CLASSICAL ELEMENTS AND CREATIVE NOVELTY IN SELECTED PLAYS OF EFUA SUTHERLAND, OLA ROTIMI AND WOLE SOYINKA

BAMUTURAKI JULIUS

14/U/12813/GMAL/PE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE OF KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

I, Julius Bamuturaki, declare that this study is a product of my effort and it has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for any formal award. All the cited sources have been acknowledged.

Signature: …….. Date: ……..

JULIUS BAMUTURAKI

ENDORSED ……. Date: ……

BENON TUGUME (PhD)

SUPERVISOR

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family: my tender-loving and caring parents, Gladys Kabasinguzi and Constantine Byamaka, and all the rest of my family members, notably Topista Kabahindi, Kyengonzi Precious, Harry Smith Agonzebwa and Natasha Kyembabazi Odetta. You have been the source of my inspiration!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has come to fruition as a result of the enormous help that I received from various sources, which I now heartily acknowledge. First and foremost, I thank God, the Lord Almighty, Holy and eternal Father, for having blessed me with life and knowledge that have been key to the completion of this work.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Benon Tugume, whose generous guidance and insightful comments greatly encouraged me to accomplish this study. He was always readily available for me and willing to give an extra hand. I am really humbled!

I am equally indebted to all the lecturers in the Literature Department, especially those teaching the Master of Arts in Literature programme, Sr. Dr. Frances Nakiwala, Dr. Patrick Mukakanya and Dr. Dorothy Atuhura for their selfless academic guidance and support.

I am also heartily grateful to the amazing Ryan Family (USA): Barbara Ryan, Rev. Joseph (Skip) Ryan, Christopher, 'crazy' Bekah, Carey Beth and Dr. Paul Catalino for their exceptional 'parental' love, generosity, care and prayers. May the Lord Almighty continue to richly bless your endeavours!

My deep appreciation also goes to the amazing people that I have been lucky to share an office with at Kyambogo University: Ms. Elizabeth Asiimwe, Aisha Nansubuga, Julian Namiyingo, Benjamin Mugume and Rodgers Twasiima. Thank you for everything!

Lastly, but in no way least, I profoundly thank my parents, Gladys Kabasinguzi and Constantine Byamaka, for always being there for me. Their tender-loving-care and confidence in me throughout the course of this study was not only exceptional, but evidence that true parents still live!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed classical elements and creative novelty in selected plays of Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka through a cross-reference to the selected drama of Euripides and Sophocles. The study was guided by three objectives, namely: the underlying classical themes and ideas, literary style and creative novelty in the selected plays. The study was library-based, involving a close reading and analysis of both primary and secondary sources of data through which classical elements and creative in the selected African drama was explained. The primary sources of data were three African plays, Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. Secondary sources were got from book-reviews, articles, reports and journals, and this was supplemented by a close reading of three classical drama texts, namely Euripides' *Alcestis*, *The Bacchae* and Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. The New Historicism literary theory and central notions of intertextuality were used to critically analyse classical themes and ideas, the classical literary style adapted, and the authors' creative novelty. The analyzed data was then organized into five chapters. The findings of the study reveal the influence of classical theories in the construction and production of the drama of Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka. The classical themes include: fate versus freewill, sin and retribution, patriarchy, subjugation of women and misogyny, human suffering and the folly of pride. The classical literary style adapted include: use of the prologue, plot structure and characterization; the creative novelty includes changes in titles, characterization, Africanized themes and use of elements from the African oral tradition. The study recommends that future literary scholars should investigate the role of classical literature in promoting imperialistic agenda in Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study analyses classical elements and creative novelty in three African plays: Efua Theodora Sutherland's *Edufa* (1967), Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are Not to Blame* (1968) and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* (1973). The study makes cross-references to three classical plays, namely, Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 B.C.E) and *The Bacchae* (405 B.C.E), and Sophocles' *King Oedipus* (429-420 B.C.E) to enhance the discussion of the use of classical elements in African drama.

The study mainly engages itself with the underlying classical themes, style and creative novelty in the aforementioned drama of Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka.

1.2 Background to the Study

One of the major defining features of African literature, especially African drama, is the tendency of the African dramatists to infuse, either consciously, or otherwise, western dramatic forms, notably the classical literary elements, with the African traditional performances as a way of narrating both the social and political experiences of their varied contemporary African societies. This style in African literature, generally, and African drama, specifically, is called Classicism.

By classicism, one is probing into the literary style that consciously emulates the forms and subject matter of classical antiquity, and, for the purposes of Western literature, this means Greek and Roman drama, poetic forms like the epic, and literary theory as expounded in

Aristotle's literary treatise, the *Poetics*. Classicism developed during the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras, and continued to shape literature into the 20th century, with the seventeenth century French writers being the first to align with classical standards as part of an organized literary movement.

By the standards of many literary critics, classicism is not necessarily defined by the boundaries of time; however, there are several major periods with which Classicism is generally associated. These periods include the Golden Age of Greece (5th and 4th century BC) that was dominated by the two city-states of Athens and Sparta and in which the flourishing of theatre, especially tragedy and comedy, was witnessed; the Ciceronian Age (q.v.; 70-43 BC) whose political and literary scene was dominated by Marcus Tullius Cicero, a statesman, orator, poet, critic and philosopher who perfected the Latin language as a literary medium through which abstract and complicated thoughts were clearly expressed and eventually gave birth to the qualitative prose rhythm; and the Augustan period (q.v.; 43 BC-AD 18) that started with the imitation of Cicero's prose and later became a period of mature literary achievement by such writers as Virgil, Horace Livy and Ovid. And finally, the Enlightenment periods of France, England, and Germany (17th-18th Centuries) whose writings were critical, reforming and eventually revolutionary. Often times, classicism encompasses all of what is considered neo-classicism, although it ought to be emphasized that the reverse is not considered true.

Both ancient Greek and Roman cultures had definite ideas and attitudes about literature, and the qualities they valued in literary works included: a sense of restraint and of restricted scope, a dominance of reason, a sense of form, and a unity of purpose and design. Clarity was especially important to the Greeks, emphasizing that communication was an act of informational-

transmission between multiple individuals rather than the end result of self-expression by a single individual; the classicists also valued objectivity over passion.

Each classical revival emulated these characteristics differently, for instance, the French classicists stressed reason and intellect, while the English took great interest in form. The Germans, on the other hand, wanted not only to imitate but to surpass the grandeur of the original classics. And, of course, some modern-day literary works also manifest various aspects of the classical traditions, as seen in the works of Thomas Stearns (T.S.) Eliot, though there is less agreement about whether they can truly be described as works of classicism.

It ought to be emphasized that classical literature has had an enormous influence over later literatures in the entire globe. The literatures of Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Africa have thematic and stylistic traces of the classical literary tradition as writers, the world over, have continued to re-invest, re-imagine and appropriate Greco-Roman cultural values and ideals in their literary works. This view is one of the major scholarly standpoints energetically-pursued by Amar Acheraiou (2008) in his critical work, *Rethinking Postcolonialism*: *Colonialist Discourse in Modernist Literature and the Legacy of Classical Writers*, especially in the chapter entitled, "Modern Europe and Classical Connections", especially during the period starting from the late 18th Century, through the early 19th Century, to the late 20th Century. This classical influence on European literary thought, according to Amar, occurs in two phases. Firstly, there is a direct contact between France and Britain through Roman colonialism that saw imperial Rome expand to Northern Europe not only in search of new territories to its Mediterranean-based empire, but also with a desire to have a grip on the riches of Gaul and Britain that subsequently led to the spread of the classical values of rationality,

democracy, order, law and justice. It is, thus, no wonder that famous 18th century British works such as Joseph Addison's *Cato* (1713) and Richard Glover's epic poem, *Leonidas* (1737) that celebrate the virtues of liberty apparently reflect the values of ancient Roman republicanism. Besides Britain, the central position that ancient Rome occupied among the early 18th century French writers and scholars deserve mention. Of particular emphasis is Voltaire (1694-1778) who was seen as the emblem of the 18th century literary thought in France with his immortalization of Marcus Brutus, a Roman statesman, in his play, *Brutus*, that was popular during the French Revolution of 1789. Voltaire's epic poem, *La Henriade* (1728) that celebrates the chivalrous and warrior-ideal was influenced by the *Aeneid*, a Roman epic poem by Virgil, and was to later on earn him the label of the "French Virgil". It should be noted that the Romans were physically present in both the British Isles and France, unlike their Greek counterparts. Hence, the European scholars of the 18th century had insufficient knowledge of ancient Greek culture, the reason why the first phase is characterized by the Romans.

The second phase of the influence of the classical literary world on European intellectual thought, according to Amar Acheraiou (2008), takes place in the late 18th century in which cultural and ideological transformations across Europe saw a significant change in the perceptions about ancient Greece by the British and French writers, literary critics and historians. The writings of German Hellenist scholars such as Johann Joachim Winkelmann (1717-1868), Wilhelm Humboldt (1767-1835) and Goethe (1749-1832) were vital in this phase. The costs of the values, ideas and institutions inherited from the Roman and Christian forced the British and French to look to Greece for alternative cultural patterns. As result, the passion for ancient Greek values and ideals swept over Britain and France from the mid-eighteenth century and continued into the 19th century and early 20th century. For instance, 19th century French Hellenism was

represented by the Parnassian, including such towering literary figures as Theophile Gautier (1811-72), Leconte de Lisle (1818-94), Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) and Stephane Mallarme (1842-98). Ancient Greece, for these writers, was the very embodiment of artistic creation and a "Home of the Muses" to which they returned to draw inspiration. For Britain, ancient Greece was significantly revered in the Romantic Period with such iconic poets of the age as Percy Bysshe Shelly (1792-1822), Lord Byron (1788-1824), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and John Keats (1795-1824) whose image of classical Greece was idyllic: they regarded Greece as a model of beauty, democracy and, above all, as the fount of Western civilization.

The influence of the classical literary world was also greatly felt in nineteenth-century American culture and literary scholarship. Thomson Gale (2006), in his essay, "Classical Literature: American History through Literature 1820-1870", contends that although the ideological basis of nineteenth-century America had a Judeo-Christian outlook, with its strong Protestant heritage and growing evangelical movement, the Greco-Roman tradition survived through the educated Americans' immersion in classical literatures, both original and translated. Right from the onset, Gale further contends, the European settlers had a classical view of the new continent, conceiving it as an "Edenic garden" whose Puritanical notion earned it the label of the "New Canaan". America, was thus, regarded as place that offered a return to the "Golden Age", with its explorers and settlers compared to classical heroes. Moreover, the "founding fathers" consciously molded the Republic of the United States on the Roman Republic, with a capital city built to echo Rome; an enduring iconography of Latin mottos on official seals, and public buildings resembling classical temples, and a goddess called 'Liberty'. Major writers of the American Renaissance or Romantic period include Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), author of *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and *The Mable Faun* (1860), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-

1882) and David Thoreau (1817-1862) whose literary works manifest classical scholarship. American poetry was also influenced by classical literature. For instance, Walt Whitman's 1871 poem, "Son of the Exposition", gives a new twist to the traditional epic invocation of the muses, and points to America as a new and worthier subject for poets than "that matter of Troy". Edgar Allan Poe is another American with an adoration of classical literature. For instance, his popular poem, "Glory to Helen" (1831), shows his awe, veneration and heartfelt gratitude to Greek and Roman traditions: "The glory that was Greece/ And the grandeur that was Rome."

Omolara Kikelomo Owoeye (2013), in his critical essay, "Classical Temper and Creative Ingenuity in Osofisan's Tegonni: An African Antigone", argues that creative writers use existing materials from both literature and mythology in their literary works. He, for instance, cites *King Oedipus*, a Theban play by Sophocles, whose story, though rooted in Greek mythology, had great artistry that many writers exploited in their works. He further cites English writers like Geoffrey Chaucer, John Dryden, John Milton and Alexander Pope as having drawn much from classical mythology in their literary compositions. Therefore, Omolara is of the opinion that the greatest writers of literature have been influenced by "older" literature (122).

Omolara (2013) further views classicism as an enabling tool for African dramatists as it leads to the discovery of a "parallel between the Grecian ways of life and worship and those of the indigenous people of Africa." To concretize his argument, he cites Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian playwright of all times, who in his introduction to *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, notes that "there is a line of similarity between a Greek god and a Yoruba deity" (121).

In line with the use of classical elements in contemporary African drama, Efua Theodora Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka are some of the lead African dramatists whose

classical scholarship has shaped much of their drama, hence, giving it a 'classical flavour'. Before much ado, it is vital that a brief portrait of these three iconic dramatists be given.

1.2.1 Efua Theodora Sutherland

Efua Theodora Sutherland Morgue, born on 27th, June, 1924, is a Ghanaian playwright, poet, director, teacher and children's literature author. After completing her studies at the Teacher Training College in Ghana, Sutherland went to England to do further work at Homerton College, Cambridge, and at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. On returning to Accra, she helped to establish the literary magazine, "Okyeame", founded the Experimental Theatre, which became the Ghana Drama Studio, and directed the University of Ghana's traveling theatre group.

She is, by critical consensus, one of Africa's best early female writers and she is best-known for her famous literary works: *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967), and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). She has also published juvenile literature in the form of children's rhythm plays such as *Vulture, Vulture* and *Tahinta*, which she tried to use in her private grade school.

Driven by the need to express her concern over the place and role of women in contemporary Ghana, specifically, and Africa, generally, Sutherland has been regarded as "the mother" of West African Literature in English, with Donald Herdeck, a famous literary critic, publisher and a one time State Department diplomat, calling her, "Black Africa's most famous woman writer".

Like any lead African dramatist, Sutherland's plays are often based on the African oral tradition, especially African myths and legends, but she also used western sources, such as Euripides and Lewis Carroll.

1.2.2 Ola Rotimi

Emmanuel Gladstone Olawale Rotimi, born on April 13th, 1938, in Sapele, Nigeria, was a renowned Nigerian scholar, playwright, and director. Born to an Ijaw mother and a Yoruba father and was educated in Nigeria in Port Harcourt and Lagos; he traveled to the United States in 1959 to study at Boston University. After receiving a B.A. in fine arts in 1963, he attended the Yale School of Drama (M.A., 1966), concentrating on playwriting. Returning to Nigeria in the 1960s, he taught at the Universities of Ife – now Obafemi Awolowo University, and Port Harcourt. Owing, in part, to political conditions in Nigeria, Rotimi spent much of the 1990s living in the Caribbean and the United States, where he taught at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 2000 he returned to Ile-Ife, joining the Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University.

In his literary works, Ola Rotimi often examines Nigeria's history and ethnic traditions, and some of his famous works include: *To Stir the God of Iron* (1963), *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1966), and *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1968). Ola Rotimi died in 2000.

1.2.3 Wole Soyinka

Born on 13th, July, 1934, Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka is a Nigerian playwright and poet, and the 1986 Nobel Prize for literature award-winner, the first African to win such a coveted award. He was born into a Yoruban family in Abeokuta, Western Nigeria, to Samuel Ayodele Soyinka, an Anglican minister and headmaster of St. Peters School in Abeokuta, and Grace Eniola Soyinka, who owned a shop in the nearby market and a political activist within the women's movement in the local community.

Wole Soyinka attended St. Peters Primary school and the Abeokuta Grammar school prior to joining one of Nigeria's elite secondary schools, Government College in Ibadan, in 1946. He was at University College in Ibadan, an affiliate of the University of London, between 1952-54 where he studied English Literature, Greek and Western History. He also worked for the Nigerian National Broadcasting Service especially on the work, "Keffi's Birthday Treat", which was broadcast in July 1954.

Later in 1954, Wole Soyinka moved to England, where he continued his studies in English literature at the University of Leeds (1954-57) under the mentorship of Wilson Knight. It is at the University of Leeds that he met numerous young, gifted British writers, and before defending his B.A., Soyinka began publishing and worked as an editor for the satirical magazine, "The Eagle", prior to the defence of his B.A.

Soyinka is the undisputed African dramatist of all times – a towering literary force on the African continent and a resoundingly "universal man" who, in the eyes of many literary scholars, has been described as a: poet, playwright, novelist, critic, lecturer, actor, translator, politician and publisher. His art is resoundingly sublime, influenced by a combination of factors which directly or indirectly sharpened Soyinka's dramatic and theatrical vision: they are the Yoruba god of iron, Ogun, his early contact with western and Christian education, communal rites, rituals and festivals; romance and fraternity with the Yoruba travelling theatre troupes; his individual disposition to life; socio-politico, religious, moral and economic problems as well as the western theatrical modes. Specifically, Soyinka's drama has been influenced by, among others, the Irish writer, J.M. Synge, but links up with the traditional popular African theatre with its combination of dance, music, and action. He bases his writing on the mythology of his own tribe, Yoruba,

with Ogun, the god of iron and war, at the centre. Some of his major works include: *The Swamp Dwellers* (1958), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1959), *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1959), *A Dance of the Forest* (1960), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), *Kongi's Harvest* (1964), *The Road* (1965) and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* (1973). His major works in the novel genre include *The Interpreters* (1964) and *Season of Anomy* (1972).

Soyinka has also written great poetry that include the following poetry anthologies: *Idanre and other poems* (1967), *A Big Airplane Crashed Into The Earth* (original title *Poems from Prison*) (1969), *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1971), *Ogun Abibiman* (1976), *Mandela's Earth and other poems* (1988), *Early Poems* (1997), *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known* (2002).

Soyinka's art "blends African with European cultural traditions, the high seriousness of modernist elite literature, and the topicality of African popular theatre."

In short, iconic African playwrights like Efua Theodora Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka have been, in many ways, a brain-child of the rich and long-held Greek and Roman classical literary tradition as they have all, time and again, refigured Greco-Roman literary materials in the contexts of their own classical traditions and in postcolonial contexts: they have used classical referents as a way of exploring their own cultural identities and those of their societies.

In his most famous critical essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Thomas Stearns (T.S) Eliot (1919) points out that no writer has his value and significance in isolation, and so, to judge the work of a poet or an artist, we must compare and contrast his work with the works of poets

and artists in the past; such comparison and contrast is essential for forming an idea of the real worth and significance of a new writer and his work. He thus, states:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his own complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone. You must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all works of art which preceded it. (2440)

Accordingly, Eliot's conception of tradition is a dynamic one: tradition is not anything fixed and static – it is constantly changing, growing, and becoming different from what it is. Therefore, a writer in the present must seek guidance from the past; he must conform to the literary tradition. Hardwick and Stray (2007) argue that the centrality of reception studies to the discipline of classics and ancient history is now more certain than ever, and that, its ability to provide uniquely powerful insights into the ways in which the modern world encounters the ancient is self-evident. They further contend that although the leading scholars in the field recognize that this apparent acceptance should not be taken for granted, new studies are turning their attentions to rigorous discussion, theorization, and conceptualization of "reception".

Marianne McDonald (1999) opines, however, that the classics were often used to further the agenda of European imperialism in Africa. He quotes, for instance, the defense of the French empire in Berlioz's literary work, *Les Troyens* (1863) and Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1865). He is of the argument that *Les Troyens* endorses Dido and Aeneas' conquest over the supposedly inferior African natives during the time of French imperialism in Algeria and Morocco in 1830 and 1844 respectively. In Berlioz's opera, Enee pledges Trojan support and Didon accepts. Enee chooses the imperialistic rhetoric and refers to the 'enemy' as "cette horde immonde d'Africains" – vile horde of Africans, which he asserts will be scattered like sand by the wind

and the army will be driven back to the burning deserts. The imperial chiefs then speak of exterminating this black army. He pursues the point further by asserting that the Roman epic by Virgil, the *Aeneid,* has an imperial model which serves to sore up France's cultural self-justification for its imperial ravages in Africa. The Greek classics, conversely, are rooted in democracy. Hence, the Romans are often used in modern times to represent the values of the state, whereas, the Greeks, and particularly the figures of Antigone and Dionysus, are used to represent the individual, civil rights and freedom.

