utterances reveal how patriarchal ideologies are naturalised through recourse to cultural norms, lineage, and social hierarchy, aiming to reinforce gendered subordination. There is a predominant use of the declarative mood, asserting authority as undeniable truth. Clauses like "this cannot go unpunished" and "this is what it would bring" are marked by high modality, conveying judgment and certainty, which further institutionalises male authority. Tradition becomes a discursive weapon to police behaviour and reassert male dominance. In example 6, the speaker draws a boundary between masculine authority and feminine disruption. The speaker refers to the women as "indolent," "irate" disqualifying their voices. He employs discursive othering, delegitimising their participation in political discourse. The interrogative conditional clause "are there men among them?" implies that only male presence would justify seriousness or rationality. This reinforces a gendered hierarchy of credibility and authority. The command to "disperse them" after superficially promising to consider their demands shows performative listening, a strategic move to diffuse dissent without conceding power. It is also a material process where women are the goal of the action (the ones being acted upon), rendering them passive objects of state control. This excerpt demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity is maintained through institutional language that classifies women's participation as emotional, irrational, and disruptive. These examples show how resistance from women is not only dismissed but also constructed as dangerous or abnormal, thereby reinforcing the discursive boundaries of gendered power.

Normalisation of gender roles and domestication of women

In patriarchal societies, gender roles are often presented as natural, fixed, and universally accepted, shaping how men and women are expected to think, speak, and behave. This normalisation process is reinforced through everyday language and discourse, making social expectations appear commonsensical and beyond question. This section shows how gender roles are linguistically constructed and sustained as normative.

7. Igbalode: What are you up to?
   Titilola: **Nothing special, dear. I have been frying and cooking.**

Igbalode: frying and cooking?
Titilola: Yes, is anything wrong with that?
Igbalode: No, but now, come and serve me my food. Since you have been frying and cooking. I want to eat. (AWR, 26)
Igbalode: You will always be in this house, my dear… You are a genius in the kitchen. Even in the other room, your acumen cannot be rivaled. You are just perfect, my dear. Give me toothpick. (AWR, 27)

8. KOWODE: Always inconsiderate, there is no way I will be the one to buy food, pay school fees, pay rent and still give you pocket money to do fine boy around town. I cannot give you money to buy data and be toasting girls online. No way.
Kofo: Other women would help their husbands to succeed, not you. Jealousy will not allow you.
Kofo: Other men would appreciate the efforts of a hardworking and resourceful woman, not you. You bring nothing to this house, yet you eat regularly and still complain.

Examples 7 and 8 illustrate how gender roles are normalised through discourse, often framed as natural expectations within domestic and relational settings, particularly through the valorisation of female domesticity and the delegitimisation of female autonomy. The interaction in example 7 presents domestic labour and sexual performance as essential, normalised aspects of a woman's identity. It reveals how language is used to normalise domestic confinement, objectify women through praise, and subtly reinforce patriarchal control masked as affection. Titilola is the actor in the material process "I have been frying and cooking," but this agency is limited to domestic tasks. Her self-description reflects an internalised domesticity, offered as a default activity needing no justification further indexed by the phrase, "*nothing special*". Titilola's casual remark is met with Igbalode's expectation-laden response, "Come and serve me my food." This implies that her cooking is not self-directed but oriented toward serving male consumption. This frames Titilola's domestic work not only as expected but as incomplete until it directly serves him. Igbalode's later use of the identifying relational process, masked as praise, "You are a genius in the kitchen… in the other room", reinforces a reductive framing of women as valuable only in terms of culinary and sexual utility. The metaphor, "the other room" (a euphemism for the bedroom popularised in Nigerian patriarchal discourse), reinforces the sexualisation of women's roles within the home, while obscuring their identity beyond domestic and erotic utility. The label "perfect" appears flattering but functions ideologically to freeze her identity within narrowly defined patriarchal roles. This discourse reflects the hegemonic femininity expected in many patriarchal cultures, where women's value is tied to nurturing, caregiving, and sexual availability. The affectionate tone, "my dear", masks the patriarchal assumption that a woman's role is to serve, a strategy often used to naturalise subservience through emotional intimacy. The epistemic "will" in "will always be in this house" shows high modality, asserting permanence in her domestic role and erasing the possibility of change. Collectively, the discourse naturalises female subordination through a combination of commands, infantilising endearments, and functionalist praise, exposing the insidious ways in which language sustains patriarchal hegemony under the guise of intimacy. Again, the name Igbalode is also ideologically suggestive. The name means modernity. This suggests that in modern times, women continue to be subjugated through praise and other discursive means as opposed to old methods of subjugation.