McDonald further contends that the classics also provide a literature of protest. His argument is that since societies and governments appreciate the values of the classics, people who perceive themselves as oppressed can use it to express their discontent. The result, he argues, is not simply a political tract protesting abuse, but a passionate expression of hopes and fears. In other words, in the same way that the classic can be used to filter personal terror such as fear of death and allow the audience to confront this fear, so can it explicate social and political atrocity so that the audience can finally see what in many cases it would prefer to ignore.

In critically analyzing the overriding prevalence of classicism in African literature, generally, and African drama, specifically, this study takes into account the raging literary debate that ensued between two illustrious classical philosophers and literary critics, Plato and his disciple, Aristotle, regarding the "mimetic" nature of literature as expounded in their critical treatises, the *Republic* and the *Poetics*. Plato views literature as just an "imitation of an imitation", and unlike philosophy, thrice-removed from the ideal-truth, counterfeit and with no moral-purpose to serve a well-run, or better, an "ideal" society. Consequently, with the exception of hymns to the gods and songs in praise of heroes, which must be checked through great censorship, literature should be banished from the "ideal republic". *Republic* (10) features a Socratic-dialogue between Plato

and Ion in which the former could not be more dismissive of the relevancy of literature to a well-run republic:

> [595] 'I think we have certainly founded our city along the right lines in many respects, and especially in relation to poetry.'
>
> 'In what way?'
>
> 'In our refusal to allow poetry which is imitative. For I think it's even obvious that we shouldn't allow it now that we have distinguished between the different parts of the soul …' (40)

The above excerpt is from *Republic* (10) and it should be noted that Plato uses the term "poetry" to mean literature in its entirety: poetry itself, prose and drama. Plato is, thus, the first literary critic ever to acknowledge, though disparagingly, the imitative nature of literature for which he thinks it should be banished from the 'ideal' republic as its imitation is merely counterfeit and lacking the moral purpose that would be beneficial to the "guardians" of a republic.

Relatedly, Aristotle, Plato's avowed adherent, as expounded in his critical treatise, the *Poetics,* could not acknowledge any better his teacher's claim that literature is imitative in nature. It is noteworthy, however, to stress that although Aristotle affirms Plato's imitative aspect of literature, he fundamentally disagrees with him on the nature of imitation and the 'purpose' that literature should serve to society. Unlike Plato who accuses imitative arts of being illusionary, Aristotle, contends that humanity, by nature, delights in imitation, and that artistic imitation is a faithful representation of the object imitated. Hence, according to Aristotle, what is imitated is not only plausible, but also necessary. As for the purpose of literature to society, Aristotle views literature as an autonomous art. This, by critical extension, means that literature is independent of the social, political and religious contexts of its production, and therefore, far from serving a moral purpose, a literary work can delight: "art for art's sake".

From the raging intellectual debate between Plato and his student, Aristotle, as expounded in both the *Republic* and the *Poetics*, it can, thus, be deduced that literature in all its forms and at all times is liable to imitation and it is this imitative nature that has given rise to the prevalence of intertextual dialogues between literary works in the modern era. It suffices to argue, therefore, that there is no such a thing as an exclusively original literature: all literary works are copies of some sort mirroring something, an argument validated by Mustafa Albay and Mustafa Serbes (2017) in "Intertexuality in Literature". They deposit:

> Literature is not the product of a specific nation; rather it is a combination of the experiences of all nations. So to speak, there is inheritance amongst the literary texts all over the world literature. (208)

The above quotation illustrates the notion, long held by both Plato and Aristotle, that literary works are copies of some sort, and therefore, "unoriginal" by nature. There is, thus, a tendency of "intertextual-dialogues" among modern literary texts. In view of the constant communication (intertextual-dialogues) between literary works that render literature, as both Plato and Aristotle contended, a thorough discussion of the concept of 'Intertextuality' is presented here under.

Mohammad Khosravi Shakib (2012), in his "Inevitability of Arts from Inter-texuality", contends that the word, intertextuality, was coined in the late 1960s by Julia Kristeva, an acclaimed French-Bulgarian linguist and literary theorist, in her seminal work, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966). Kristeva views intertextuality as "the literal and effective presence in a text of another text" (1). A text, according to Kristeva, is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (1).

Maria Jesus Martinez-Alfaro (1996), in “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept”, views Julia Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality in such a way that the literary text is “a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products” (268). A literary work is, thus, viewed as an intersection of textual surfaces, rather than a point (fixed meaning); as a dialogue among several writings. He asserts, thus:

> There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems, but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of textual structures. Rejecting the New Critical principle of textual autonomy, the theory of intertexuality, insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole, and so, that it does not function as a closed system. (268)

The argument here is that, literary texts are not merely created out of the author’s mind, but are rather compiled from pre-existing texts. As such, literary texts cannot be divorced from the contexts out of which they are produced. Moreover, it suffices to argue that even Julia Kristeva’s views on intertexuality have intertextual-relations with both Bakhtin’s social context of language in “Discourse in the Novel”, and Ferdinand de Saussure’s system features of language in “Course in General Linguistics” (1974).

More insightful, for this study, regarding the concept of intertexuality in literature are the ideas propounded by Gerard Genette (1930), a famous French structural-literary theorist, in his trilogy: *The Architect*: *An Introduction* (1979), *Palimpsests*: *Literature in the Second Degree* (1982) and *Paratexts*: *Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997). Genette combines the ideas of intertextuality by Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva and comes up with a more comprehensive concept, “Transtextuality”, which, according to Sayyed Ali Mirenayat (2012), in “Gerard Genette and the Categorization of Textual Transcendence”, is a theory of the text that expands the identity of the

text to include its origins and its uses of texts of the past. This, by extension, is yet another validation of the long-held notion that "no text is self-born and every text of the present is an 'inter-text' with something happening between it and a text of the past" (533). Transtextuality, also known as textual transcendence is, therefore, an intertextual relation between a text and other texts which describes the numerous ways a later text prompts readers to read or remember an earlier one. Genette puts forward five categories of transtexual relations, namely, intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architexuality:

Intertextuality, according to Gerald Genette, is the first type of his concept of transtextuality. Genette takes Kristeva's original idea of intertextuality and refines it as "the co-presence of two or more texts in a text" (534). According to Genette, intertextuality includes quotations, plagiarism and allusion. Intertexuality is also sub-divided into three categories: implicit or explicit intertextuality, covert or overt intertextuality, and hidden or open intertextuality. Of these three sub-divisions of intertextuality, Sayyed Ali Mirenayat, et al, remark:

> For the first one, explicit intertextuality expresses overt presence of a text in another text. In clearer word, in this kind of intertextuality, second text's author doesn't intend to hide his/her text's reference (first text) … For the second one, covert intertexuality indicates the hidden presence of a text in another text. In other words, this kind of intertextuality tries to hide its intertexuality reference and this secrecy is not only because of literary necessities, but also it has extra literary reasons. … And for the last one, sometimes the second text's author is not going to hide his/her intertextual, and because of that, he/she uses signs that we can recognize intertextual and even its references. (534)

The above quotation is an illustration of the three sub-divisions of Genette's refined concept of intertextuality as one of the five aspects of his much broader concept of transtextuality.

Paratextuality forms the second type of Genette's theory of transtextuality. The word, "Para", means "outside". A paratext, in this case, refers to all those elements which surround the main body of the text. These include: title, heading, preface, acknowledgement, footnotes,

illustrations, et cetera. According to Genette, therefore, Paratextuality refers to the "relation between a text and its paratext" (534). The paratext is also sub-divided into two: those devices and conventions both within the text, known as the *Peritext*, and those outside the text, known as the *Epitext*. The Peritext includes such elements as titles, prefaces and captions; while the Epitext includes such elements as interviews, publicity, announcements, reviews, private letters, authorial and editorial discourses. Thus, the paratext is the sum of the peritext and epitext. The paratext,

> Performs various pragmatic functions which guide the readers to understand when the text was published, who published it, for what purpose, and how it should or should not be read. (534)

From the above quotation, it can be argued that understanding paratextual elements is vital for a proper interpretation of a literary text. The liminal devices and conventions used in literary texts, both as peritexts and epitexts, have serious meanings that they add to the overall meaning of the text, and so should be taken for granted at one's own peril.

Metatextuality is identified as the third type of Genette's theory of transtextuality, and is defined as the explicit or implicit reference of one text on another text. According Genette, metatextuality "unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it" (535). In other words, the intertextual relation here is implied, rather than being stated, and only understood in what is expressed. Sayyed Ali Mirenayat, et al, views metatextuality as "explicit or implicit critical commentary of one text on another text (535). The example of a metatextual relation can be seen in a book of commentary on a literary text. In metatextuality, commentary, or rather literary criticism, is seen as integral because all texts are written to be read and interpreted (criticized).

Hypertextuality is the fourth type of Genette's theory of transtextuality. Accordingly, hypertextuality refers to any textual-relationship that unites a new text, called the 'hypertext', to an earlier text, called the "hypotext", upon which it is grafted in a manner different from commentary (or literary criticism). Therefore, hypertextuality "represents the relation between a text and a text or genre on which it is based, but which it transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends (including parody, spoof, sequel, translation" (536). Here, Genette's argument is that all texts are "hypertextual", although the existence of a "hypotext" is, sometimes, too uncertain to be the basis for a hypertextual reading, in which case Genette reminds the reader to read the "hypertext" either for its own individual worth or in relation to its hypotext.

Architextuality is, according to Gerard Genette, the fifth type of his theory of transtextuality. Here, the text is designated as part of a genre or genres. The architextual nature of the text includes the thematic and figurative expectations about the text by the reader. Therefore, the reader's expectations and their reception of the work is a key factor. Sayyed Ali Mirenayat, et al, contend:

> Genette call architextuality, the relationship between a work and the genre that work belongs to it. Also, architextuality is the tradition or pool of texts out of which a text of the present emerges. Just as an utterance is an actual realization (parole) of the code of language (langue), similarly any literary text originates out of a tradition of text. (536)

In other words, writers of literary texts are influenced by tradition and that is why literary works are categorized in terms of genres or traditions. These theories of intertextuality as advocated by Gerald Genette complement the main theoretical framework of the study, New Historicism, to enhance perception of the various intertextual-relationships between the selected African plays and the classical plays of Euripides and Sophocles.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The exposure of notable African dramatists like Efua Theodora Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka, among others, to the Western education, generally, and the classical literary tradition, specifically, has had a significant influence on much of their writings; and although it is conceivable to argue that a discussion of the inspiration of an African creative mind should naturally bring into focus the issue of the African oral tradition as a major source of material for such a work, the classical literary tradition has been a uniquely empowering tool for most of these African dramatists. This is evidenced in the dramatists' use of classical referents in their drama not only as a way of exploring their own cultural identities and those of their societies, but also as a way of chronicling the social and political experiences of their varied African societies.

However, much as the contemporary African drama genre has attracted a host of scholars and critics alike, a lot of attention has been on the "Africaness" of the contemporary African dramaturgy, and little is said on the overriding issue of classicism. Therefore, the current study fills the gap by examining how African playwrights, such as Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka skillfully borrow from the classical literary tradition to enrich their drama texts.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study examines classical elements and creative novelty in three selected African drama texts, Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. The selected plays contain salient thematic and stylistic elements of a classical drama, generally, and classical tragedy, specifically, which are the basis of the research. The study applies the New Historicism literary theory and central postulations of Gerald Genette's intertextuality in examining the classical elements and creative novelty in the selected plays.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1.5.1 General Objective

The main objective of the study is to examine classical elements and creative novelty in African drama.

The Specific objectives are:

1. To examine the underlying classical themes and ideas in the selected plays.

2. To analyse the classical style adapted by the selected African authors in their plays.

3. To examine the authors' creative novelty in the selected plays.

1.6 Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that, although ornamented with ingenious craft and African novelty, the thematic and stylistic elements of Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are Not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* are major African adaptations of the classical literary tradition of Euripides and Sophocles.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study applies the New Historicism literary theory to analyse classical elements and creative novelty in the selected African plays. Using the philosophy of Michel Foucault, especially his belief that any discourse represents the cultural hegemony, and not the individual thought of the author, New Historicism literary theory was developed in the 1980s by Stephen Greenblatt in his famous work, *The Power of Forms and the Forms of Power in the Renaissance* (1982), as a reaction against the fundamental tenets of its predecessor critical theory, (Russian) Formalism or (Anglo-American) New Criticism, that a literary text is an autotelic artifact: a literary text is an

end itself, or its own justification. In other words, a literary work, according to New Criticism (Formalism), is viewed as something best understood separately from its social or political context, and even from the context of everyday language and identity, making the text, as Simon Malpas and Paul Wake (2013) contend, a " verbal icon or well-wrought urn that is self-enclosed, self-sufficient, cut-off from the day today interests of the world, and whose meaning can be gleamed from an understanding of the formal interactions of the poetic or naratorogical devices it employs" (67).

Although New Criticism (Formalism) suspected history, considered it ill-disposed to literature and put strong emphasis on the autonomy of the literary work to shield it from the encroachment of the outside world, New Historicism literary theory, acknowledging the dynamic interplay between the literary and social worlds, emphasizes the importance of history in the fabric of the literary work. New Historicism literary theory, thus, necessitates the interpretation (analysis) of a literary work with a keen interest in the socio-cultural and historical events that are involved in building the literary work. This is based on the assumption that every literary text is a result of the historical event that created it. A key aspect of the New Historicism literary theory, as Louis Advian Montrose, one of its key proponents contends is the "historicity of literature" and the "textuality' of history". The textuality of history refers to the idea that history is a narrative that is constructed and fictionalized; while the historicity of literature refers to the literary text's tendency to be embedded within the socio-political conditions of its production and interpretation. Simon Malpas and Paul Wake (2013), co-editors of *The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*, could not be more elaborate about the historical aspect of literature. They assert:

> … New Historicism insists that texts are part of the everyday, are firmly embedded in the institutions and power relations of general culture, that there is no separate realm of poetic utterance, and that such formal isolation drains literature and culture of any political or social importance. Only by refusing to separate artistic expression from other forms of social and cultural interaction, new historicism have argued, can art or literature come to be meaningful or important to us all (67).

In other words, because literature has a tendency to mirror the times of its production, its interpretation should have a historical context: a literary work cannot be divorced from the historical context of its production.

The main tenet of the New Historicism literary approach, therefore, is to find meaning in a literary text by placing the work within the framework of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. Thus, the new historicist literary critic studies a literary work in its wider historical context by examining how the writer's times affected the work, and how the literary work reflects the writer's times; in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts shape the critic's suppositions about the work. In addition to Stephen Greenblatt, other notable proponents of the New Historicism literary approach include, Jonathan Goldberg, Edward Pechter, Louis Advian Montrose and Jean Howard.

The fluid nature of literary criticism is such that there is no single critical theory that can lay absolute claim in exhaustively deciphering all the artistic draperies of a literary work. This study, therefore, complements the tenets of New Historicism literary theory with insightful ideas on intertextual-relations espoused by Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Gerard Genette to analyse classical elements and creative novelty in the selected drama of Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka.

1.8 Review of Related Literature

Uwem Affiah and Ndubuisi Osuagwu (2012), in their critical essay, "Ethnodramatics: Towards a Theory for Indigenous African Drama", decry the tremendous scholarly energy that has been invested in denigrating the existence of indigenous or traditional African drama. Specifically, they pinpoint literary scholars like M. J. C. Echeruo (1981) who dismisses African drama as a mere ritual that is forced to yield a story, Kalu Uka (1973) who disparagingly calls African drama "properly and essentially elements of drama" (6), and Ruth Finnegan (1970) who calls African 'native' drama as not being typically wide-spread or even developed in form. Such scholarly remarks, according to Affiah and Ndubuisi, are not only unfair to African drama, but are also meant to "de-indigenize" or "de-traditionalize" it. Perhaps most irritating to Affiah and Ndubuisi is the general tendency by literary critics, even Africans, to analyse African drama using "western" critical postulations. They assert:

> It is important to note that the Aristotelian postulations on drama were actually descriptive of what Sophocles had done. They were not meant to be prescriptive. Sadly, however, succeeding scholars and critics have since hallowed and made them universal. Concomitantly then, even African scholars like Echeruo and Uka would seem to agree that Greek culture should be transplanted to Africa. (6)

Affiah and Ndubuisi have, no doubt, presented themselves as great advocates for the recognition of, and by extension, the respect for, African drama as an autonomous mode of literary production, and their passion to have the concept of drama domesticated by establishing genuine, or better, afro-centric critical standards for indigenous African drama should be applauded. However, they ought to have been humble enough to acknowledge the mimetic nature and universality of literary works, especially how African drama has greatly benefited from the infusion of elements from the African oral tradition with classical referents to authoritatively chronicle African major concerns. Therefore, the present study shows how an African creative

mind can be immensely resourceful for an African audience by a skillful adaption of western literary works, especially classical drama, while retaining his Africanness.

Tony Simoes da Silva (2005), in his essay, "Myths, Traditions and Mothers of the Nation: Some Thoughts on Efua Sutherland's Writing", first and foremost, recognizes Sutherland as not only one of Ghana's towering literary figures, but also a hugely influential dramatist on the African literary scene who possessed a rare artistic skill of effectively incorporating western (Greek) theatre with the elements of the African oral tradition such as storytelling, proverbs, myths and folktales. He, however, runs the argument that much as there is considerable critical work devoted on Sutherland's work, she astonishingly remains little known outside the specialist fields of African literature, and indeed theatre, especially when compared with the critical reviews of her Ghanaian literary compatriots such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Joe C. De Graft and Kofi Anyidoho. To concretize his argument, da Silva remarks:

> …Clearly, then, it is wise not to overdo this dearth of critical attention on Sutherland's writing and work, not least because she is not alone here. To suggest that scholarly research on African women writers pales in comparison to the attention devoted to that of their male counterparts is not too far-fetched a proposition, especially when we consider the sheer weight of critical writing on a few authors such as Achebe, Soyinka and Coetzee, for instance…(256)

In the above quotation, Simoes da Silva expresses his dissatisfaction with, what in his thinking, is the limited critical attention that has been given to the work of Efua Sutherland, despite the enormous influence it has had on the works of others. This, however, is contrasted to the enormous critical energies devoted to male African writers like Achebe, Soyinka and Coetzee. I could not agree any more with da Silva's lamentations about the scanty criticism on the work of one of Africa's most popular female writer, Sutherland. Her contribution to the African literary scene is remarkably grand and she deserves more scholarly attention, much like her male African

literary counterparts, and her Ghanaian literary compatriots. The current study, thus, fills the gap by incorporating a selected work of Sutherland with those of Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka in the critical analysis of the use of classical elements and creative novelty so as to add on the scantly existing critical views on the work of Efua Sutherland.

Idowu Odebode and Cynthia Eke-Opara (2015), in their "Ethnography of Communication in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*: A Pragmatic Study", contend that although there are a variety of critical studies on Ola Rotimi's famous play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, none, according to the them, had taken into account the analysis of the play by using Dell Hyme's Ethnography of Communication, apparently a theoretical framework that unravels the in-depth textual resources by subjecting a literary work to a pragmatic approach and taking into consideration of its usage of language in context. The current study on Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is, however, designed to show how the play, through New Historicism literary theory, complimented by central notions of Gerard Genette's ideas of intertextuality, effectively uses language to bring out the ethnic distrust and tribal animosity that befell the Nigerian society shortly after her independence.

Robert Baker-White (1993), in his critical essay, "The Politics of Ritual in Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*" dismisses Havelock's analysis of Wole Soyinka's classical adaptation, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, as "leading to towards understanding Euripides' drama as at least, in part, a locus of tension between the vanishing mode of collective ritual process…" (381). His opinion, thus, is that viewing the rise of drama as part of this transition raises serious questions about identifying Euripides' play, the *Bacchae*, as a programme for ritual action. He pursues his argument further by claiming that Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, "must be understood not only as an artistic *tour de force*, but also within the

context of Soyinka's identity as a political playwright." Of course in the introduction, he accuses Soyinka of radically-remaking ancient drama. He asserts:

> The title page of Wole Soyinka's adaptation announces a contradiction: *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. Euripides' *Bacchae* is a play, not a rite. Transforming this classical text from one form of cultural phenomenon into another raises fascinating questions about plays, rites and the Bacchae, but at the outset, Soyinka has made an extravagant claim by labeling the text as Euripides' and then adding the new descriptive tag. (377)

As the above quotation illustrates, Robert Baker-White is obviously dissatisfied with the ending of Soyinka's adapted play. In the retelling of the play, Soyinka has had to abandon the ending of the original and create a new ending, much to the annoyance of Robert Baker-White and the like. However, in his analysis of Soyinka's adapted play, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, a lacuna exists. Whereas Robert Baker-White is 'unhappy' with the ending of the adapted play, and rightly identifies the iconic Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka, as a "political playwright", he either unconsciously, or deliberately, overlooks the fact that Soyinka is a towering literary figure who does not merely imitate classical writings without a blend of African creative novelty. Such an issue of novelty that a critic like Robert Baker-White seems to ignore has been addressed by this study.

Brain Crow (1983), in *Studying Drama*, especially on the section of "Popular ideas on tragedy", makes very critical ideas regarding the concept of tragedy in modern drama. He, first of all, acknowledges the predominant ideas about tragedy as put forward by Aristotle in his literary treatise, the *Poetics*. He states that Aristotelian tragedy,

> Shows the fall of a great man because of some flaw in his otherwise impressive character, ending usually in the sadness of his death. Witnessing his downfall, and becoming emotionally involved in it, we experience a mixture of pity and fear by means of which emotions we are spiritually "purged" or "cleansed". (124)

The above quotation is Brian's paraphrase of the Aristotelian, or rather, classical definition of a tragedy. He, however, advances a very crucial argument when he says that he would regard a play from any kind of culture to be described as a tragedy. He supports his argument by using Arthur Miller's American play, *Death of a Salesman*, which he calls a "tragedy of a common man and of modern urban societies", that he believes upset central traditional notions of what a tragedy should be. To validate his "qualification" of Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*, as a tragedy, he quotes Arthur Miller in his *Introduction to Collected Plays* (31):

> It is now many centuries since Aristotle lived. There is no more reason for falling down in a faint before his *Poetics* than before Euclid's geometry, which has been amended numerous times by men with new insights … Things do change, and even a genius is limited by his time and the nature of his society. (125)

In the above quotation, Brian Crow's point of departure is that whatever the relevance of Aristotle's views of tragedy to his own time and place, and whatever its continuing relevance to the modern period, we cannot use it as a universally applicable 'definition' covering all possible experiences of tragedy, for the simple reason that this would be to ignore the social and historical dimension pointed out by Miller and others.

As I had earlier pointed out, Brian Crow's arguments on Aristotelian tragedy and the need for novelty in an attempt to contextualize, and perhaps, modernize tragedy, are vitally important for modern drama. The weakness in his arguments, however, is that much as he refers to Arthur Miller as one notable playwright with great modification (novelty) on the classical idea of tragedy, he is not clear enough on the "others" who have been at the forefront of remaking ancient tragedy. This study has filled in such a gap by examining the "others" such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and Efua Theodora Sutherland's remaking of tragedy, especially in the African context. The current study fills in that gap.

Marianne McDonald (1999) argues that the classics were often used to further the agenda of European imperialism in Africa. He quotes, for instance, the defense of the French empire in Berlioz's literary work, *Les Troyens* (1863) and Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (1865). His argument is that *Les Troyens* endorses Dido and Aeneas' conquest over the supposedly inferior African natives during the time of French imperialism in Algeria and Morocco in 1830 and 1844 respectively. In Berlioz's opera, Enee pledges Trojan support and Didon accepts. Enee chooses the imperialistic rhetoric and refers to the 'enemy' as "cette horde immonde d'Africains" – vile horde of Africans, which he asserts will be scattered like sand by the wind and the army will be driven back to the burning deserts. The imperial chiefs then speak of exterminating this black army. He pursues the point further by asserting that the *Aeneid*, a Roman epic by Virgil, has an imperial model which serves to soar up France's cultural self-justification for its imperial ravages in Africa. The Greek classics, conversely, are rooted in democracy. Hence, the Romans are often used in modern times to represent the values of the state, whereas, the Greeks, and particularly the figures of Antigone and Dionysus, are used to represent the individual, civil rights and freedom.

In regard to the colonial agenda in Africa, no one can dispute Marianne McDonald's argument that the classics, like any other forms of western literary enterprise, were bound to foster European imperialistic motives in Africa, and indeed, anywhere else where European colonialism was manifest. However, McDonald runs the risk of being dismissed as being too fanatically Afro-centric for much as the plays show textual traces of colonialism, the thematic and stylistic features of *Les Troyens*, *L'Africaine* and such other plays like *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* are great illustrations of the

classical influences on African drama, especially through the theories of intertextuality and New Historicism literary theory.

Patrice D. Rankine (2012), in his critical essay, “Black is, Black ain’t: Classical Receptions and Nothingness in Ralph Ellison, Derek Walcott and Wole Soyinka”, argues that given the ever-present dichotomy between black and white, there is a fixation, unsurprising, though, on an unusual aspect of classical literature when analyzing the literary works of such post-colonial authors as Ralph Ellison, Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott, arguing that each of the three aforementioned authors, in one way or the other, “must come to terms with the light of western civilization” (458). His argument in this essay is that, blackness, which he calls “nonbeing” or “nothingness” (and a creative muck!), is one of the key ideas that shape these authors’ literary projects. In pursuant of his argument, he asserts:

> My idea that, particularly when it comes to the classics, Ellison, Soyinka, and Walcott can be viewed through blackness, runs counter to much chatter regarding them (sometimes generated by the authors themselves) as hybrid. … Blackness, both as chaos and as historical phenomenon that leaves its mark on bodies, is an important contribution of these authors to the study of the classics. (450)

Although I strongly agree with Patrice D. Rankine that the concept of “blackness” profusely features in most literary works by postcolonial writers, Soyinka inclusive, African writers have also been at the centre of remarking world literature through their adaptations. The fact that postcolonial African writers like Soyinka have even been honoured with the Nobel Prize award is testament that their works should not just be narrowed to one single aspect of “blackness.” Aside from analyzing Wole Soyinka adapted play, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* among other African plays through “blackness”, this study brings out the thematic and stylistic classical overtones in the selected plays.

Christopher Kirunda (2010), in his PhD thesis, *Hybridity and Christopher Okigbo's Poetry*, and particularly on his discussion of "Voices, Concerns and Influence: Hybridity and the African Poet", affirms the role of classical literature to contemporary African literature. His argument is that the latter draws from both the former and African folklore. He, however, makes a critical argument in his assertion that:

> While much as contemporary literature draws on the classics and folklore, both elements are not generally as dominant and almost equally weighted as the classical and contemporary literary influences are in Okigbo's poetry. (8)

Christopher Kirunda's passion for classical literature, generally, and Okigbo's poetry, specifically, is remarkable to the extent that the distinguished Ugandan novelist, poet and literary critic, Timothy Wangusa, commends his PhD thesis as a "labour of love by Christopher on Christopher" (xi). Although I profoundly agree with Kirunda that classical literature and the African oral tradition have had an immense influence on the poetry of Christopher Okigbo, I find his argument that the classics and folklore are more "dominant" and "weighted" in Okigbo's poetry either an obsession with Okigbo's poetry, or a deliberate attempt to overlook other literary works that have been greatly shaped by both the classics and African folklore. The current study, thus, investigates how modern African playwrights, such as Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka showcase their creative ingenuity by enriching their selected drama with both classical referents and elements from the African oral tradition.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This research is significant in that it presents a critical analysis of the seemingly complex concept of classicism in African drama. The study offers an in-depth analysis of the use of classical referents such as classical themes and style in the selected African drama texts to show

a parallelism between the Greek and African modes of life, thereby bringing out the idea of a shared-humanity between classical Greece and Africa, despite the time and distance.

Of significance also, is the critical analysis made on the salient areas in which the African playwrights, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka, depart from the classical literary tradition in their attempt to enrich their creative productions. The study posits that much as the three African playwrights borrow from the classical tradition, they add novelty to the classical literary tradition and tailor it for relevance to an African audience, thereby showcasing remarkable artistic ingenuity.

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Research Design

The study was mainly library-based and a qualitative research approach was used to critically analyze both primary and secondary sources of data.

1.10.2 Primary Sources

In this study, the primary sources of data were got from the three selected African plays, Efua Theodora Sutherland's *Edufa*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. The selection of the above three African plays was because they contain striking thematic and stylistic elements of a classical drama, generally, and classical tragedy, specifically.

1.10.3 Secondary Sources

Secondary data was also used in this study and this was got from book-reviews, articles, reports and journals. Also, the researcher read and critically analysed classical plays that have been

adapted by the three African playwrights. The three classical plays are Euripides' *The Bacchae*, *Alcestis*, and Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. The secondary sources were aimed at enhancing the researcher's interpretation of the primary sources.

1.10.4 Data Collection Methods

In this study, data was collected using different qualitative data collection methods such as close reading and in-depth analysis of both primary and secondary literary works. Through close reading and critical analysis of literary texts, documentary reviews and discussions, the researcher derived and explained findings regarding the thematic and stylistic classical elements and creative novelty in the selected African drama texts.

1.10.5 Procedures for Data Processing and Analysis

In this study, data was processed and analyzed by using the New Historicism literary theory and the central concepts of intertextuality. In line with the concept of classical elements and creative novelty, the selected literary works were read and critically analyzed and guided by the research objectives, the underlying classical themes, style, and the novelty added to the classical literary tradition by the three dramatists in question were critically examined. Both direct and indirect quotations were used to amply illustrate the arguments raised in the study.

The processed and analyzed data was then organized in five chapters: chapter one is introduction and background to the study; chapter two is analysis of the underlying classical themes and ideas in the selected plays; chapter three is the classical style adapted by the authors; chapter four is the novelty that playwrights have added to the classical literary tradition, and lastly, chapter five presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

1.11 Definition of Key Terms

Adaptation: a literary composition that has been recast into a new form.

African drama: drama written by Africans in Africa dramatizing African issues such as suffering, colonialism, poverty, et cetera.

Classicism: The term is used in this study to refer to the following of ancient Greek or Roman principles and style in art and literature, generally associated with harmony, restraint, and adherence to recognized standards of form and craftsmanship.

Drama: a literary composition that tells a story, usually of human conflict, by means of dialogue and action to be performed by actors.

Elements: in this study, the term elements refer to features or overtones of classical drama in African drama.

Intertextuality: this study upholds Gerard Genette's broader perspective on Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality as "all that sets the text in a relation, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts." (533)

Literary theory: the vantage point or lens through which a person interprets a given literary text.

Tragedy: a serious drama (or play) dealing with tragic events, especially one with a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion that elicits pity or fear for the main character.

CHAPTER TWO

CLASSICAL THEMES AND IDEAS

2.1 Introduction

Christopher Baldick (2001) in, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms,* defines a theme as a "salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject matter; or a topic recurring in a number of literary works" (258). Becky Villarreal (2001), on the other hand, defines a theme as the central idea, dominant impression or the universal, generic truth found in the story.

Simply put, therefore, the theme of a literary work refers to the central topic or idea that such a literary work treats: it is the writer's major point of concern or basic recurrent idea that he wants his reader (s) to grasp. Usually, the theme of a literary work is implied.

Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs (1989) in *Literature*: *An Introduction to Reading and Writing*, define an idea as a "word now commonly understood to refer to a concept, thought, opinion, or belief" (363). In literary works, therefore, an idea simply refers to the writer's view or conclusion drawn from the theme. It should be noted that the theme of a literary work and its central idea may be considered as synonyms.

This chapter espouses the classical notion propounded by both Plato and Aristotle that literary works are, by nature, imitative, or copies of earlier creative works, which are themselves already copies. Using New Historicism literary theory and modern ideas of intertextuality as advanced by Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette, the study contends that the selected African plays, Efua Sutherland's *Edufa,* Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite,* have a conspicuous intertextual thematic-relationship with such

classical drama texts as Euripides' *Alcestis*, *The Bacchae* and Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, respectively. This intertextual-relationship is brought to the fore by the selected African plays' dramatization of classical themes for the African stage. The classical themes include: Fate versus freewill, Sin and retribution, patriarchy, misogyny and the subjugation of women, the folly of pride and ambition, human suffering and acceptance of moral responsibility.

2.2 Fate versus Freewill

Hanna M. Roisman (2014), in "The Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy", views fate as an "English word that roughly approximates the semantic range of the Greek term, *Moira*, which is strictly apportionment or lot or apportioning agent." Moira refers to "a divine agent that apportions destinies, sometimes in co-operation with other deities or principles" (1).

Morgens Brondsted (1967) in "The Transformations of the Concept of Fate in Literature" defines fate as, "an unalterable universal order, more or less moral in its basic character, with or without the co-operation of the gods. … External power which decisively controls human life; an arbitrary spiritual will behind all events; fixed destiny, perhaps even superior to the gods" (172).

Paolo Gaibazz and Marco Godin (2015) in "The Work of Fate and Fortune in Africa: Critical African Studies", define fate as "a scheme of things designed at a higher, non-human cosmic level (by gods, ancestors, etc.) thought to partly or wholly determine the course of human existence and worldly events."

Simply put, therefore, Fate presupposes a lack of choice by man in the occurrence of something already predetermined for him by a higher-power. It is the power or force that determines the course of events and is beyond human control: this power is so supernatural that it is believed to have control over everything that happens, and it can neither be stopped nor changed by man.

Freewill, on the other hand, refers to man's ability to make his own (personal) decisions, usually on the basis of human propriety and probability, without necessarily being under the control of a supernatural force.

It should be noted that since the classical literary period had a firm belief in the 'external-power', it is less surprising that Sophocles and Euripides, the lead playwrights of the age, highly featured fate as a major thematic aspect in their drama works. In the classical literary period, generally, and Greek mythology, specifically, people had a firm belief in fate that was not only considered to be beyond man's control, but that it also determined the course of events in the ancient Greek society. For the Greeks, everything in life apparently happened for a reason, and the path they led in life was prescribed for them by forces far beyond their control. This classical concept of "an unalterable universal order" or the deterministic motif profusely features in such African literary works as *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* by Sutherland, Rotimi and Soyinka, respectively, as a probable reminder to the African audience that although man should have a sense of duty and is sometimes influenced by masculine egoism due to the predominantly patriarchal nature of African societies, the vagaries of life in African societies, much like in classical Greece, are beyond his (man's) control.

The prevalence of the concept of fate in the African tradition is perhaps more captured by Nelson Udoka Ukwamedua and Victor Omokpo (2016) in their abstract to *The Ontology of Destiny and Freedom among the Igbo-African*: *A Discourse in Existential Metaphysics*. They argue:

> The tripartite issue of determinism, freedom and destiny are topical and recurrent issues of wonder in African philosophy. This is predicated on the premise that the African has his origin and existence deeply-rooted in the world beyond, that is the metaphysical world. …This explains why forces and divinities play a critical role in their (Africans') mode of existence. In view of the reality of the interplay and relationship that exists between the African and his worlds, at times, the African

> is in dilemma whether his life-actions and end has been destined/predestined even before birth by a higher being either to succeed or to fail. (272)

In the above quotation, the concept of fate or pre-ordained destiny in influencing the "life-actions" and "ends" of the African, much like in the classical period, is of great emphasis. Fate, therefore, as was the case in classical Greece, is a key aspect in the lives and existence of Africans, and this partly explains why it is a major thematic concern in the African drama texts under scrutiny.

In Efua Sutherland's play, *Edufa*, the classical theme of Fate versus Freewill is dramatized in a hypertextual mode of transtextuality. Edufa, the eponymous character, is a modern, wealthy and popular Ghanaian man whose obsession with the elongation of his life prompts him to consult a diviner, the African (Ghanaian) equivalent of the Greek oracle, so that he may learn of his fate, or simply the days he still has to live. Edufa's fate, as foretold by the diviner, is that his death is imminent, but that his death (fate) could be averted by having someone else, actually a member of his own family, die in his stead to which his wife, Ampoma, unwittingly swears when apparently none of Edufa's family members, notably his parents, is willing to die for him. Ironically, after Ampoma's unwitting declaration of self-sacrifice for her husband's life, things take a terrible turn for Edufa's once jovial household as Ampoma becomes seriously sick, bedridden, too frail to even walk on her own, and in fact, on the verge of death, despite the attempts of her continuous bathing of herbs and incense-burning in the home. Things are, indeed, worse for Edufa to the extent that his father, Kankam, who had furiously left the latter's home three years ago, retraces his footsteps to his son's home to reprimand his son for Ampoma's state of lifelessness. Of course the eventual death of Ampoma and Edufa's subsequent degeneration into a mental-psychosis seal the fate in the play. The issue of divination in the African tradition

becomes key in understanding the concept of one's fate, and this is revealed in the dialogue between Edufa and his father, Kankam, in Act Three, Scene Four:

> EDUFA … What do you want, I say?
>
> KANKAM (*With terrible self-control*) The life of your wife, Ampoma, from you.
>
> EDUFA (*Very nervous*) And you mean by that?
>
> [*KANKAM only stares at him*] What makes me keeper of her life?
>
> KANKAM Marriage, and her innocent love. [*A chilly pause*] Oh, I know it all, Edufa. You cannot hide beyond impudence and lies; not with me. Diviners are there for all of us to consult. [*EDUFA winces.*] And deeds done in secret can, by the same process, be brought to light.
>
> EDUFA You know nothing. Diviners! Ho! Diviners? What have diviners got to do with me?
>
> KANKAM That, you must tell me. I believe in their ancient art. I know, at least, that Ampoma is sick, and could die. It has been revealed to me that she could die. And why? That you might live. (109)

In the above dialogue, Sutherland effectively brings out the "historicity" of her play by dramatizing the consultation of diviners, a common practice among the Akan people of Ghana, specifically, and Africa, generally. Here, the diviners function as the equivalents of the ancient Greek Oracles. As was the case in classical Greece, the Akan people of Ghana (Africa), and of Sutherland's time, specifically, had their own way of knowing the unknown, and so people would consult diviners in a bid to learn of their fate or what the future held for them. This is exactly what Edufa and his father, Kankam, have done: they both consult diviners so as to know the mysteries of life. The dialogue between Admetus and his father, Pheres, about the power of fate in the Greek hypotext, Euripides' *Alcestis*, could not be more equivalent:

ADMETUS … Yet it had been a beautiful deed in you to die for your son, and short indeed was the time left you to live. She and I would have lived out our lives, and I should not now be here alone lamenting my misery. You enjoyed all that a happy man can enjoy – you passed the flower of your age as a king, …

PHERES My son, do you think you are pursuing some hireling Lydian or Phrygian with your taunts? … I indeed begot you, and bred you up to be lord of this land, but I am not bound to die for you. … But you – you strove shamelessly not to die, and you are alive, you shirked your fate by killing her. (28)

In the above excerpt, Admetus, the Greek equivalent of Edufa, and his father, Pheres, the Greek equivalent of Kankam, argue over the death of Alcestis, the equivalent of Sutherland's Ampoma, which is the fate of the play. Earlier in the play, we are told that Admetus was fated to die young for his insolence to Artemis, the Greek goddesses of the hunt, who had enormously contributed to his success in the bridal contest for Alcestis, but whom he had overlooked during the offering of his marital sacrifices. However, through the intercession of Phoebus Apollo, Admetus was allowed to shift his fate to his wife, Alcestis, after none of his family members, notably his father, Pheres, was willing to die in his stead. Here, much like in Sutherland's *Edufa*, we are presented with a moving historical dramatization of how the Greek gods and goddesses had vested interests in human affairs and so human beings would simply do as dictated by the deities, transgression of which would come at a great cost.

As already indicated, the treatment of fate in both *Edufa* and *Alcestis* has a hypertextual aspect as far as transtextuality is concerned. According to Gerard Genette, hypertextuality works in such a way that the hypertext or the new text, *Edufa* in this case, makes modifications on the hypotext or the source-text, Euripides' *Alcestis*, in the dramatization of the same theme, fate. Both texts, therefore, dramatize the theme of fate in a slightly different manner to suit the best interests of their audiences.