Example 8 reveals a tension between traditional gender expectations and a challenge to them, offering insight into how norms are maintained and resisted simultaneously. Kowode places himself in the beneficiary role, while expecting Kofo to be the Actor in actions of service and support. Kofo reverses the dynamic, casting Kowode as a passive consumer, he "brings nothing" but "eats regularly," highlighting his lack of contribution. Kowode uses relational clauses to moralise Kofo's behaviour, casting her as flawed for resisting patriarchal roles. While Kowode attempts to reinforce traditional expectations (women must serve, men must be supported), Kofo resists, revealing the discursive cracks in hegemonic masculinity. However, the need to defend her position indicates that the default gender script still favours male entitlement and female sacrifice. Across these examples, traditional gender roles are discursively reproduced as normal and expected, particularly through language that celebrates female service and male consumption. A deeper look at this example reveals that gender roles are naturalised, with men as providers and women as homemakers. Therefore, a problem arises when these roles are switched.

While the playwright tries to present women as professionals by the way the characters are named in *AWR*, she restricts the role of women to the domestic sphere. For instance, the female characters in AWR are named Teacher, Nurse, Iyaloja, Olowosibi, among others. These names portray women as professionals and economically active, yet these professions relate to caregiving and therefore domesticate the role of women.

Naming and Confronting Oppression

Power is often sustained through the silencing or erasure of justice in patriarchal societies. However, when individuals explicitly name and challenge oppressive practices, they disrupt the ideological foundations of gendered subordination. This section analyses how the playwright manages the voices of characters to confront male dominance and structural inequality through direct, resistant language. As a result language becomes a tool not only for naming injustice and other issues relating to inequality but also for asserting agency, challenging authority, and reclaiming space in a male-dominated sociocultural order.

9. Iyalode: It is true. This did not start today. The oppression started long ago and we have been taking it quietly. This is the right time to react
   Titilola: Haven't we been suffering in silence all along?
   Nurse: I'm glad iyalode spoke out today. Passivity has been our greatest undoing. It's time to act now. Period!
   Trader: It is good to speak out. Is it not the inability to speak out that is the foundation of great misfortune?
   Olowosibi: Yes, a trader who keeps mum never sells her wares. (AWR, pg. 13)
   Iyalode: We also have to win the battle against communal and financial domination. (AWR. Pg 50)
   Teacher: … it deals wisely – it is the employment of strategy, information and intelligence in the female fight for equity, fairness, justice and egalitarianism against male hegemonic and patriarchal oppressions. (AWR, pg. 17)
10. Women leader: … by the time you satisfy twenty-one of us for a start, you may probably understand what a teenage girl feels when she is gang-raped by five boys, or how a six-year-old feels when she is molested by a fifty-year-old.
    Speaker: Now wait. What are your requests? We will take them immediately.
    Women leader: legislation against rape, domestic violence and all forms of abuse against women with specific punishment for the different categories. What are they, my people? Castration for child rape! Public flogging for flogging or beating! Incarceration for spousal sexual abuse! (Kowode, pg. 27)

In example 9, Iyalode's statement, "The oppression started long ago and we have been taking it quietly," foregrounds a historical awareness of structural gender-based injustice. It locates their condition within a legacy of patriarchy, not isolated incidents. Iyalode identifies an externalised, nameable enemy to be confronted. Titilola echoes this with, "Haven't we been suffering in silence all along?", a rhetorical question that reinforces collective experience and solidarity in victimhood and again mentions another enemy, "silence". The nurse's declaration, "Passivity has been our greatest undoing", rejects the culturally imposed silence expected of women. She explicitly names passivity as the mechanism of continued subjugation. The trader and Olowosibi use local metaphors and folk wisdom, "a trader who keeps mum never sells her wares", to link silence to economic and personal failure, thus asserting that speech and visibility are empowering. The characters root the resistance in indigenous epistemologies, making the discourse both culturally grounded and politically radical. Through the voice of the teacher, egalitarianism is also emphasised as seen in the use of equality-related terms and lexical reiteration. This dialogue marks a discursive turning point in which female characters collectively reject silence and strategise feminist resistance against patriarchal oppression.