In a more historical perspective of the Akan people, or better still, Ghana of Sutherland's time, it should also be noted that like in classical Greece, the Akan people of Ghana believed that one's fate could be averted, hence, choice or freewill. As already seen, when the diviner tells Edufa that his death (fate) is imminent, but would be averted if he gets someone from his family to die in his place, Edufa makes an attempt to avert his imminent fate by cunningly asking who of his family members loved him enough to die for him, to which his loyal wife, Ampoma, unsuspectingly swore to ironically escalate his fate. In the attempt to have this imminent fate averted, the dialogue between Edufa and his father, Kankam, is insightful:

KANKAM That's alright, my man. Most of us consult diviners for our protection. All men need to feel secure in their inmost hearts.

EDUFA I am not all men. I am emancipated.

KANKAM As emancipated as I'll show. Your diviner saw death hanging over your life – a normal mortal condition, I could think. But what happened, coward, what happened, when he said you could avert the danger by the sacrifice of another life?

EDUFA He lies.

KANKAM Who? Has that not been heard before? Has that not been said to many of us mortal men? Why were you not content, like all of us, to purge your soul by offering gifts of cola and white calico to the needy, and sacrificing a chicken or a sheep, or, since you can afford it, a cow?

EDUFA Are you alright, father?

KANKAM Beasts are normal sacrifices, but surely, you know they are without speech. Beasts swear no oaths to die for others, Edufa. … (109-110)

The above excerpt illustrates how Edufa willed to learn of what the future held for him by consulting from the diviner. On learning from the diviner that the future was not good for him

since death was to soon knock at his door, but also that the danger could be averted by "sacrificing another life", Edufa sacrifices his own wife, Ampoma. The dialogue between Edufa and his wife, Ampoma, illustrates this:

AMPOMA Don't speak of it. I have strayed into the cold. Yet, how good that I should not be the one to live beyond your days. I could not live where you were not. I could not live without you, my husband.

EDUFA Ah, loving wife.

AMPOMA Yes. That is the truth. I have loved you.

EDUFA You have. And I have you still to fill my days with joy. [*He puts his arms around her protectively*.]

AMPOMA [*Looking sadly at him*] I am dying too young, don't you think? Look at me. [*She rises abruptly*] What am I saying? We knew this day could come. Am I listening to the lure of his voice at this final stage? Weakening at the closeness of his flesh? [*To EDUFA*] Help me. Take your arm away from me. Why do you restrain me at your peril? (104)

From the above dialogue, we get to know of how Ampoma's selfless decision to die in her husband's stead, innocently though, was out of sheer love for the husband, Edufa. Ampoma would not fathom living without her husband. On the other hand, Edufa chooses to let his wife die for him so that he may live longer. He really wills to have his fate averted, although he later on discovers what a futile attempt averting fate is. It can, thus, be deduced that the futility of trying to avert fate is both universal and historical.

Furthermore, in regard to freewill (choice), Edufa thinks he can save her wife, Ampoma, from her impending death. Edufa's sister, Abena, and their home matron, Seguwa, have to spend sleepless nights preparing herbs that Edufa thinks will rescue his wife from the misery of death. Even Kankam, Edufa's father, thinks Ampoma could still be saved if Edufa denounces the oath.

EDUFA Rest. My wife, Ampoma, is not dying.

KANKAM If she does not die it will be by the intervention of some great power alone. An oath once sworn will always ride its swearer. But there might still be a chance to save her.

EDUFA Indeed, in this age, there are doctors with skills enough to sell for what's ailing her, and I can pay their fees.

KANKAM (*Pleading*) Confess and denounce your wrong. Bring out the evil charm. And before Ampoma and all of us whose souls are corporate in this household, denounce it. Burn it. The harm may not be irrevocably done if we raise the prayer of our souls together. (112)

As already noted, Edufa's father, Kankam, firmly believes how greatly powerful an oath from a diviner is: "it will always ride its swearer" (112), he says. However, he also believes that if something is done, the power of the oath can be somehow checked, the reason why he wants his son, Edufa, to denounce it before his wife and the rest of the family members. This, however, seems delusional from the old man. The oath has been sworn with strong charms, and therefore, Edufa has signed a pact with the devil. Diviners always speak in double-tongues, and perhaps, this partly explains why Edufa does not denounce it: he knows that the pact is sealed!

At the end of the play, Edufa, rather theatrically brags of his conquering prowess as he roars that he will bring Ampoma back to life:

CHORUS She is dead. [*They rush into EDUFA'S rooms*.]

SENCHI [*With infinite sadness*] There, Edufa, there … don't rave so. No … not this. [*He attempts to hold him again*.]

EDUFA [*Wrenching himself free*] The last laugh will be mine when I bring her home again. I will bring Ampoma back. Forward, to the grave. [*He moves in strength towards courtyard, roaring*.] I will do it. I am a conqueror! [*His last word, however, comes as a great questioning lament*.] (156)

The day Edufa made his wife, Ampoma, to swear dying in his stead is the day Ampoma's death, and by extension, Edufa's fate, was sealed. One cannot eat his cake and have it again: Edufa ate

his cake the day he tricked his wife into swearing that powerful oath. He will never have her again, bragging though he may. He is simply putting up a show typical of the last kicks of a dying horse! Edufa's futile attempt to have his fate averted is a timeless reminder to all of us that fate is inescapable. In fact, the more we try to run away from our fate, the more we actually edge closer to it. More so, the unsuccessful attempt to have Ampoma's life brought back through the constant bathing of herbs and incense-burning is also another reminder that freewill is delusional. The historicity here is that, as freewill was as delusional in classical Greece, so is it even in the Ghana of Sutherland's time.

In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, an African reworking of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, the concept of fate versus freewill features, also in a hypertextual model. The birth of a baby boy to king Adetusa and queen Ojuola in the land (kingdom) of Kutuje sets the fate in motion. It is critical to note that, like the Greeks (Thebans), the Yorubans firmly believed in divinities (fate) with Ogun, "the god of war", "iron" and "doctor of all male children", at the centre of their worship. This view is perhaps more illustrated by P. J. Conradie (1986) in his critical essay, "*The Gods Are Not to Blame*: Ola Rotimi's Version of the Oedipus Myth". His argument is that:

> As was to be expected, Rotimi experienced certain difficulties in transplanting the myth to Africa. An interesting aspect is the role of the oracle. The Yoruba have an elaborate system of divination, and in this respect they resemble the ancient Greeks. But there are differences in their use of divination. (28)

Conradie's argument is that the Greeks' mode of divination parallels the Yoruba people of Nigeria, especially during Rotimi's time, and perhaps among other things, this parallelism between the Greek and African mode of life, especially worship, as hypertextually-dramatized in both Sophocles' *King Oedipus* and Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is meant to bring out the aspect of a shared history and humanity between classical Greece and post-independence Nigeria, specifically, and Africa, generally, despite the time and geographical differences.

On such account, therefore, there is little wonder why Rotimi and other celebrated African playwrights such as Efua Sutherland, Wole Soyinka, among others, rework Greek literary works for an African audience.

According to the Yoruba tradition, much like the Greeks, in case of a first-born in the land, the child would be brought to the shrine of Ogun so that his fate would be henceforth foretold by the Ogun priest. In the prologue of *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the narrator says:

> NARRATOR The struggles of man begin at birth. It is meet then that our play begins with birth of a child. The place is the land of Kutuje. A baby has just been born to king Adetusa and his wife Ojuola, the king and queen of this land of Kutuje.
>
> [*Merry singing and drumming. Enter QUEEN OJUOLA, bearing baby swaddled in white linen. She is accompanied by elderly women in a dance procession. Next, KING ADETUSA and his entourage of chiefs, prominent among them the tall, balding OGUN PRIEST*.]
>
> It is their first baby,
> so they bring him for blessing
> to the shrine of Ogun,
> the God of War, of Iron,
> and doctor of all male children.
> Then they call
> a Priest of Ifa,
> as is the custom,
> to divine
> the future that this boy
> has brought
> with him. (1-2)

The above illustration validates the view held by the New Historicism literary critics that the institutions and power-relations of a people's culture are great embodiments of a literary text. The Yoruba culture that gives an African context of the adapted classical play, much like the Greek (or Theban) tradition, believed in the divine will of the gods: priests, as was the case in classical Greece, would be consulted to foretell people's future or fate. It is important to note the

semblance of the fate that both the kingdoms of Kutuje and Thebes get: in both, the oracles predict human catastrophe that involves a male child unwittingly killing his father, taking over the kingdom and marrying his own mother! In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame,* this fate is illustrated thus:

NARRATOR
Baba Fakunle,
Oldest and most knowing
of all Ifa priests in this world,
it is you I greet.

Mother awaits, Father awaits.
Now, tell them:
What is it that the child has brought
as duty to this earth
from the gods? ...

BABA FAKUNLE
This boy, he will kill his own father
and then marry his own mother! (2-3)

From the excerpt above, we get to know that the newborn child of King Adetusa and Queen Ojuola of the royal house of Kutuje kingdom is fated, or better, doomed, to kill his father and marry his mother. This is similar to the fate of Oedipus, the king of Thebes, in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* as illustrated:

> Before even a name had been given to this infant – indeed, by some accounts, before he was born – his life was clouded with the presage of disaster; for Apollo's oracle had nothing but ill to foretell of him: he was destined one day to kill his father, and to become his own mother's husband. (23)

The semblance in the fates that befall the two kingdoms, Thebes (Greece) and Kutuje (Nigeria/Africa)), is remarkable as both protagonists, Oedipus and Odewale, are doomed to unwittingly commit patricide and incest, great acts of transgression in both ancient Greece and Africa. The textual-relationship between Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Sophocles' *King Oedipus* on the theme of fate is hypertextual because the hypertext has slightly

modified the fate in the hypotext to suit the African stage. In other words, although the fate in Rotimi's play is an allusion to Sophocles', deliberate alterations are made by Rotimi to suit his African audience. The modifications made are discussed in chapter four of this study.

However, much as fate or the deterministic motif features steadily in both *King Oedipus* and *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, there are also numerous instances of freewill where the tragic heroes of these great plays try as much as possible, futile though, to avert their imminent fates, as is the case in Sutherland's *Edufa* and Euripides' *Alcestis*. The first instance of the clash between fate and freewill is seen in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* when Laius, the Theban king, and his queen, Jocasta, try to avert the foretold fate by ordering the servants to have the baby killed. In the prologue of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, the narrator says:

> Could any mortal device be proof against the god's prediction? Could any mortal be so presumptuous as to try to thwart it? Laius and Jocasta would so presume. One way alone offered any hope – more than hope, certainty. The child should not live. They would not indeed take upon themselves the guilt of infanticide, but they would deliver the child to a servant of theirs, a shepherd, with orders to abandon it on the mountain-side, its feet cruelly pierced with an iron pin, so that it might not even craw to safety. (23)

The above quotation shows how determined king Laius and Jocasta were to avert the fate of the newborn from ever living to grow up and do the unthinkable: kill his father and marry his own mother. However, their will to avert the fate is overcome by powers far beyond their control. The narrator in the prologue says:

> This was done. But still the word of Apollo – and human compassion – prevailed. For the shepherd had not the heart to leave the child to perish; instead, he entrusted it to a fellow-labourer, a Corinthian shepherd, beseeching him to take it away beyond the borders of Thebes and rear it as his own. The Corinthian, a servant of Polybus, King of Corinth, in due course brought the child to his royal master, who, being childless gladly welcomed the infant and adopted it as his own, giving it the name of Oedipus (Swollen-foot) in commiseration for its painful treatment. (23-24)

The above quotation shows the extraordinary strength or power of fate in influencing human affairs. Although it is king Laius' will to have the ill-fated boy killed at infancy so that the foretold fate could be averted, the servant's eventual compassion for the child, which is obviously a working of fate, thwarts Laius' will (choice) for the child's death. This also illustrates the notions that fate is inescapable, no matter man's will to escape it. What the powers have willed must, indeed, come to pass someday, and that our desire to alter fate is not only illusionary, but also dangerous.

Furthermore, Oedipus grows up in Corinth under the "parental" care and love of King Polybus and his queen, Merope, and as such, takes Polybus and Merope to be his biological parents, and by extension, he considers himself a Corinthian prince. However, when he hears at the feast in Corinth that he is not the biological child of Polybus and Merope, he naturally becomes curious about his origin and in a manifestation of freewill (choice) decides to go to Delphi to consult from the oracle about the truth of his identity. Although Apollo does not answer Oedipus' question about his birth and origin, Oedipus is horrified when the oracle tells him that he would one day kill his father and marry his own mother! Greatly fearing such a fatal prediction from ever happening, Oedipus flees Corinth full aware that as long as he away from his "parents" (Polybus and Merope) such a dreadful thing would never happen. In other words, Oedipus, much like Laius and Jocasta, wills to avert his own tragedy by fleeing Corinth.

Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, with modifications typical of hypertextuality, gives an African context, and by extension, a textual history of the classical incidences of freewill or personal desire to have the foretold fate averted. For instance, after the Priest of Ife foretells the ill-fate that the newborn son of King Adetusa and queen Ojuola bears, the royal

house of Kutuje kingdom is advised by the Ogun priest to kill the doomed child so as to avert the fate:

NARRATOR Bad word!
Mother weeps, Father weeps.
The future is not happy
but to resign oneself to it
is to be crippled fast.
The bad future must not happen.
The only way to stop it
is to kill,
kill the unlucky messenger
of the gods,
kill the boy.

…
Priest of Ogun ties boy's feet
with a string of cowries
meaning sacrifice
to the gods who have sent
boy down to this earth. (3)

Like in Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, King Adetusa wills not to have such a dreadful thing of his own biological son killing him (Adetusa) and marrying his own biological mother, Queen Ojuola, and so heeds the Ogun priest's advice that the ill-fated child be killed to avert the impending doom. And like in *King Oedipus*, Gbonka, the servant tasked to execute the murder of the ill-fated child does not do so, perhaps by the workings of the powers. Like the servant in *King Oedipus*, the ill-fated boy is handed over to Alaka, a servant who instead takes the boy to his childless king, Ogundele, the king of Ijekun. King Ogundele and his wife, Mobike, named the child Odewale and treated him as though he was their own biological born. The powers, thus, thwart king Adetusa's desire to avert his fate.

Furthermore, Odewale, the new king of Kutuje and the tragic hero of *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, tells us why he ran away from Ijekun, his supposed homeland. When a Priest of Ifa told

him that he had a curse of killing his own biological father and marry his own mother, he could not help but move away from Ijekun so as to avert the oracles' prediction. This is revealed to us through the dialogue between Odewale and the Ifa priest:

ODEWALE	… I went to a Priest of Ifa. I asked him: 'Am I not whom I am?'
VOICE	'You have a curse on you, son.'
ODEWALE	'What kind of curse, Old One?'
VOICE	'You cannot run away from it, the gods have willed that you will kill your father, and then marry your mother!'
ODEWALE	'Me! Kill my own father, and marry my own mother?'
VOICE	'It has been willed.'
ODEWALE	'What must I do then not to carry out this will of the gods?'
VOICE	'Nothing. To run away would be foolish. The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay where you are. Stay where you are … Stay where you are… stay where you are…(60)

Important to note here is that, like Oedipus' innocent belief that Polybus and Merope are his biological parents, Odewale thinks Ogundele, the king of Ijekun, and his wife, Mobike, are his biological parents and greatly fears that the Ifa priest's predictions will be fulfilled if he stays in Ijekun with his "parents". He, therefore, wills to avert the curse that he carries by running away from Ijekun. In his dialogue with Alaka, his Ijekun childhood friend, he tells us:

ODEWALE	…[*TO ALAKA*] That was why I fled from home, my brother. [*TO TOWNSPEOPLE*] Like a madman, I believed that the gods had willed me to kill the man and to marry the very woman who gave me life. (60)

After the Priest of Ifa foretells Odewale's fate, his will is to run away from Ijekun well knowing that as long as he is not near his "parents" the priest's predictions could never come to pass. But like Polybus and Merope are to Oedipus, so are Ogundele and Mobike to Odewale: they are not his biological parents. In his attempt to avert his own fate, he runs away from Ijekun to Ede where he unwittingly fulfills the priest's ill-predictions by killing an old man (Adetusa) who turns out to be his own biological father; because he has saved the people of Kutuje by mobilizing them in an attack against their nemeses, the people of Ikolu, he is rewarded with the throne of Kutuje and her queen, Ojuola, who dreadfully turns out to be his own biological mother, hence unwittingly fulfilling his fate.

Perhaps, Odewale should have heeded the priest's advice and stayed in Ijekun instead of running away in fear of killing his "father" and marrying his "mother", Ogundele and Mobike, respectively. The Priest of Ifa had actually warned him against trying to run away from Ijekun. The Ifa priest's warning that, "The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay where you are. Stay where you are …" (60) is suggestive of the futility of trying to run away from one's fate and the deceptive aspect of our human desires (freewill) to attempt to avert predetermined occurrences. In Africa (Nigeria), fate, much like in ancient Greece, is inevitable. There is, therefore, no armour against fate. This hypertextual dramatization of fate in the two drama texts is an indication that the ways of the gods or supernatural forces are universal.

The clash between predestination and personal choice also profusely features in Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, a reworking of Euripides' Greek tragedy, *The Bacchae*, to heighten the concept of a shared history and humanity between classical Greece and Africa. The play dramatizes the fate of king Pentheus who has just ascended to the Theban throne succeeding his grandfather, Kadmos. However, his cousin, Dionysos, son to Semele and

Zeus, has come back from Asia to claim his birth right in Thebes. Given the bizarre nature of Dionysos' birth especially being born of a mortal mother, Semele, and Zeus, Pentheus and the entire members of the royal house of Kadmos do not believe that Dionysos is a god. King Pentheus, actually warns the people of Thebes against honoring Dionysus as a god, something that makes Dionysos to rage with revenge that ultimately seals the fatal end of the Pentheus.

From a historical standpoint, kings and rulers, the world over, believed they were (almost) divinely mandated to protect their people from any external-intrusion. As the king of Thebes, thus, Pentheus feels he has both the political-obligation and moral-authority to protect the Thebans from the seemingly chaotic-brand of religion, characterized by unrestrained revels and sex that the Bacchantes, followers of god Dionysos, practice. Pentheus, thus, labels the worshipping of Dionysos as blasphemous since he knows that the latter is born of a mortal-being, Semele. The dialogue between Pentheus and Tiresias is illustrative:

PENTHEUS You go too far Tiresias!

TIRESIAS Not so far as Dionysos means to go. Oh
Accept him Pentheus. Look up at the rockhills.
Whom do you see bounding
Over the high plateau through the needle peaks
Who is the rustle of wind in pine forests
Shaking winter into life with green branches?
Dionysos is here
In your state. He is at work
All over the world.
Accept him
Poor wine for him
Put vine leaves in your hair for him
Dance for him.

PENTHEUS You would love that. Madness and folly
Ever seek company. Licentiousness requires
The stamp of approval from a head of state
To break the last barriers of restraint.
Then power passes into the hands of those
Who prove the most self-abandoned.

TIRESIAS If only you would lose this notion that power
Is all that matters in the life of man.
Do not mistake for wisdom these fantasies
Of your sick mind … (30)

As the above excerpt indicates, King Pentheus does not approve of Dionysos' divinity and so cannot have him worshipped as a god in his kingdom of Thebes. Although Tiresias, the Theban soothsayer, who is of course, knowledgeable about Dionysos' divinity, attempts to persuade the young king into accepting Dionysos as a deity, all is in vain.