In example 10, the Women Leader's analogy is a direct, unflinching naming of gender-based violence. It forces male listeners to confront the visceral, dehumanising reality of the abuse of females. She breaks societal taboos and places women's trauma at the center of political discourse by invoking child molestation and marital rape. Her demands, "legislation against rape… castration… public flogging… incarceration", shift the tone from pleading to demanding, signaling a move from victimhood to agency and legal-political advocacy. The list of punishments suggests a form of retributive justice, underscoring the severity of abuse and the need for systemic accountability. The Women Leader uses relational processes to frame the emotional weight of rape, "understand what a teenage girl feels," making the pain experiential and emotive. She also uses material processes in her demands: "legislation, castration, flogging, incarceration", turning language into actionable policy. This example exemplifies direct confrontation, pushing for legal and institutional reforms as a response to lived gendered violence. It reclaims discursive power by insisting that women's pain be recognised, legislated against, and punished accordingly. These excerpts demonstrate how women deploy discourse to name, expose, and confront systemic oppression, transforming silence into a site of resistance. These are not merely conversations; they are discursive revolts, repositioning women as actors of change in oppressive systems.

Objectification of the woman

Objectification is a central mechanism through which patriarchy sustains gender inequality, reducing women to instruments of male desire, utility, or control. In discourse, this process manifests through patterns that portray women primarily in terms of their physical attributes, domestic roles, or availability to men, often stripping them of subjectivity and agency. This section explores how objectification operates within the selected texts.

11. Kowode: Is there any alternative? …
    Priest: … women are the best materials in rituals if you want the best results. Vigins for money, mothers for *awure*, pregnant ones for positions of power. Even when we sacrifice pregnant women for swaying the minds of an entire community like during elections, it is more effective when the foetus is a female. (Kowode: 12).
12. Balogun: Kabiyesi, we told you. A king must acquire a harem. If they were two and there had been competition and rivalries, one of them would have stayed behind to curry favour.
    Kabiyesi: what of you? Don't you have three? Have they not all gone? (AWR: page?)

In example 11, the priest's statement directly legitimises the unequal treatment and instrumentalisation of women. He presents their exploitation not as a matter of choice or power imbalance, but as a necessary condition for achieving "the best results" in rituals. Women are primarily represented through material processes – actions done to them or their bodies, "sacrifice pregnant women". They are the Goal or Affected in these dehumanising processes. Again, women are reduced to specific categories based on their reproductive status (virgins, mothers, pregnant women). These categories are

directly linked to their perceived "usefulness" in ritualistic practices. The assertion that female fetuses are "more effective" further reinforces a harmful gender essentialism. The focus is entirely on the utility of women's bodies and their reproductive capacities. Their thoughts, feelings, desires, and individual experiences are completely disregarded and rendered irrelevant. In the same vein, Balogun's statement in example 12 presents the acquisition of a harem as a necessity for a king, an institutionalised practice. In traditional Nigerian (especially Yoruba) royal culture, kings often have multiple wives (a harem). This is seen not only as a sign of wealth and status but also as a political and social strategy; wives often represent different lineages, clans, or influential families. The word "acquire", positions women as objects to be obtained, similar to property. This normalises the idea of women as possessions or status symbols for powerful men. The rationale provided for a harem is explicitly about managing power dynamics and ensuring loyalty ("curry favour"). The behavioural process, while seemingly offering some agency, is still framed within the context of pleasing the male authority figure, reinforcing their subordinate position. Women are seen as tools to be manipulated within the male power structure. Both excerpts illustrate the objectification of women through distinct but overlapping linguistic strategies. The first example, through the voice of religious authority, justifies the instrumental use of women's bodies based on essentialist categories. The second example portrays women as possessions and tools within a patriarchal power structure, highlighting the institutionalisation of their objectification.

Strategic and Collective Feminist Resistance

Resistance to gendered oppression often emerges through individual defiance and through collective and strategically organised acts of dissent. This section examines how women in the texts mobilise solidarity, voice, and strategic discourse to challenge male dominance and oppressive social structures. The analysis reveals how resistance is embedded in discourse as both ideological struggle and political agency. particular attention is given to the linguistic construction of collective identity, shared goals, and assertive action

13. Teacher: We must act in unison and resist the oppressive propensities of the men
Teacher: we must not just fight, we must fight to win. We must plan the fight… we must fight intelligently. We must stay united
Iyalode: … we have to show them that a flea can trouble a lion more than a lion can trouble a flea. (AWR: page?)

14. Women: no to rape!
Castrate all rapists!
Death to the rapists!
Death to the abuser!
Domestic violence is an offense!
Make laws to protect women!
Make the streets safe for girls!...
Both genders matter. (Kowode, 23)

These excerpts show strategic and collective feminist resistance, where women move beyond isolated acts of dissent to coordinated, purposeful activism. The Teacher's call to “act in unison” and “fight to win” foregrounds strategic planning and collective action, two hallmarks of feminist resistance. The Teacher uses material processes ("act," "fight," "plan") to establish women as actors engaged in purposeful, goal-oriented action. The repetition of “we must” constructs a shared sense of urgency and responsibility, encouraging solidarity among women. The clause structure fosters inclusivity and unity, using first-person plural pronouns (“we,” “us”) to emphasise collective identity. The high deontic modality, “ must”, expresses strong obligation and commitment, highlighting that resistance is not optional but necessary. This discourse is militant, strategic, and inclusive. Iyalode’s final metaphor, “a flea can trouble a lion,” flips power dynamics, suggesting that small, underestimated forces (women) can destabilise dominant powers (men), a subversive feminist metaphor for strategic rebellion. It suggests that strength is not only physical or structural but can emerge from organised persistence and resilience, even among the seemingly powerless. Here, we see how women reject their traditional roles as passive or subordinate and instead construct themselves as strategic agents, capable of disrupting male hegemony through collective and calculated resistance. Example 14 is also an enactment of collective feminist protest, where women publicly confront systems of violence and injustice through a series of demands and declarations. The voice is plural ("Women"), foregrounding solidarity and shared purpose. It marks a shift from passive victimhood to active political engagement. The chants directly confront dominant patriarchal ideologies that normalise or excuse rape, abuse, and domestic violence. imperatives like "Castrate all rapists" and "Death to the abuser" reflect a radical call for justice and accountability, challenging systems that protect perpetrators. The slogans are succinct, repetitive, and emotionally charged, designed for maximum impact in public and political spaces. They function as both protest and policy demand, bridging activism and legislative advocacy. The final declarative statement, "Both genders matter", reframes the discourse beyond antagonism, reaffirming the feminist goal of equity, not gender reversal, thereby rejecting the common misrepresentation of feminism as anti-male.

Reclaiming Women’s Value: Affirmation and Inclusion in Patriarchal Spaces

Female characters are discursively constructed in ways that affirm their strength, resilience, intelligence, and moral agency by male characters in *AWR*. Moving beyond portrayals of victimhood or subservience, the discourse foregrounds women’s positive attributes and contributions within private and public spheres.

15. Kabiyesi: Balogunnn, the matter is simple. This money comes with an instruction. The women are smart. … don't forget the fact of their population, their ability to influence the younger men and the maidens.
Kabiyesi: Here, we are talking of women, our wives and mothers. They are neither lepers nor slaves as you are implying. They are precious to us. Is it not you our people who say a beautiful thing is never perfect?
Adigun: It is our duty to let our elders know that our women deserve better treatment
The absence of women and their divine wisdom is taking its toll.
Igbalode: The refusal to listen to women in the bane of modern society. It is time to negotiate, period!
Kabiyesi: All I know is that now I want life back in Atunse. I want the women back here before sunset tomorrow.