King Pentheus is too obsessed with power and he probably thinks that god Dionysos is trying to overthrow him from the Theban throne under the pretext of religion. In a classic struggle of fate versus freewill, the god Dionysos is arrested under the orders of the Theban king, Pentheus. It is a bizarre situation of a mortal holding divinity captive. In his desire to have Dionysos arrested, king Pentheus orders his soldiers to:

… Go instant!
Find the place where this prophet sits
Faking revelations out of birdsong. Go.
Pry it up with crowbars, have it over
Upside down. Demolish everything you see.
Through his fillets out to wind and weather.
That will teach you! The rest of you.
Go scour the city, bring me this foreigner
This thing of doubtful gender who infects
Our women with strange diseases and pollutes
Our marriage beds. Find him. Clap him in chains,
Drag him here. He'll suffer stoning to death
The nearest fate I can devise to Acteon's
Piecemeal death at the jaws of his hunting hounds.
He'll find Thebes a harder bed than he had
Bargained for his Bacchic jigs. (32)

Such is the contempt that Pentheus has for god Dionysos. He does not approve of his nationality, gender and, of course, his divinity. The eventual arrest of Dionysos is denigration of a divinity for which Pentheus must dearly pay. Of course Dionysos will willingly be arrested by Pentheus'

soldiers, and will be henceforth incarcerated. But as a divinity, he shocks everyone, including king Pentheus himself, by going out of the Theban prison without the knowledge and even consent of the prison-warders. Dionysos later on recounts to his followers, the Bacchantes, how he got out of prison by divine power:

> Afraid, companions from distant lands?
> Look at you, hugging the earth, terror struck.
> You saw the house of darkness split and sundered –
> For Dionysos was there. You willed him,
> Summoned him, your needs
> Invoked his presence. Why do you tremble?
> Look up. Look up at me. The mortal ribs of Pentheus
> Crumble, sundered by the presence
> Of the eternal. Look up. All is well. (48)

Dionysos' invocation of divine powers that easily facilitate his escape from the Theban cells is a foreshadow of his divine-might that he eventually uses to manipulate both Pentheus and his mother, Agave, to seal-off king Pentheus' tragic end. Therefore, Soyinka, in *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, also pursues the idea that human strength is nothing to divine-might. Pentheus was doomed to fall from grace to grass the day his human wisdom beguiled him into running a collision-path with a divinity, Dionysos.

2.3 Sin and Retribution

This study contends that the classical literary period in which Sophocles and Euripides, two of the acclaimed playwrights of the age, lived had a firm belief in retributive-justice. As such, literary works such as *King Oedipus*, *The Bacchae* and *Alcestis*, among others, give us a textual history of the Greek ethical code and justice system, a view that that is well illustrated by Richard V. Cudjoe, et al (2011) in the abstract to *The Fall of the Tragic Hero*: *A Critique of the "Hubristic Principle"*. They state:

> The fall of a hero is as a result of a sin or wrong committed. The commission of this must not go unpunished. In effect, the hand of justice, what they call nemesis, no matter how delayed must fall on the hero. (1)

The above quotation gives a textual-history of the retributive nature of the ancient Greek judicial system. People would make wrongs or commit acts of transgressions at the peril of a corresponding punishment. In short, the judicial system in classical Greece was retributory in nature as no one, not even a hero (a person of a high social rank), would go away with an act of transgression, whether committed deliberately or innocently.

Like their classical Greek counterparts, the African playwrights under study, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka, perhaps acknowledging a parallelism in the mode of life between classical Greece and their African societies, incorporated in their plays aspects of the ethical codes of their African societies, thereby presenting their literary works as some sort of manuals of morality meant to provide models for correct conduct in which an individual mode of behavior is either rewarded or punished. This study, therefore, contends that the African drama texts under study have a hypertextual-relationship with the Greek drama texts in their dramatization of the classical theme of sin and retribution for the African stage.

Efua Sutherland's play, *Edufa*, dramatizes the theme of sin and retribution mainly through the characters of Edufa and his wife, Ampoma. First of all, Edufa's material fetishism and the obsession to live beyond his life, even if this means someone dying in his stead, is by the ethical code of the Akan people of Ghana, specifically, and Africa, generally, a great act of transgression for which his entire household eventually pays dearly. The plan to heed the diviner's advice that Edufa's looming death (fate) would be averted by choosing a member of his family die in his stead backfires in spectacular fashion. Ampoma's selfless, but also innocent, sacrifice for her own dear life so that the husband may live beyond his life and continue taking

care of his wealth is not enough for Edufa as we see Edufa's entire household descend into great misery. Ironically, the death of Ampoma that was meant to make Edufa live longer and probably happier is only good enough to make him mad. After the death of Ampoma, Edufa roars:

> … The last laugh will be mine when I bring her home again. I will bring Ampoma back. Forward to the grave. [*He moves in strength towards the back courtyard, roaring*.] I will do it. I am conqueror! [*His last word, however, comes as a great questioning lament*.] Conqueror …? (153)

Only a mad and foolish person can think of bringing back to life a dead person in Africa. By claiming that he would conquer death and bring back to life Ampoma, it is clear that this death has killed Edufa's mental faculty. He is a dead man walking because he can no longer think and reason rationally.

Furthermore, although Ampoma's decision to die in her husband's stead can be applauded as a selfless and heroic act, it is can also be condemned as being too thoughtless and devoid of maturity in decision-making as wife. In other words, by thoughtlessly swearing to die for her husband, Ampoma has committed an irrevocable crime (sin) that she must pay with her own dear life. At one point in the play, Ampoma seems to regret her decision when she tells Edufa that:

> [*Looking sadly at him*] I am dying too young, don't you think? Look at me. [*She rises abruptly*] what I am saying? We knew this day could come. Am I listening to the lure of his voice at this final stage? Weakening at the closeness of his flesh? [*To Edufa*] Help me. Take your arm away from me. Why do you restrain me at your peril? (104)

That Ampoma is sad and tells Edufa that she is "dying too young" is suggestive that of the thoughtlessness in which she swore to sacrifice her life for the husband. It could also be interpreted as her regret for the thoughtless decision she made and perhaps a veiled plea to Edufa to reverse the decision. Of course, that would be too little, too late as the fate was sealed on the day she swore to die for the husband. In fact, in the hypertext, Euripides' *Alcestis*, Admetus' father, says that Alcestis "was not impudent, but foolish" (30) to have sworn to die for her

husband. Pheres seem to suggest that it serves her (Alcestis) right for her eventual fate. He obviously does not approve that a person should lose his life for a fellow person. In other words, swearing to die for another person's stead is a crime that should be punished.

In Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the classical notion that sin should be punishable is dramatized. For instance, King Adetusa sins against Odewale when he leads his men to root Odewale's produce. As if that is not enough, the old king makes disparaging remarks about Odewale's tribe much to the enragement of Odewale, and the old king heavily pays with his dear life. Odewale tells his Ijekun childhood friend, Alaka, that:

> The Old Man should not have mocked my tribe. He called
> my tribe bush. That I cannot hear. (50)

The Yoruba society of Ola Rotimi's time was greatly tainted by ethnic distrust and tribal animosity and tribal sentiments were so high that making disparaging remarks about one's tribe was criminal enough to warrant one's death in retaliation, something that befalls king Adetusa.

Furthermore, Odewale unsuspectingly commits patricide and incest when he kills king Adetusa, who turns out to be his own biological father, and when he marries queen Ojuola, who turns out to be his own biological mother. As was the case in classical Greece, patricide and incest were great acts of cultural transgression in Africa, and the harshest possible punishments were decreed to the culprits, irrespective of whether the transgression was committed deliberately or inadvertently. For instance, the first harshest punishment is the plague that befalls the two kingdoms, Thebes and Kutuje. Although the people of both kingdoms are unaware of the grave sins committed by both Oedipus and Odewale, they are also accomplices in the plagues that have befallen them because, innocent as they seem, they have erred in installing criminals to their royal thrones. Secondly, both Jocasta and Ojuola view their transgressions, unwitting as they are, as befitting suicide. And lastly, both Oedipus and Odewale pluck off their eyes and exile

themselves as retribution for the grave sins of patricide and incest. It can be emphasized that the justice system of classical Greece and the ethical codes in Africa were equally retributive in nature, and for any sin or transgression, irrespective of whether it was committed deliberately or inadvertently, was highly punishable. Therefore, Ola Rotimi and Sophocles validate the modern day legal view that "ignorance of the law has no defense."

In Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, we see the newly-ascended, young Theban king, Pentheus, obsessed with the defence of the Theban traditional notions of truth and justice, albeit at his own peril. As a king, he feels he has both the political and moral obligation to ensure order in the kingdom, which is often enforced at the expense of the rights and freedoms of the Thebans. Pentheus, for instance, regards Tiresias' soft-spot for Dionysos as rebellion against his rule since he views Dionysos as both his political and divine threat. He does not approve of Dionysos' divinity which he calls "blasphemy" and subsequently orders for his arrest so that he (Dionysos) can be tried for his crimes. Of course, in retaliation, Dionysos severely punishes Pentheus for refusing to acknowledge and submit to his divine authority.

At the beginning of both Euripides' *The Bacchae* and Soyinka's adapted play, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, Dionysos recounts to us how his mother, Semele' love-affair with the Olympian Zeus was seen by Hera, the great Olympian queen to Zeus, as a criminal (sinful) act by a mortal woman. Jealousy of Semele' affair with Zeus, Hera tricked Zeus into killing Semele, Dionysos' mother, with his mighty thunderbolt. In a way, the Olympian queen does not approve of a love affair between a mortal and a divinity: it is a crime that is unwittingly punished by Zeus' thunderbolt that strikes the offender, Semele, dead. Moreover, even when he was later on born, god Dionysos was forced by to move away from Mount Olympus, the seat of the Olympian gods, and had to wander off the Far East and Asia because of Hera's continuous

jealousy to his mother's sexual transgression with Zeus. A punishment is also given to Agave and her sister, Autonoe, for disputing Dionysos' divinity and calling his mother, Semele, a slut. For Agave, she is put into a "Bacchic frenzy" (a drunken spell) in which she innocently takes lead in the murder of her own biological son, Pentheus.

Conclusively, African dramatists such as Efua Theodora Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka uphold the classical (Greek) notion that for every crime committed, whether knowingly or otherwise, there is always a subsequent punishment. Therefore, the concept of sin and retribution carries a universal appeal because of the universality of man's life.

2.4 Patriarchy, Misogyny and the Subjugation of Women

The classical period deserves praise for having laid a firm foundation for modern literature, law, architecture and political governance, among other vital contributions to the modern world. However, its literary period can also be rightly condemned for having fostered an exceedingly woman-ignoring-atmosphere that was characterized by patriarchy, misogyny and the suppression of womenfolk. The callous sexism that the classical Greek males had towards their female counterparts can be used as a basis to contend that the acclaimed playwrights of the classical era, notably, Sophocles and Euripides, were male-supremacists and misogynists with a male-centric agenda that confined women to only domestic work.

Brian Wilkie and James Hurt (1997), in *Literature of the Western World*: *The Ancient World through the Renaissance*, decry of the unfair and male-chauvinistic nature of the classical period by arguing that Greek women did not enjoy the same rights and opportunities as their male counterparts, instead, they did domestic work. They assert:

> … Greek women had few rights and were confined in the home. They managed domestic matters, and they bore and raised children (at least in Athens, customs differed among the city-states). Greek children were almost exclusively in the company of women until the age of seven and then were rigidly segregated by

> sex; the result, predictably, was a perpetration of traditional attitudes on the part of Greek women and a deep-seated distrust and even fear of women on the part of men. (6)

As Brian and Hurt have illustrated above, ancient Greek women were only fit for the lowest social-rank in society. Apart from domestic work and child-bearing, nothing much was expected of them. The Greek men, however, enjoyed undue influence and rights on the mere basis of their gender. The ancient Greek society was, hence, predominantly patriarchal and designed to selfishly foster the interests of men at the expense of women.

Like their classical counterpart playwrights, and given the glaring parallelism of patriarchy between classical Greece and the African setting, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka equally dramatize a low-woman-status environment that has for years been the plight of the African woman. The study, hence, runs the argument that the three African plays under scrutiny have been modeled on a patriarchal paradigm that alludes to the classical period of Sophocles and Euripides.

In Efua Sutherland's play, *Edufa*, much like its Greek hypotext, *Alcestis*, the position of the African woman, especially in a largely male-dominated Akan (Ghanaian/African) society, is Sutherland's major point of concern. Recognizing the semblance between male-chauvinistic ancient Greece and her Ghanaian (Akan) society, she adapts Euripides' play to dramatize the sad reality of being a woman in a patriarchal African society. And as is the case with classical Greece, the status of a woman in Ghana is appalling. She deliberately titles her play using a male name, "Edufa" to express her feminine sentiments on the prevalence of women oppression, not only in her Ghanaian society, but Africa as a whole.

To begin with, the appallingly low status of an African woman is dramatized in the institution of marriage. From a moral or better, ideal, perspective, marriage is supposed to not only be sacred,

but it should also promote mutual love and companionship among married partners. Married couples should live for each other without any of the partners taking advantage of the other. However, the sort of marriage that we witness in both *Edufa* and *Alcestis* leave a lot to be desired in as far as the status of a wife is concerned. It is the woman (wife) who should sacrifice her own dear life in case the husband's life is under threat as seen in the way both Alcestis and Ampoma mortgage their dear lives so that Admetus and Edufa, respectively, may live beyond their allotted times on the mere basis of love. The fact that the men in the plays, notably, Edufa and Admetus, fear their own deaths is evidence enough that they would not have extended the same favour to their wives if circumstances necessitated. By dramatizing women selflessly willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of their husbands, the two playwrights seem to state that a man's life, according to patriarchal foolishness, matters more than that of a woman. Also, patriarchal double standards are satirized by having the seemingly weaker sex, a woman, brave to face death, moreover another person's death, as the seemingly stronger sex, a man, fears his own death. The plays, thus, show the pathetic emptiness of the so-called patriarchal societies in both classical Greece and Africa.

Furthermore, to the Akan (Ghanaian) society of Sutherland's time as seen in *Edufa*, a woman is prescribed a very marginal role in society. For instance, the Chorus of Women moves from place to place, wailing and chanting as death approaches. They are only good enough to perform the demeaning role of ritual-cleansing. By assigning women to do ritual-cleansing (chasing away evil), Sutherland is suggestive that the patriarchal society probably thinks that the women, and not men, are the cause of the evil that they are tasked to chase away. Besides, the other female inhabitants of Edufa's household, Abena and Seguwa, have to endure long and sleepless nights preparing herbs and burning incense in a futile attempt to avert a calamity started by a man. That

Ampoma is critically-sick and not even a member of her family is informed about her sickness speaks volumes about the low status of women in Africa; moreover, Edufa warns the members of his household against ever letting any person in the neighborhood know of Ampoma's near-death sickness. *Edufa*, thus, serves as a textual history of how women in the Ghana of Sutherland's time were victims of patriarchy.

In Euripides' *Alcestis*, a woman is a mere marriage-object for whom a contest should be organized and married off, without her consent and love, by the winner of the bride-contest. We are told that Admetus had married Alcestis as a result of having emerged triumphant in the bride-contest arranged by Alcestis' father, Pelias. All these instances indicate that the status of a woman in any male-centric society, be it Greece or Africa, has never been better.

In Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, much like in Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, the status of a woman is equally deplorable. A woman has no say in the affair of the home apart from domestic chores. For instance, when Ojuola's baby is declared ill-fated, the man (Adetusa) declares, without any consultation from his wife, that the baby be killed in the bush. All a woman should do in such circumstances is just cry and be soothed by the husband. The fact that both *King Oedipus* and *The Gods Are Not to Blame* feature the dreadful tale of a woman being married by his own child and even bearing children for the "husband" who, of course is her own biological son, is indicative of the deliberate patriarchal tendency to degrade women in society as being so daft that they can easily forget their own biological children to the extent of even marrying them and producing children for them. This is rather ironic, especially in the context of Africa where it is widely believed that it is only the mother (woman) who knows the true father of her children. Surely, if a woman cannot forget the true father of her children, how would she fail to recognize her own biological child as to commit such a dreadful act of transgression?

Besides, in terms of responsibilities in the kingdom, much as Ojuola is the queen of Kutuje, she holds no office, and therefore, has no say in the affairs of the kingdom.

In Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, the question of the status of a woman remains unanswered as the society is predominantly run-rugged by men at the expense of women. All the major actors in the kingdom of Thebes are men like Kadmos, Tiresias, Pentheus and Dionysos. As for women, they are only good enough to be sexually-immoral like Semele, mad and murderers of their own children like Agave.

In conclusion, therefore, masculine identity and conflicts continue to shape the enterprise of both Greek and African tragedy as female characters continue to be ascribed more subservient roles in the society, compared to their male counterparts. From the illustrations given above, it suffices to argue that, like their classical Greek counterparts, the African tragedians under scrutiny, are also male-supremacists and perhaps misogynists. This is also the case for Efua Sutherland, whose stereotypic-depiction of male characters in Edufa is motivated by her feminine sentiments and the ultimate desire to advance the agenda of women emancipation.

2.5 Human Suffering and Limitation

It is vital to note that during the classical era, the numerous complexities surrounding the execution of social obligations led to great suffering of not only an individual, but the entire society. As a consequence, the lead Greek tragedians, Sophocles and Euripides, felt duty-bound to dramatize this innumerable human suffering. Asuamah Adade-Yeboah (2012) in his critical essay, "The Tragic Hero of the Neo-Classical Revival", argues that:

> The essential element of tragedy is the notion of suffering which is the source of the tragic experience. As a result, it is believed that when one has gone through suffering, one emerges "white washed" or rather chastened. (104)

The claim that suffering is a main element of tragedy is further supported by Heinz-Uwe Haus, in "Vision and Method – (Re-) Reading of Ancient Greek Drama", who says:

> In ancient Greek theatre, suffering is presented as inevitable as well as irrevocable. According to Aristotle, the tragic protagonist is responsible for his own suffering but it is only through his destruction that social harmony is restored. (2)

In Classical Greece, suffering was perceived to be part and parcel of human life, and thus, was sure to happen to anyone, any time. However, suffering did not come on its own. It was always believed to be as a result of the tragic hero's own transgression or error in judgment. And that through suffering, human beings learnt how to behave themselves in society as they knew that committing similar transgressions would lead to adverse repercussions to the culprit. The classical theme of suffering features intensely in the selected African drama works of Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka both physically and psychological as a cautionary tale to the African audience to either behave themselves or face adverse consequences for any wayward conduct.

The theme of suffering in Sutherland's *Edufa* is both physical and emotional (psychological) in nature, and typical of hypertextuality, the cause of suffering is slightly different from that of the hypotext, Euripides' *Alcestis*. Edufa has gambled his wife's life by tricking her into swearing to die in his stead. The oath that Ampoma takes is so strong that it drains all the energy and life from her. She becomes too sick and bedridden to even walk by herself. Every time she tries to walk, she falls. She also undergoes great psychological torture as she knows that her hour to exit the world would strike any time soon. She fears that Edufa may marry after her death a woman who may torture her children. In her psychological suffering, she begs the husband to promise that he would not marry another wife. The dialogue between Ampoma and Edufa in Act One, Scene Two, shows how emotionally devastated Ampoma is:

> AMPOMA [*More calmly, moving again, halting now and then*] Let me talk with you a little longer in the sun before I step into

> The dark where you cannot see me. Soon, my pledge will be honored. I am leaving our children motherless in your hands. Let me here you say you love them, though I know you do.
>
> EDUFA I love them, Ampoma.
>
> AMPOMA And will you keep them from harm? Protect them?
>
> EDUFA How else would I be worthy of the sacred name of father? How worthy of your trust, brave woman? No harm shall come to the children, that I can prevent.
>
> AMPOMA I fear the harm that might come to them from another woman's dissatisfied heart. (104)

Apart from her physical ill-health, the above excerpt shows that Ampoma is scared that the children may be the victims of a jealousy wife that Edufa may marry after her death, and that is why she seeks assurance from the husband that nothing harmful shall ever happen to her young children. Analogous to the Greek notion of human suffering, Ampoma is partly responsible, to a less extent though, for her suffering because she willingly offered to die in her husband's stead. One may say that she was tricked, but the trick was not only meant for her. It was for the entire family of Edufa, and she chose to swear when everyone had refused. She was too naïvely in love. Abena and Seguwa are other members of Edufa's household that greatly suffer in Sutherland's play, *Edufa*. As already indicated, the two females spend nights awake preparing and watching over Ampoma's medicine. Moreover, Seguwa, the matron of the Edufa's home, has to ensure that Ampoma's sickness remains a secret. Surely, Ampoma's sickness has become too much a burden. In her frustration, she tells Edufa:

> I'm not saying I doubt anything. You have chosen me to share this present burden with you, and I'm letting my mouth speak so that my mind can have some ease. It is I myself who say I'm hardy, but how can I help having a woman's bowels? (101)

Being a matron of Edufa's home has proven to be an exceedingly daunting task for Seguwa. Edufa's burdens have become her burdens too. She is really psychologically tormented with Ampoma's pitiable and lamentable state. Keeping secret all these troubles in Edufa's home is so burdensome to her. She really draws our sympathy for she does not merit suffering. Kankam also suffers insults from Edufa.

In the hypotext, *Alcestis,* there is great suffering in the household of Admetus, the king of Pherae, Thessaly. Alcestis, like Ampoma (out of love and loyalty), has sworn to die in her husband's stead, and this has led to lots of suffering to the entire household. The dialogue between the leader of the chorus and Admetus' servant is very illustrative of the suffering in Admetus' household:

> LEADER And does Admetus lament this woe-since he must be robbed of so noble a woman?
>
> SERVANT He weeps, and clasps in his arms his dear bedfellow, and cries to her not to abandon him, asking impossible things. For she pines, and is wasted by sickness. She falls away, a frail burden on his arm; and yet, though faintly, she still breathes, she strives to look upon the sunlight, which she shall never see hereafter – since now for the last time she looks upon the orb and splendor of the sun… (9)

Much like Ampoma in Efua Sutherland's *Edufa,* Alcestis is suffering and causing lots of psychological torment to those around him. A king (Admetus) to weep is indicative of the psychological torment he is undergoing due to the imminent loss of his loving wife. Luckily for Admetus, unlike Edufa, his wife will be brought back to life by his grateful friend and visitor, Heracles. But, this happens much later when he (Admetus) has gone through lots of suffering.

Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, is yet another great African drama depicting human suffering, misery and agony. In the prologue, we learn of the firstborn child of King Adetusa and Ojuola, the queen. The newborn is, however, ill-fated for patricide and incest and so

the king orders that the child be taken and left to die in the bush. Eve when the order of taking the child to die in the bush comes from king Adetusa, we see that both the king and his queen are emotionally-upset. In the prologue, the narrator tells us:

> NARRATOR Bad word!
> Mother weeps, Father weeps.
> The future is not happy…
>
> Mother sinks to the ground,
> in sorrow for the seed
> that life must crush so soon!
> Father consoles her, in his own grief. (3)

Both King Adetusa and queen Ojuola are torn by the grief of their ill-fated firstborn child who circumstances have necessitated to be sacrificed back to the gods. The old adage that "even the rich cry" applies to the royal house of Kutuje. There is, therefore, psychological suffering in the household of king Adetusa.

Still, in the prologue of the play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame,* suffering of the people of Kutuje is highlighted. We are told of how the people of Kutuje had never had peace ever since King Adetusa died: they would always be attacked by the war-mongering people of Ikolu:

> The land of Kutuje
> had known peace and seen quiet
> for some time
> until
> the people of Ikolu,
> taking advantage of death in the palace,
> attacked Kutuje.
>
> [*War song, IKOLU ATTACKERS invade palace;*
> *KUTUJE TOWNSPEOPLE run helter-skelter*.]
>
> They killed hundreds,
> They seized hundred,
> They enslaved hundreds more,
> and left behind in the land of Kutuje
> hunger, and thirst, and fear. (5)

The aggression that the people of Ikolu perpetrated to the people of Kutuje after the death of King Adetusa led to death, hunger and misery to the entire kingdom of Kutuje. It was after Odewale, a foreigner from an unknown tribe, rallied the people of Kutuje that they eventually defeated their tribal adversaries, the people of Ikolu. Here, Rotimi uses *The Gods Are Not to Blame* as an insightful commentary on the toxic social situation in post-independent Nigeria in which tribal aggression was rampant and threatened the social harmony and stability of the entire nation.

In Act One, Scene 1 of the play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the citizens of the kingdom of Kutuje have come to ask their king, Odewale, for a remedy to the plague that has caused them untold suffering and agony. Ironically, even the King Odewale's household has not been spared: suffering is everywhere in the kingdom of Kutuje:

> ODEWALE No, no – do not beg. I have said nothing yet to prove me innocent of your charges, and already you beg for forgiveness. No, do not beg, I pray you, only listen. And listen well. I know your pains, my people. I feel your suffering too. Sickness is in your houses? Sickness has entered my palace too. [*Calling*] Ojuola! Ojuola! [*Addressing TOWNSPEOPLE*] My children too are …[*OJUOLA appears*]
>
> OJUOLA My lord …
>
> ODEWALE Bring the children here.
>
> OJUOLA Adebisi is just trying to sleep after being sick, my lord.
>
> ODEWALE Wake her up, bring her – bring them, bring them all.
>
> OJUOLA Vey well my lord. [*Exit into rear rooms*.]
>
> ODEWALE Now to answer your question. What have I been doing about the sickness in the land? Have I been sleeping? If so, I am sick in the head: for only a madman would go to sleep with his roof on fire. (10-11)

The above excerpt shows how devastating the plague has been to the people of Kutuje, the royal house inclusive. In essence, everyone in Kutuje is suffering as their children and animals are all dying mysteriously. The plague in Kutuje parallels the plague that befalls the Thebans in Sophocles' play, *King Oedipus*, only that in the hypotext, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, no one is spared, including the household of king Adetusa, and to an African audience, this indiscriminate nature of the plague on the people of Kutuje is more plausible than Sophocles' classical play.

Of course, like Oedipus in Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, all the suffering in Kutuje is blamed on Odewale, the successor to King Adetusa. First of all, the plague, according to the Priest of Ifa, is caused by the curse in the kingdom for which Odewale is responsible. Odewale's unwitting commission of the dreadful crimes of patricide and incest is reason why the gods are angry. Innocently, Odewale will strive to find out the real cause of the plague and this will be his undoing as he finds out that he is actually the murderer of king Adetusa, has committed incest and therefore the cause of the plague. This is too much for Odewale that the best way for him is to gouge out his eyes and go for exile.

Queen Ojuola is another character that undergoes intense tremendous suffering in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. First of all, her first born is predicted by the Ifa Priest as ill-fated and so is ordered to be killed. She loses her husband, Adetusa, and becomes a widow. But as if that is not enough, when she finally gets another husband, the marriage turns out be incestuous. The gruesome manner in which she ends up her miserable life is simply a resolution to end a life spend in total misery and agony.

ADEROPO Where is my mother?

CHIEFS [*Pulling him back*] Patience, young man – He wants no body in there –

FIRST CHIEF [*Emerging from the bedroom with a bloodstained dagger*.]
Oh … Ogun … it is all over.

OGUN PRIEST Is he dead too?

FIRST CHIEF Gods! I have seen deaths before. As a warrior in this land of Kutuje, I have seen deaths, at home, in battle. I have seen deaths. But the death of a woman with a knife pushed deep by her own hands to reach her very womb … Gods! (69)

Queen Ojuola's life has been greatly miserable and nowhere in the play do we find her happy like most queens. It suffices to say that the Yoruba gods have not been fair to her, and so her death, horrific as it is, ends her misery and agony, drawing our sympathy.

Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* is another African tragedy in which the theme of suffering is well explored. Like in Euripides' Greek play, *The Bacchae*, suffering takes both physical and psychological dimensions. First of all, the play depicts the wanton oppression and suffering of non-Greeks such as slaves and helots under the dictatorial regime of the new Theban king, Pentheus. The stage direction reveals quite a lot about the suffering and oppression that the slaves go through:

> *To one side, a road dips steeply into lower background, lined by the bodies of crucified slaves mostly in the skeletal stage. … In the foreground, the main gate to the palace of Pentheus. Farther down and into the wings, a lean-to built against the wall, a threshing-floor. A cloud of chaff, and through it, dim figures of slaves flailing and treading*. (1)

In *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, Soyinka dramatizes the dire state in which dictatorial western powers as represented by King Pentheus of Thebes subjected slaves, who of course were non-Greeks to all sorts of mistreatment and torture that claimed many of them. Of course Soyinka has been given the label of "political activist" and in a veiled way uses his play to questions the institutionalization of slavery by western (European) governments that dehumanized some people, especially people of African descent.

More captivating (and perhaps from an afro-centric view) about the suffering and dehumanization of the non-Greeks (slaves) in the play is the argument put forward by Norbert Oyibo Eze (2015) in "Overthrowing the Status Quo: Interpreting Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* from a Marxist Perspective." He argues:

> … A major human condition that horrifies the Marxists, which is expressed deeply in *The Bacchae*, is the issue of slavery. In the text slavery is used to illuminate total debasement of a class. It is used as a tool for extreme alienation of man from his kind. In the play, the slaves are shown to lack any right to self-determination. They are confined to a solitary place from where they are drawn to work or to be flogged to death as objects of sacrifice in a monstrous ritual, notwithstanding the fact that they provide labour that sustains the economy of the nation. (339)

Such is the miserable state in which King Pentheus subjects the slaves in Thebes. To King Pentheus, much like any other western monarch, people of African descent were less human, and therefore, only fit for servitude. The 'political-activist', Soyinka, uses his adaptation to question the legitimacy of such a race-based institution that prides in debasing fellow human beings.

Tiresias, the old blind Theban priest is another manifestation of suffering under King Pentheus' oppressive political system. According to the Theban culture, every year a human sacrifice has to be offered so as to cleanse all the evils of the country, and the person to be sacrificed had to go through it voluntarily. In the play, the old priest has voluntarily offered himself for the monstrous ritual. The reader is appalled at how the old man is chased and flogged by a Theban mob. The dialogue below is more illustrative:

> [*TIRESIAS is left alone with the floggers. As he begins to pick himself up painfully, they rush forward to help him up. He brushes them off angrily*.]
>
> TIRESIAS Take your hands off!
>
> [*He rises, tries to dust himself and winces*]
>
> FIRST FLOGGER Where you hurt?

TIRESIAS Animals!

FIRST FLOGGER Oh, we … didn't mean to.

TIRESIAS You never do.

SECOND FLOGGER Who was he?

FIRST FLOGGER Yes who was he? Where did he spring from?

TIRESIAS [*Snorts*] Who was he? Where did he spring from? Fools! Blind, stupid, bloody brutes! Can you see how you've covered me in weals? … (7)

The fact that Soyinka uses Floggers as characters speaks volumes about the oppression and human suffering in this kingdom of Thebes. One wonders why a man who has willingly offered himself for the sacrifice should be subjected to such flogging. The floggers are indeed "bloody brutes". Flogging of people is very constant in the play, and Soyinka seems to be advancing a point that certain cultural rituals are outdated and degrading to humanity. Perhaps, this explains why Tiresias has soft spots for god Dionysus' new religion that ultimately and in a more bizarre way topples the dictatorial governance of king Pentheus.

Like any other tragic hero, the Theban king, Pentheus, suffers excessively in *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. His cousin, Dionysos who is ready to avenge for the Thebans' refusal to honour him as a god masterminds all the misery and agony that Pentheus goes through up to his bitter end. He is put under a spell by god Dionysos (disguised as a human) and led to the mountain of Cithaeron. In his quest to have a clear view of the reveling Bacchantes in the mountain, Dionysos tricks Pentheus by lifting him up on a high tree branch from where he is mercilessly stoned until he falls down torn to pieces by his mother, Agave, who is also under a spell from Dionysos. The officer at the palace witnesses, firsthand, the gruesome murder of Pentheus and recounts:

OFFICER … Saw king Pentheus stark against the sky
Clearer than he could he could see them. Hell broke loose.
Like startled doves, through grove and torrent
Over jagged rocks they flew, their feet excited
By the breath of god.

His mother took the lead.
I heard the voice of Agave calling on her Maenads
To make circle, shouting, "This climbing beast
Must not escape lest he reveals the secrets
Of our god." They mad a ring. A hundred hands
A hundred supple arms heaved and strained. King Pentheus
Clutched at futile anchors on his naked nest
Hoping to keep death at bay. I heard the wretch of roots
From their long bed of earth, tilted, and down
From his high perch fell Pentheus, tumbling
Down to earth, sobbing and screaming as he fell … (75)

The above excerpt illustrates king Pentheus' tragic end: charmed by the vindictive Dionysos, he is led to the wrath of the women in the mountain, among which includes his own mother, Agave, who is also under a spell for her disgraceful remarks that Dionysos' mother Semele, had faked her love relationship with Zeus in the birth of Dionysos. Seeing his mother among the people pulling stones at him, he pleads for mercy, which he never gets. He falls down torn to pieces.

Agave, the mother to king Pentheus and sister to Semele, also undergoes excruciating suffering and humiliation. Dionysos puts a spell on her that drives her mad and runs with other women to revel in the mountain of Cithaeron. Still under the spell, she cannot recognize her son, Pentheus, on the tree and instead leads the onslaught that leads to Pentheus' tragic end. The dialogue between Agave and her father Kadmos is quite revealing:

AGAVE And Pentheus?

KADMOS The whole city was possessed by Dionysos.
He drove you mad. You rushed to the mountains …

AGAVE Of Kithairon? Yes … was I not there?

KADMOS You killed him.

AGAVE I?

KADMOS You and your sisters. You were possessed.

AGAVE [*A soft sigh*] A-ah

[*She stands stock-still, then turns towards the ladder*.]

It is time to bring him down. [*Begins to climb slowly*]

(85)

Agave, thus, suffers great humiliation when she sobers up from the Dionysos' curse and learns that the dead body she was rejoicing over its death was actually for her very own, Pentheus, and that she was her son's murderer. As if that is not enough for her, Agave, together with her father, Kadmos are subsequently banished by Dionysos from Thebes.

2.6 The folly of Pride

In a more basic perspective, pride refers to a person's tendency to portray an unreasonable and inordinate self-esteem. It is a lack of humility and overestimation of one's abilities. In classical Greek tragedy, pride took the form of Hubris which was seen as the tendency of a character, usually in a powerful position or high social rank, otherwise called the tragic hero, to overestimate his abilities to such an extent that he forms a delusion to be equal to the gods and subsequently tries to defy them in an attempt to alter his fate. Hubris is an overweening pride or the pride that comes before a fall. It is considered as the greatest tragic flaw (hermatia) which ultimately brings about the downfall of the tragic hero. Noteworthy, also, the depiction of a hubristic character in a tragedy is for a moral purpose because the character is eventually punished for his hubristic actions, something that makes the audience fear that similar punishment may befall them if they imitate the hubristic tendencies of the tragic hero.

As already emphasized, the African playwrights under study saw a remarkable parallelism in the aspect of life between classical Greece and Africa and were wary of the catastrophic consequences of overweening pride. Their plays are, thus, cautionary tales for the African audience against overweening pride.

In *Edufa*, Sutherland is very concerned about the way pride can make an individual forget his traditional values, and by extension, his origins. Edufa, Sutherland's protagonist, is a very rich and popular man in his society. But his wealth has made him too proud to even imagine himself dying, human as he is. He is too proud to die and leave behind his wealth. In other words, Edufa's wealth and fame have given him a false sense of entitlement, the elongation of his own life. He falsely believes that rich people are not supposed to die, the very pathetic reason he gambles Ampoma's life. Furthermore, Edufa's wealth has put him way above advice. Whatever he thinks and knows is the only correct. He disregards Seguwa's advice that they should try other ways since the herbs have failed to cause any noticeable improvement in Ampoma's health. He does not think that Kankam, his father, speaks sense and insultingly calls him mad. His "emancipation" has made him too obsessed with his own ideas, however thoughtless and catastrophic they are. But as is usually the case with proud heroes, he falls from grace to grass when his wife eventually dies and he degenerates into a mental-psychosis.

In *Alcestis*, Admetus' pride makes him overlook the Greek goddess of the hunt, Artemis, when offering his matrimonial sacrifices. Although the goddesses had prayed a vital role in Admetus' victory in the bridal-contest, he later on disregards the goddess' assistance and does not include her in his sacrifices. Admetus is probably too patriarchal to think that a female deity, Artemis, merits a sacrifice as the sacrifices are offered to male deities like Phoebus Apollo. It is this pride in overlooking a female deity that earns him the fate of an early death, although for him,

Heracles manages to avert it. He also too proud in thinking that his father, Pheres, owes him life, the reason why he is so annoyed with him for having refused to sacrifice his life for him.

In *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, Odewale's pride leads to his tragic end. He is so proud of his Ijekun tribe that he even kills king Adetusa for disparagingly calling the people of Ijekun a "bush" tribe. King Adetusa's tragic fall is as a result of his obsession with tribal superiority and that is why he quickly dismisses the people of Ijekun as "Bushmen" to draw the wrath of Odewale. Furthermore, when Odewale consults about his true identity while in Ijekun, the priest tells him that he would kill his own father and marry his own mother. Even when he asks the priest what he could do to avert his fate, the priest tells him that nothing could be done to avert the ill-fate, warning him, through the proverb of a snail, against running away. Odewale is too proud to think that he kill his own father and marry his own mother, and in his own foolish human wisdom he thinks he can escape such a fate by running away. His excessive pride later becomes the source of his downfall. In recognition that his tragic end has been due to his pride, Odewale tells us that:

> No, no! Do not blame the gods. Let no one blame the powers. My people, learn from my fall. The powers would have failed if I did not let them use me. They knew my weakness: the weakness of a man easily moved to the defence of his tribe against others. I once slew a man in my farm in Ede. I could have spared him. But he spat on my tribe. He spat on the tribe I thought was my own tribe … (71)

From the above quotation, it is clear that tribal pride was so highly pronounced in Rotimi's Nigeria that it could lead to the murder of one who spat on another person's tribe. Odewale, thus, admits that his tragic end is more attributable to his excessive tribal-pride than the powers. In other words, Odewale castigates pride as it leads to disastrous consequences. The tragic end of Odewale alludes to Oedipus' end in the Greek hypotext, *King Oedipus*. It is Oedipus' overweening pride that makes him think that he can avert the tragedy. He brags about how he

solved the riddle of the sphinx and pours contempt on Tiresias' failure to do it. He clashes with the traveling Laius at the crossroad and subsequently murders him on the mere basis of who had the right of way. Even as a young man, he was too proud to let the old man's entourage pass first. It is excessive pride that makes him rash to pronounce harsh judgments on the murderer of the late king Laius, something that later backfires against him as he turns out to be the cursed murderer. Even when he is warned by Tiresias against knowing the murderer of Laius, he does not heed. In short, Oedipus is too full of himself to heed any advice. Because pride was considered a big crime in classical Greece, Oedipus pays dearly for it.

Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* is another African drama text that dramatizes the cautionary tale against overweening pride. Through the character of king Pentheus, the folly of pride is well illustrated. Because he is the king, Pentheus does not show respect to anyone. He disrespects both Kadmos, his grandfather whom he has succeeded for the Theban throne, and Tiresias, the kingdom's soothsayer. Even when he is told by the duo that Dionysos is a god and he should accept him, Pentheus does not listen. He, instead, sets out to run a collision path with the god. He even has a chance to learn that Dionysos is not just any mortal when he breaks escapes from the cells in a bizarre circumstance, Pentheus is unrelenting. It is this pride to fight a deity that leads to Pentheus' downfall.

It is important to note that although the aspect of overweening pride is considered to be a characteristic trait of an individual (tragic hero) and not a society, the society to which the offender (tragic hero) belongs also suffers collateral consequences of the tragic hero's hubristic tendencies as seen in which the entire household of Edufa suffers as a result of Edufa's decisions stirred by his pride; the people of Kutuje suffer as a result of Odewale's transgressions caused by his pride, and the whole house of Cadmus is severely punished by the vindictive Dionysos due to

the hubristic acts of king Pentheus. Important to note, also, is the idea that pride comes before a fall. After the downfalls of the tragic heroes, they become very humble. In Sutherland's play, the once proud Edufa is even willing to mend fences with his father, Kankam; Odewale is very apologetic to Aderopo, and Pentheus cries for mercy from his mother, Agave.