This set of exchanges marks a discursive shift from the traditional marginalisation of women to a revalorisation of their presence and contributions in a patriarchal context. The male figures in the dialogue, especially Kabiyesi, Adigun, and Igbalode, articulate a break from patriarchal silence and erasure of women. These statements subvert discursive hegemony by shifting the ideological centre from male authority to inclusive negotiation and respect for feminine wisdom. Relational processes dominate, "They are smart", "They are precious", and "They are not lepers nor slaves" assign positive attributes to women and redefine their social value. Women are agents of community renewal, and their return is equated with the restoration of life in the statement of Kabiyesi. This discourse functions as a form of internal critique within patriarchy, where male figures begin to challenge and dismantle the ideologies they once upheld. It is a discursive moment of reconciliation and inclusion, in which male power does not merely "give" space to women but recognises their indispensability. It also anticipates a transformative politics, where collaboration across genders is necessary for community restoration.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically examined how patriarchal ideologies are constructed, contested, and subverted in Lara Owoeye's plays *Another Wife's Revolt* and *Kowode* using tools from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Feminist CDA, and Halliday's transitivity framework. The analysis reveals that both plays are rich sites of discursive struggle, where language becomes a tool oppression and resistance. The study confirms that in both plays, Lara Owoeye deliberately constructs female characters who are not merely victims of male dominance but active agents of change. Their discursive strategies mark a conscious effort to challenge the structures that confine them. By using drama as a site for ideological contestation, Owoeye contributes to a broader feminist project of social critique and transformation in Nigerian society. Thus, the plays reflect societal realities and function as tools of sociopolitical intervention, showing how the performative use of language can disrupt entrenched gender norms and inspire reimagined gender relations.

The study highlights that male authority in these texts is discursively reinforced through imperatives, proverbs, and appeals to tradition and religion, often silencing or diminishing female voices. Yet, this authority is persistently challenged through defiance, irony, declaratives, and strategic unity among female characters. The plays expose how traditional and religious norms function ideologically to domesticate and objectify women, while simultaneously illustrating how women reclaim their voice, space, and identity through solidarity and intentional discourse. Importantly, the reconfiguration of gender roles in the plays culminates in a discursive shift—from domination and exclusion to recognition and inclusion. Male characters such as Kabiyesi and Adigun eventually acknowledge the indispensability of women, signalling a broader ideological transformation. Thus, Owoeye's plays do not merely dramatise gender conflict; they actively participate in redefining societal narratives around femininity, authority, and justice. Many earlier studies on African drama, especially those by male dramatists (e.g., Soyinka, Achebe, and Clark), have been critiqued for portraying women as passive, docile, or confined to domestic and reproductive roles. This study challenges that trend by foregrounding female characters in *Another Wife's Revolt* and *Kowode* who not only speak but also act, resisting, mobilising, strategising, and reshaping their social realities. Owoeye's characters defy the stereotype of the submissive African woman and are instead portrayed as assertive and politically conscious agents of change.

Ultimately, this study affirms that language is a central battleground in the struggle for gender equity. Through their linguistic choices, Owoeye's female characters subvert entrenched norms and carve out space for feminist expression, political agency, and communal transformation. The analysis of *Another Wife's Revolt* and *Kowode* reveals a sustained and strategic interrogation of patriarchal power structures within Nigerian society. Lara Owoeye's dramaturgy exposes how language serves as both a vehicle of oppression and a powerful tool of resistance. From the assertive speech acts of Kofo and Iyalode to the collective chants and mobilisation of women against violence and objectification, the plays foreground a discursive struggle where women contest their marginalisation and assert their agency. The study contends (Akande, 2020) that there seems to be no rigorous ideological posturing in Another Wives' Revolt. *Another Wife's Revolt* and *Kowode* become not just artistic works, but cultural interventions aimed at unsettling patriarchal discourse and imagining a more inclusive future. While previous feminist readings of African drama (e.g., works by Ogunyemi, Stratton, or Aidoo) often focus on thematic or narrative dimensions, this study extends that body of work by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to dissect how language itself constructs or contests gendered power. This linguistic depth reveals how patriarchy is encoded not just in what is said, but how it is said—through mood, transitivity, modality, and speech functions.

This study significantly extends existing scholarship on gender and African drama by integrating a detailed linguistic analysis with feminist literary critique. It bridges the disciplinary gap between literary studies and

sociolinguistics, presenting drama not only as a site of cultural reflection but as a discursive battlefield where gender ideologies are actively contested. Moreover, the emphasis on collective feminist resistance—through chants, public protest, and strategic solidarity—extends existing feminist scholarship that often focuses on individual empowerment. Finally, by grounding resistance in culturally resonant expressions such as proverbs and communal values, the study affirms the importance of African feminist frameworks like womanism and motherism, offering a contextually nuanced critique that resists both Eurocentric feminism and local patriarchal orthodoxy.

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