2.7 Conclusion

By dramatizing classical themes and ideas in their plays, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka acknowledge the parallelism between Africa and classical Greece. Ideas of fate versus freewill, sin and retribution, the patriarchal oppression of women, and human suffering that they dramatize in their works are not meant for a Greek audience, but to show an African audience that certain things have a universal appeal. What happened in Greece, ancient as it was, happens everywhere, including in Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

ADAPTED CLASSICAL LITERARY STYLE

3.1 Introduction

Cuddon, J. A (2013), in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, defines style as "the characteristic manner of expression in prose or verse: how a particular writer says things" (688). Simply put, therefore, the style of a literary work refers to the manner in which a given writer distinctively expresses his thoughts and intentions in a literary work. In other words, the style of a literary work is the "*how*" by which the "*what*" of such a literary work is presented. Noteworthy, style here includes all the formal properties held to be distinctive of a particular work, author or literary tradition (era), and, these include both the formal structure of the literary work and the conventional literary techniques that the writer use to effectively communicate his message.

For the purpose of this study, this chapter presents a critical analysis of the distinctive stylistic features of the classical literary period, especially the style used by Euripides and Sophocles, that feature conspicuously in the selected African plays: Efua Theodora Sutherland's *Edufa*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. In line with this chapter, the study affirms the classical argument run by both Plato and Aristotle, that by nature, literature is imitative, and adds that classical literature is a forerunner of this imitative syndrome in modern literature. Using the theories of intertextuality as discussed by literary critics like Bakhtin, Barthes, Kristeva and Genette, the chapter critically analyses the fascinating intertextual-stylistic-relationship between *Edufa, The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* with their "hypotexts": *Alcestis, King Oedipus* and *The Bacchae*, respectively. The study makes it clear that, although the Aristotelian

notions of a "prototype" tragedy were actually descriptions of what Sophocles and the like had done, the study examines how these "hypertexts" subscribe to the Aristotelian ideas of tragedy as stipulated in the *Poetics*.

Notable aspects of the classical style that is have been analyzed in this study include: use of the prologue, use of the chorus, characterization, dramatic reversals, recognition, plot structure, the three unities (action, time and place), reporting, pathos, verse, imagery, apostrophe and rhetorical questions.

3.2 The Prologue

From the ancient Greek word, *Prologos*, derives the modern-day word, Prologue, which is the opening scene in which the background of the story is established, usually by a single actor, or in a dialogue between two actors. In classical drama, the use of the prologue is attributed to the Greek playwright, Euripides. The Harvard academic, Hugo Leichtentrit (1936), in *On the Prologue in Early Opera*, firmly recognizes the significance of using a prologue in early opera, especially in the 17th Century, although it was almost entirely absent from later opera. He remarks:

> Accordingly, the prologue is derived from ancient Greek drama. Its purpose there is to inform the listening public concerning details of the legend: its antecedents, necessary to the understanding of the drama proper. The ancient prologue is generally a direct address to the public – a plain story, briefly told, not in dramatic circumscription (88).

The prologue, thus, serves as an explicit exposition that introduces materials before the first scene begins; it functions as a complete episode, or the first act, which is then succeeded by the remaining acts (episodes) of the play. The use of prologues in Greek (classical) drama,

specifically, and western drama, generally, is almost canonical as the lead dramatists of the age such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides have hinged the plots of their dramas on prologues.

Like their Western (classical) counterparts, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka use prologues in *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, respectively, as opening-segments to introduce the rest of the actions in their dramas, thereby telling the audience (reader) what to expect. The use of prologues in African drama becomes critical since, like their classical playwrights, their actions start in a sort of "Medias Res" thereby necessitating an explicit identification of the crisis in the prologue where the entire plot revolves around.

Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, like its Greek source-text, Euripides' *Alcestis*, begins with a prologue in which Abena, Edufa's sister, sadly recounts the dejection that has, of late, befallen her brother's household. Hers is a song of lament at the present deplorable state of affairs in her brother's house ever since Ampoma, her brother's wife, fell sick. In the prologue, we learn that Abena, at the orders of her brother, Edufa, spends sleepless nights preparing the herbs – actually collecting dew into the pot – for the sick Ampoma. Abena laments, thus:

ABENA: [*Beginning slowly and sleepily*]
Night is long when our eyes are unsleeping.
Three nights long my eyes have been sleeping,
keeping wakeful watch on the dew falling,
falling from the eaves …

[*She glances anxiously around the inner court, rises, goes towards the steps leading to EDUFA'S rooms, hesitates and turns back.*]

and dreaming.
Dreamlike views of mist rising
Above too much water everywhere.
I heard tonight,

A voice stretched thin through the mist, calling.
Heard in that calling, the quiver of Ampoma's voice.
Thought I suddenly in the restless white waters,
The laterite red of an ant-hill jutting
And rocking.
A misty figure on its topmost tip,
Flicking her fingers like one despairing.
I panicked, and came to this door, listening,
But all was silence –
Night is so deceiving when our eyes
Are robbed too long of sleep. (97)

……..
Here in this house, where there was always someone
laughing, suddenly no one feels like smiling. I've
never known such silence in my brother's house… (98)

Typical of all prologues in drama, the above excerpt serves as an exposition of the utter gloom that has befallen the once cheerful household of Edufa. Although Abena fondly remembers the cheerfulness that has been characteristic of her brother's home, her laments about the sleepless nights she spends preparing herbs not only put the audience in a suspenseful mood as to what the problem in Edufa's household could be, but also give us clues on the imminent tragedy that strikes at the end of the play.

The Greek hypotext, Euripides' *Alcestis*, starts the action with a prologue in which the god Apollo gives us vital background information that explains the events prior to the current state of things in King Admetus' palace. Accordingly, the god Apollo was banished from Olympus and forced to labour for a mortal man, Admetus, king of Pherae, Thessaly, for having ragingly slewed the Cyclopes who forge the fire of Zeus as a vengeful act for the death of his son, Asclepius, who was struck dead by Zeus' thunderbolt. We also learn that as an appreciation for Admetus' hospitality to Apollo, the god had actually trickily persuaded the Fates to grant king Admetus the privilege of living beyond the allotted time of his death – as his life would have been cut short for upsetting Artemis, Apollo's sister. There is an aspect of hypertextuality here in

that, the Admetus' privilege to elongate his life, like in *Edufa*, comes with a price: king Admetus must find someone to die in his stead, something that his devoted wife, Alcestis, agrees to do, as opposed to Admetus' parents. Apollo remarks:

> APOLLO Dwelling of Admetus, wherein I, a God,
> deigned to accept the food of serfs! The
> cause was Zeus. He struck Asclepius, my
> son, full in the breast with a bolt of thunder,
> and laid him dead. Then in a wild rage I slew
> the Cyclopes who forge the fire of Zeus. To
> atone to this, my Father forced me to labour
> as a hireling for a mortal man; and I came to
> to this country, and tended oxen for my
> host. To this hour, I have protected him
> and his. I, who am just, chanced on the
> son of Pheres, a just man, whom I have
> saved from Death by tricking the Fates.
> The Goddesses pledged me their faith
> Admetus should escape immediate death,
> if, in exchange, another corpse were given
> to the Under-Gods. … (2)

The above excerpt from the prologue in Euripides' *Alcestis* is instrumental in arousing and sustaining the interest of the audience as it gives the audience vital background details of the action. The fact that the actions of these plays start in *medias res* (in the middle of things), the prologue, thus, enhances our appreciation of the play by giving us hints on the likely resolution of the conflict. We also notice a hypertextually stylistic relationship between the two drama texts, *Alcestis* and *Edufa*. Both texts, in a hypertextual form of Genette's concept of transtextuality, dramatize men obsessed with the elongation of their lives, much to the detriment of the lives of their devoted and unsuspecting wives.

The centrality of the classical technique of a prologue in condensing the action by giving the audience vital background details of the action of the play is further evident in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are Not to Blame*, an African remaking of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. In a typical

hypertextual relationship with its Greek hypotext, the prologue gives us a backstory to the action around which the entire plot revolves: in the royal house of Adetusa and Ojuola, the king and queen (respectively) of Kutuje Kingdom, a first-born male child, as was the custom of the land, is taken to Baba Fakunle, the Priest of Ifa, to have his future foretold by the priest. Unfortunately, the new-born child's future, as foretold by the Ifa priest, is one of patricide and incest, great transgressions in the land of Kutuje. Intent on averting the fulfillment of such a dreadful prophecy, King Adetusa, on the advice of the priest, quickly orders his special royal messenger, Gbonka, to have the ill-fated new born taken to the evil forest and forthwith killed. Two years, later, Obatala, the god of creation, comforts the royal family, Adetusa and Ojuola, with another son, Aderopo. We are told that thirty years later, King Adetusa is murdered, leaving a political (leadership) vacuum that was greatly exploited by the people of Ikolu who constantly attacked Kutuje, until the arrival of Odewale, a traveller from the tribe of Ijekun Yemoja, who motivated the people of Kutuje in defeating the people of Ikolu leading to his subsequent installation as the new king of Kutuje and being rewarded further with the marriage of Ojuola, the queen of Kutuje. In view of the above, the narrator could not be more elaborate:

NARRATOR … It is their first baby,
so they bring him for blessing
to the shrine of Ogun,
the god of War, of Iron,
And doctor of all male children.
Then they call
a Priest of Ifa,
as is the custom
to divine
the future that this boy
has brought
with him.
…….

…Now Baba Fakunle
tells Mother, tells Father,

tells the priest of Ogun and aged keeper
of the king's household and the land;
he tells them
what it is that the boy has brought
as mission from the gods
to carry out on earth.

BABA FAKUNLE This boy, he will kill his own father
and then marry his own mother!

[*The TOWNSPEOPLE sing a dirge, softly*.]

NARRATOR Bad word!
Mother weeps, Father weeps.
The future is not happy,
But to resign oneself to it
Is to be crippled first…
Man must struggle.
The bad future must not happen.
The only way to stop it
Is to kill,
Kill the unlucky messenger
Of the gods,
Kill the boy … (2-3)

The above is an excerpt from the prologue in which, like in its Greek source-text, *King Oedipus*, the audience (reader) is given a wealth of information that is central to the play's plot. Like its Greek hypotext, the action in Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, starts when things are already in Medias res as the new-born in the royal house of Kutuje is doomed to commit the most dreadful of crimes, patricide and incest. This, albeit with modifications, is what the prologue in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* is about. Told as a Theban legend, the prologue, after giving us details of how the ancient kingdom of Thebes was founded and the genealogy of the subsequent Theban kings, the ill-fate of the new-born Oedipus, son to King Laius and his queen Jocasta, is then given:

> … Cadmus begat Polydorus, and Polydorus begat Labdacus, and Labdacus begat Laius; and to Laius and his wife Jocasta a son was born. Before even a name had

> been given to this infant – indeed, by some accounts, before he was born – his life was clouded with the presage of disaster; for Apollo's had nothing but ill to foretell of him: he was destined one to kill his father, and to become his own mother's husband. (23)

The above excerpt, from the prologue in Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, has a hypertextual semblance with Ola Rotimi's the *Gods Are Not to Blame*. The prologues of both drama texts talk about one thing, the ill-fated nature of the newborns in both Thebes and Kutuje kingdoms, and how the respective kings, Laius and Adetusa, terrified by the oracles' predictions, try, unsuccessfully though, to avert the fulfillment of the ill-fated predictions. The implication here is that, man's unavoidability of fate is universal: as was the case in classical Greece, fate cannot be avoided in Nigeria, West Africa and Africa, generally.

Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* is another African drama text whose prologue is hypertextually-hinged on Euripides' classical play, *The Bacchae*. Although there is a touch of great artistic ingenuity, Soyinka's prologue parallels that of its source-Greek play. Like Euripides, Soyinka uses the prologue as both an introduction to, and an explanation of the ensuing action. Through the prologue, the audience is, therefore, provided with vital background information that enhances the audience's understanding of the action. In the prologue of Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and unrestrained revelry, tells the audience of how his native Thebes, under the reign of his young cousin, King Pentheus, refuses to accept him as a god, noting that participants of his cult are always persecuted under the orders of Pentheus. Stating his patrimony ("even here in Thebes"), he tells of the circumstances leading to his birth and divinity: he was born of a divine father, Zeus, and a mortal Theban princess, Semele. Through his narration of his birth, we notice that Dionysus was "twice-born": his mother, Semele was consumed by Zeus' thunderbolt and the embryo, taken at six months from his mother's womb, was placed in the thighs of Zeus, and born

three months later. His divine birth is, however, contested by his mother's own family who believe that she had blasphemed when she said that Zeus was responsible for her pregnancy, the reason the members of Cadmus' royal family believe she was struck dead by Zeus' thunderbolt. The narrator says:

> DIONYSOS Thebes taints me with bastardy. I am turned
> Into an alien, some foreign outgrowth of her
> habitual tyranny. My followers daily pay
> forfeit for their faith. Thebes blasphemes me,
> Makes a scapegoat of a god.
> It is time to state my patrimony – even here in
> Thebes. I am the gentle, jealousy joy. Vengeful
> and kind. An essence that will not exclude, nor
> be excluded. If you are man or woman, I am
> Dionysos. Accept. …(1)

Soyinka's prologue in *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* above can be compared with an excerpt from Euripides' prologue in *The Bacchae* below:

> DIONYSOS I've arrived here in the land of Thebes, I Dionysus,
> son of Zeus, born to him from Semele, Cadmus'
> daughter, delivered by a fiery midwife – Zeus'
> lightning flash[1] … Thebes is the first city of the
> Greeks where I have roused people to shout out
> my cries. …(1)

Although the two prologues above do not strictly follow a systematic wording, they basically talk about the same thing, the return of Dionysos to Thebes, the birthplace and ancestral home of his mortal mother, Semele, and how he struggles to be accepted as a god in his own mother's family. Basing on Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, it can be argued that Soyinka's prologue alludes to Euripides' dialogue in *The Bacchae*. Moreover, the two prologues serve a similar purpose of providing the audience with vital information that precedes the actions of the two drama texts.

3.3 Plot Structure and Scope

In a more basic perspective, the plot of a literary work refers to the arrangement of events (action) in a rather cause-and-effect manner. Plot, is thus, taken to be the "thread" around which the story revolves. Perhaps more insightful about plot in tragedy, specifically, and drama, generally, is the view held by Aristotle, an acclaimed Greek philosopher, literary critic and author of *The Poetics* – a masterpiece literary treatise. In *The Poetics*, Aristotle not only views plot as "the ordering of the incidents" of the play, but also regards it as the most important element of the six "constituents" that he thinks determine the quality of a tragedy. Noteworthy also is the plot's scope, for which Aristotle deposits:

> Now that these definitions have been established, I must go on to discuss the arrangement of the incidents, for this is of the first importance in tragedy. I have already laid down that tragedy is the representation of an action that is complete and whole and of a certain magnitude – for a thing may be whole and yet lack magnitude. Now a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end … (66).

In essence, therefore, the "wholeness" of the plot of a tragedy is determined by its tendency to have a beginning, middle and an end, otherwise dubbed the "triadic unity" of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. As already emphasized, this study affirms the dialogic (intertextual) tendency of literary works as postulated by famous literary critics like Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Gerard Genette, by which they mean to say that literary works influence each other in one way or the other. Against such a background, therefore, African dramatists like Sutherland, Rotimi and Soyinka break no artistic rule when the deliberately structure the plots of their drama texts in the model of classical Greece. Most captivating is the way they pay homage to the Aristotelian notions of the scope of the plot of a tragedy as stipulated in *The Poetics*. Their plots, like other elements of style used, thus, intertextually allude to the Greek drama texts of Euripides and Sophocles as they all feature the "thesis-antithesis-and-synthesis" model.

Basically, the plot structures comprise the five components of: Exposition, Rising action, Climax, Falling action and Denouement (Resolution).

3.3.1 Exposition

In a tragic action, the exposition refers to the first part of the action where background information that helps understand the story is provided. It occurs at the start of the story and it is basically used to reveal such vital information as the setting, the characters, especially the protagonist (tragic hero) and antagonist (antihero), and the main conflict of the story. Usually, the exposition contains the "inciting moment" – the single incident in the action of the story that sets the reminder of the story into motion, and without which there would be no story at all.

In Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, the exposition involves the utter gloom in the household of Edufa as a result of the near-death sickness of his devoted wife, Ampoma. Having been duped into swearing an oath to die in her husband's stead, Ampoma's death is fast approaching as she quickly becomes too frail to even leave her bedroom. The once festive household in which visitors from all parts of the country were treated with remarkable hospitality has fast degenerated into great despair and misery to the extent that all doors in Edufa's home have to be kept shut, lest people intrude in and learn of the currently appalling situation in the once jovial home of Edufa. Ampoma's situation is so bad that her husband, Edufa, desperately looks for local medicine (herbs) in the hope that she may be better. No one in Edufa's household is undisturbed by Ampoma's sickness as Seguwa and Abena have to spend sleepless nights preparing the herbs. The exposition in Sutherland's *Edufa* parallels its Greek source-text, Euripides' *Alcestis*. Alcestis, Admetus' wife, like Ampoma, (but willingly) has sworn an oath to die in her husband's stead, and the time for her death has fast approached. The gloomy

atmosphere in the once happy household of king Admetus, like in *Edufa*, is best described by the chorus:

LEADER OF THE CHORUS (*chanting*) Why is there
no sound outside the palace?
Why is the dwelling of Admetus
silent? Not a friend here to tell me
if I must weep for a dead Queen or
whether she lives and looks upon the
light, Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias,
whom among all women I hold the
best wife to her spouse.

CHORUS (*singing*) Is a sob to be heard?
Or the beating of hands
in the house?
The lament for her end?
Not one,
Not one of her servants
Stands at the gate!

Ah! To roll back the wave of our woe,
O Healer,
Appear! (5)

Like in Edufa's household where there is total misery and desperation, king Admetus' household is not any better. Alcestis' life, like Ampoma's, is at the brink. This type of textual relationship seen in the expositions of the two texts is what the French literary theorist, Gerard Genette, calls hypertextuality. The hypertext, *Edufa*, although with modification, has disclosed an underlying retold hypotext, *Alcestis*: both texts dramatize the predicament of men obsessed with the elongation of their lives.

Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, features an exposition almost similar to the one in its Greek source-text, Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. Like in the Kingdom of Thebes, the people of Kutuje kingdom, under the reign of the new king, Odewale, are greatly suffering from a terrible catastrophe (plague). However, unlike the plague in Oedipus' Thebes, the one in the kingdom of

Kutuje is so indiscriminate that not even the king's household is spared as people and animals in the entire kingdom die daily. Consequently, Aderopo, Queen Ojuola's second born, is then sent to Ile-Ife, the oracle of Ifa, at the "shrine of orunmila" to find out the cause of the plague, from where he returns to tell the kingdom elders that the kingdom of Kutuje is under a curse for harbouring the murderer of Adetusa, the late king. The plague that has befallen the people of Kutuje is captured in king Odewale's address to his subjects:

> ODEWALE My people. Children of our fathers.
> Sickness is like rain. Does the rain
> fall on one roof alone? No. Does it
> fall on one body and not on another?
> No. Whoever the rain sees, on him it
> rains. Does it not? It is the same with
> sickness. You do me great wrong,
> therefore, to think that, like a rock in
> the middle of a lake, forever cooled by
> flowing waters, I do not know, and cannot
> cannot know the sun's hotness that burns
> and dries up the open land. Indeed, you do
> me great wrong, my people …
>
> CITIZENS (*prostrating themselves*). We beg for forgiveness.
>
> ODEWALE No, no – do not beg. I have said nothing yet
> to prove me innocent of your charges, and
> already you beg for forgiveness. No, do not
> beg, I pray you, only listen. And listen well.
> I know your pains, my people. I feel your
> Suffering too. Sickness is in your houses?
> Sickness has entered my palace too … (10)

The above excerpt shows the severity of the plague that has befallen the people of Kutuje kingdom. The plague has also been experienced by the members of the Odewale's household, especially the children such as Adebisi who is not only suffering from a mucous-infested nose, but vomits every time she tries to eat.

Of the plague in the Theban kingdom in Sophocles *King Oedipus*, the following dialogue is illustrative:

> OEDIPUS Children, new blood of Cadmus' ancient line –
> What is the meaning of this supplication,
> These branches and garlands, the incest filling
> the city, these prayers for the healing of pain,
> these lamentations?
> I have not thought it fit to rely on my messengers,
> But am here to learn for myself – I, Oedipus,
> Whose name is known afar.
> (*To the Priest*.) You, reverend sir,
> In right of age should speak for all of them.
> What is the matter? Some fear? Something you
> desire? …
>
> PRIEST My lord and king: we are gathered here, as you see,
>
> Young and old, from the tenderest chicks to the
>
> age-bent seniors;
>
> priests – I of Zeus – and the pick of our young
> manhood …
> You too have seen our city's affliction, caught
> in a tide of death from which there is no
> escaping …(25-26)

The above excerpt from Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, full of lamentations and despair as a result of the plague, parallels the lamentations and desperation seen in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Both Thebes and Kutuje are under a similar plague because of a similar curse – harbouring, though unwittingly, the murderers of their respective kings, Laius and Adetusa. This is yet another instance of hypertextuality, where the two texts have featured a similar exposition, but with the hypertext, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, making modifications suitable for the Nigerian/African audience.

In the exposition of Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, we get to know about the return of god Dionysus to Thebes, a recounting to the audience of the bizarre

circumstances leading to his birth and his anger that his mortal family, the royal house of Cadmus, denies him a place of honour as a deity. The exposition, also, gives us important information regarding the nature of the new Theban king, Pentheus. His regime, as indicated by the bodies of crucified slaves in the opening stage directions, is absolutely tyrannical and too blood-thirsty. The manner in which king Pentheus orders his soldiers to have Dionysus arrested after finding his grandfather, Cadmus, and Tiresias, Thebes' blind seer, dressed for the rituals of Dionysus' religious cult is rather impulsive and repressive. Basically, Soyinka's exposition in *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* is almost the same in Euripides' Greek text, *The Bacchae,* except that Soyinka modifies it by including slaves and herdsmen, characters that do not feature in the hypotext. This also exemplifies Genette's hypertextuality in which the hypertext makes modifications to the hypertext.

3.3.2 Rising Action

In the rising action phase, the basic conflict is complicated by the introduction of related secondary conflicts, such as the various obstacles that frustrate the tragic hero's attempt to achieve his goal. In other words, new twists to the conflict are added, making the story more suspenseful. In the case of Efua Sutherland *Edufa,* the rising action is seen in the surprise visit of Kankam, Edufa's father, to his son's home three years when the duo was on non-speaking terms. The entire household of Edufa is already in great distress due to the near-death of Ampoma, and Kankam's visit heightens the conflict in that in his attempt to assert himself as a father, and by extension, a wise old man, he offers advice that ironically makes matters more distressful for his son. When he demands Ampoma's life from Edufa by the latter having to denounce the oath that he has already sworn, Kankam is obviously asking too much from his son. Little wonder that the relationship between father and son is soiled the more.

In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the rising action ensues after Aderopo's return from Ile-Ife, where he had gone to consult from the Oracle of Ifa the cause of the plague in the kingdom of Kutuje. After dilly-dallying about the response from the Ifa priest, he finally tells the kingdom's leadership members, king Odewale and his chiefs, that the kingdom was under a great curse as a result of harbouring the murder of the late king, Adetusa, and that unless the murderer is thrown out of the kingdom, Kutuje will never know peace again. The plot complication occurs when king Odewale, intent on finding the murderer of king Adetusa and bring him to book, asks Baba Fakunle, the kingdom's "Tiresias-figure" who the murderer of king Adetusa could be, only to be told that king Odewale himself, is the murderer, and by extension, the cause of the plague in Kutuje. The dialogue between king Odewale and Baba Fakunle is quite revealing:

BABA FAKUNLE	Handle me gently, I pray you, for I am full of years.
FIRST CHIEF	Well then, talk!
ODEWALE	I shall count to three … Baba, feel this … (*Lets him feel his sword*.) I have sworn by Ogun to expose the murderer before the eyes of all at the feast of Ogun that ends tonight …
BABA FAKUNLE	Rage all you can, King, I will speak no more.
THIRD CHIEF	Pray you, Old One, to be silent is to be –
ODEWALE	Don't beg him. He will not talk. The murderers have sealed his lips with money. Hmm, our race is falling fast, my people. When the elders we esteem so highly can sell their honour for the devil's money, then let pigs eat shame and men eat dung.
BABA FAKUNLE	You called me pig! You are the murderer!
FIRST CHIEF	Murderer? … (27)

Baba Fakunle's eventual revelation that Odewale is the murderer of king Adetusa, and therefore, the cause of this miserable state in Kutuje, becomes a remarkable twist in the conflict of the plot in Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Everyone is shell-shocked at this revelation and King Odewale starts suspecting of plots, subversion and intrigues, believed to be led by Aderopo, the young prince of Kutuje, to dethrone him because he is a foreigner-king. Although Baba Fakunle's revelations will later on prove true, at this point king Odewale thinks that the priest has been bribed to character-assassinate him, triggering the tensions between him and Aderopo.

In the Greek hypotext, *King Oedipus*, the rising action is when king Oedipus, like his Yoruba counterpart, Odewale, learns that the cause of the plague in Thebes, like in Kutuje, is because the murderer of king Laius still lives in Thebes, and like Kutuje, Thebes is under a terrible spell. Oedipus vows to find out who the murderer is, only to be told by Tiresias, the Theban blind seer, that he (Oedipus) is the murderer of king Laius, and by extension, the "cursed polluter of this land" (35), in a rather incredible twist of events in Thebes. The dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias is very insightful:

[*Enter Tiresias, blind, led by an attendant*.]
OEDIPUS Tiresias, we know there is nothing beyond
your ken; Lore sacred and profane, all
heavenly and earthly knowledge are in your
grasp. In your heart, if not with the eye,
You see our city's condition: we look to you
as our protector. We have sent – they may have
told you –to Phoebus, and he has answered.
The only way of deliverance from our plague
Is for us to find out the killers of Laius
And kill or banish them …
TIRESIAS Wise words; but O, when wisdom brings
no profit. To be wise is to suffer. And why
did I forget this, who knew it well? I never
should have come.

OEDIPUS It seems you bring us little encouragement.

TIRESIAS Let me go home. It will be easier thus for you to bear your burden, and me mine.

OEDIPUS Take care, sir. You show yourself no friend to Thebes, whose son you are, if you refuse to answer.

TIRESIAS It is because I see your words, sir, tending to no good end; therefore I guard my own …(34)

When Tiresias reveals that king Oedipus is the "cursed polluter of this land", like Odewale, king Oedipus thinks of a conspiracy against his throne. He suspects Creon to be the architect of this "scheme" to have him dethroned. The tension is so high that a collision-path between Oedipus and Creon soon ensues, until when the former realizes the truth, much later, though. The semblance between the plot complications in both *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *King Oedipus* is remarkable: only the contexts give a difference, typical of hypertextuality.

In Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, the plot complication is seen when the young Theban king, Pentheus, enraged with the "Bacchic rites" in his kingdom, orders for the immediate arrest of Dionysus, the god who has undertaken a disguise as leader of the Bacchantes, and therefore, mistaken by Pentheus as a mere mortal. The twist in the plot is that god Dionysus offers no resistance at all for his arrest. He actually hands over himself to the soldiers sent to arrest him. Dionysus, using his own divine powers, talks and tricks Pentheus into going to watch the Bacchic rites at mount Cithaeron, where he is mistaken by the ecstatic Bacchantes, including his own mother, Agave, for insolent intrusion and subsequently smashed to death. The rising action in Euripides' Greek text, *The Bacchae*, is very much similar to the one of Soyinka.

3.3.3 Climax

This phase marks a change for the worse for the affairs of the tragic hero. That is, circumstances that had previously been good for the protagonist begin to turn bad. And this change of fortune, according to Aristotle, is brought about by an event that occurs contrary to the audience's expectations. In Sutherland's *Edufa*, the play reaches its climax when Ampoma's death makes her husband, Edufa, degenerate into a mental psychosis. In Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the play reaches its climax when Alaka reveals to Odewale that Ogundele and Mobike are not his biological parents and Gbonka is subsequently summoned to clarify things father. And in Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, the climax is when king Pentheus is smashed to death by the maenads in their Bacchic frenzy at Cithaeron.

3.3.4 Falling Action

In the falling action phase, there is the unraveling of the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist, with the former losing against the later. The falling action presents the recognition (Anagnorisis) – the moment of comprehension – where the protagonist (tragic hero) comes to understand his place in the scheme of things, leading to a final catastrophe in which the he is worse off than he was at the beginning.

The falling action in Sutherland's *Edufa* is Seguwa's unraveling to the people at the party of the mystery surrounding Ampoma's sickness and eventual death. The following action in The Gods Are Not to Blame involves the consequences of anagnorisis where queen Ojuola commits suicide and king Odewale blinds himself. While the falling action in Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* is Agave's request to her father, Cadmus, to have the remains of her son, Pentheus, decently buried.

3.3.5 Denouement

This phase involves the continuation of the story after the resolution, bringing it to an end. In *Edufa*, the denouement involves Edufa's desire to see his father and weep on his shoulders, and the chorus' mourning for the dead Ampoma. In *The Gods Are not to Blame*, the denouement involves Odewale's apologies to Aderopo for the allegations of a plot to oust his from the throne and his self-inflicted exile. The denouement in *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* involves a communion in which people celebrate with the wine coming from Pentheus' head.

3.4 The Chorus

M. H. Abrams (1999), in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, traces the origin of the word, chorus, in classical Greece. His view is that the chorus was a group of people, wearing masks, who sang or chanted verses as they performed "dancelike maneuvers" at a religious festival. In Greek tragedies, the chorus played the role of offering commentary on the dramatic actions and events, and expressed traditional, moral, religious and social attitudes of the ancient Greek society. Euripides, however, transformed the role of the chorus into a lyrical function.

In modern literary scholarship, however, the term chorus (or choral characters) is usually used to refer to the people within the play itself who stand apart from the action and by their comments provide the audience with a special, often ironic, perspective through which the audience views other characters and events. The role of the chorus in classical tragedy is stressed by Aristotle in his treatise, the *Poetics* (XVIII):

> The chorus should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be a part of the whole, and should assume a share in the action, as happens in Sophocles, but not in Euripides. With other playwrights the choral songs may have no more to do with the plot in hand than with any other tragedy … (82)

According to Aristotle, therefore, the chorus is an essential aspect of the action of a tragedy since it acts (performs a role) like other characters. This view is augmented by Albert Weiner (1980), in "The Function of the Tragic Greek Chorus", who views the chorus as a "collective character" that should be closely integrated in the fabric of the play so as to bring out this "collective" aspect of the performance of the chorus.

It can be argued that much as the chorus has its origins in classical Greece, and later on, classical Rome, it has since moved to different parts of the globe, not least to Africa, where it has become an intrinsic part of the tragic actions, playing critical roles as actors and commentators on the plots of such African literary works as *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripide*s: *A Communion Rite*.

In Efua Sutherland's play, *Edufa*, the chorus comprises of women, otherwise called the Chorus of Women, and we first meet them as early as Act One, Scene One doing a funeral chant that seems to scare both Seguwa and Edufa, given the fact that the former's wife, Ampoma, is critically unwell. We again see the Chorus of Women in Act Two, Scene One when they arrive at Edufa's home still doing a funeral chant and ask to perform rituals that they think drive a way evil spirits from homes. And finally, we meet the chorus again in Act Three, Scene Two at Edufa's home for the party that has been made for Edufa's friend, Senchi. The Chorus of Women plays two major roles in the action of the play, *Edufa*. First of all, they act like other characters in the play. Hence, they are a "collective character", as Weiner Albert rightly put it. They chant funeral songs as they move from place to place performing religious rites in people's homes in an attempt to drive out bad spirits (evil) from homesteads.

SEGUWA (*Entering from the kitchen*) Who let you in …?

CHORUS (*Cheerfully*) The gate of this house is always open.

SEGUWA (*Uneasily*) Well … greeting …

CHORUS We answer you.

SEGUWA (*Still hesitating at the kitchen door*) And you have come …?

CHORUS We have come to drive evil away. Is the man of
The house in? And the lady? We are driving evil
Out of town.

CHORUS From every home
From street and lane
From every corner of our time.
Ei! Ei! – Ei!
We the orphans cry ... (117)

From the above excerpt, it can be seen that the Chorus of Women plays the part of ritual performance aimed at chasing away ill-luck. This brings out the prevalence of superstition in Sutherland's Ghanaian society in which evil was thought to be in every home. It can also be argued that assigning women the role of performing rites meant to drive away evil is one indication of the low esteem in which women were held in this predominantly patriarchal Ghanaian society of Sutherland's time. Edufa later on tells the chorus that, "But it's late in the morning, and you are women … with homes to feed" (121). In other words, women in Sutherland's Ghanaian society were seen as mere "homemakers", and as such, her play can be viewed as a fictionalized history about the low regard in which patriarchy placed women in the Ghana of Sutherland's era.

Secondly, the Chorus of women also performs a huge commentarial role in the action of the play, *Edufa*. In other words, the chorus also makes key commentaries on the plot that colour the audience's view of the events and other characters. One such key commentary about death, for instance, is made by the chorus' chant below:

(*Speaking at a halt*)
Crying the death day of another
Is crying your own death.
While we mourn for another
We mourn for ourselves.
One's death is the death of all mankind
Comfort! Comfort to us all,
Comfort! … (120)

In the above chant by the Chorus of Women, the inevitable finality of death to mankind seems to be the chorus' emphasis, and that the thought about our imminent deaths, we become motivated to mourn for the loss of other people's lives. Death, according to the chorus, like James Shirley (1618) in "Death the Leveller" put it, is the ultimate equalizer! The chorus, thus, admonishes the "Edufas" of this world who think that other people can exempt them from death by dying for them. To the chorus, that is just a mere postponement of death.

Also, the Chorus of Women reveal to us more about the characters of both Edufa and Ampoma, the former's wife. Edufa's generosity and kindness is depicted in the description that the chorus makes about him: "He-Whose-Hands-Are-Ever-Open"; "Open face/ Open heart/ Open palm/ Edufa" (116). In other words, Edufa is not close-fisted for he is always eager to warmly receive everyone in his home. For Ampoma, the chorus regards her as "wonderful" and a "mother" (135). Such good character attributes of both Edufa and Ampoma make the audience to sympathize with them for the tragedy that befalls them at the end. It should be noted that the role of the chorus in Sutherland's *Edufa* is structured in cognizance with the role that the chorus plays in the Greek hypotext, Euripides' *Alcestis*. Like in Edufa, the chorus in Euripides's play observes and makes comments on the characters, moves the plot and evokes from the audience sympathy for both Admetus and his wife, Alcestis. This mode of transtextuality, according to Gerard Genette, is hypertextuality where the hypertext, *Edufa*, modifies the hypotext, *Alcestis*. The

modification here is that Sutherland uses the Chorus of Women, while Euripides uses the Chorus of Old Men. Both choruses, however, play the same roles of acting and commentary.

In Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, like its Greek source-text, Euripides' *The Bacchae*, features a chorus which comprises of women (Bacchantes) that have journeyed with god Dionysus all the way from Asia to Thebes in an attempt to spread the god's religious cult. Unlike other choruses in classical Greece, the Bacchantes that serve as the chorus in both Soyinka's and Euripides' plays do not undertake active participation in the action of the plays. They, however, through their constant chants in praise of the might of Dionysus, offer commentary on the vindictive aspect of the deity, especially the tragedy that would befall whoever dares to resist the god's religious cult. In telling the audience how the Pentheus is being tricked by Dionysus, the First Bacchante remarks, thus:

> FIRST BACCHANTE Look! He stands in the gate of the trap
> He'll find the Bacchae and with his life
> He'll answer. He thrashes in the net
> Of Dionysus, his wits are distracted
> Though he fought with the will of a titan.
> Yet, for all that, he's a man. (65)

The above quotation gives hints to the audience of the imminent tragedy that would soon befall Pentheus for his earlier insolence to the god. In Euripides' Greek text, *The Bacchae*, the chorus invokes the "hounds of madness" (43) in anticipation of Pentheus' downfall. Through their commentarial role, the choruses in both texts predict for the audience what will happen.

In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the role of the chorus is played by both the narrator and the chiefs of Kutuje kingdom. The narrator makes commentaries on the action, for instance, telling the audience about the ill-fate of the new-born in the royal house of Adetusa and Ojuola, Kutuje kingdom. The chiefs, on the other hand, do both commentary and acting. For instance,

they, together with the king sit in a council and demand that Aderopo tells them about the oracle's answer in regard to the cause of the plague in Kutuje.

3.5 Characterization of the ideal Tragic Hero

In its basic perspective, characterization refers to the arrangement and description of characters in a literary work. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, is a "representation of people who are better than ourselves" (77), or persons way above the common level, and therefore, the purpose of a tragedy is to evoke pity and fear: we pity the downfall of a nobly great and admirable person, and fear that if we are not careful, we are also likely to get similar falls. Of great significance regarding characterization in a tragedy, thus, is the concept of the protagonist, famously known as the tragic hero. The tragic hero, according to Aristotelian posits in the *Poetics*, is the first of the six constituents that determine a tragedy. The ideal tragic hero is normally considered to be a person of a noble stature in society, essentially admirable because of his good-heartedness, albeit possessing a hermatia (tragic flaw) that grows out of some trait we find admirable in him, which eventually triggers his downfall. In the *Poetics* (XIII), Aristotle describes the "ideal" tragic hero thus:

> This is the sort of man who is not conspicuous for virtue and justice, and whose fall into misery is not due to vice and depravity, but rather to some error, a man who enjoys prosperity and a high reputation, like Oedipus and Thyestes and other famous members of families like theirs. (73)

The tragic hero, in the Aristotelian sense, therefore, must be somebody of a remarkably great social rank, far removed from the common multitude, and although not a prototype embodiment of goodness (virtue), his downfall is not as a result of baseness, but rather an error in judgment, the reason why the audience is filled with pity and fear.

This classical or rather Aristotelian concept of a tragic hero is what the African dramatists such as Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka follow in their works. They, however, follow it in a pure hypertextual sense, as they do modifications to make their works African and not Greek. In Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, for instance, the tragic hero, Edufa, subscribes to the Aristotelian notion of a tragic hero. He is a very wealthy and influential person in his society. His generosity speaks for itself as his home is a constant welcome for everyone in the neighbourhood. He, however, has an obsession for his wealth and he has great fears that he will lose it if he dies. Edufa is intent on keeping all his wealth and cannot imagine losing it to anyone, not even to death: he will do anything to "guard" against dying for fear of leaving his wealth behind. It is this obsession for wealth that compels him to sign a pact with the devil when he consults a diviner to ascertain how long he still had to live. And when he learns from the diviner that he can actually escape death by having someone die in his place, he jumps at the "opportunity" with a false hope that one of his parents would offer to die for him. In the end, his devoted wife, Ampoma, falls into his death-trap as she unwittingly offers to die for him. The tragic irony for Edufa is that, in his obsession to elongate his life, he actually loses it as the death of Ampoma leaves him a mad man. Edufa is, thus, a symbol of the suffering that comes with selfishness and material fetishism.

Sutherland's tragic hero, Edufa, has semblances with Admetus, the tragic hero of Euripides' Greek play, *Alcestis*. To begin with, being king of Pherae, Thessaly, makes Admetus a person of high state or fame. He is also portrayed as being a piously hospitable person and a worthy friend of both Phoebus Apollo and Heracles, the wondering hero. He astonishes everyone in the way he makes the "heroic decision" of playing a "perfect host" to his friend, Heracles, despite the fact that he is mourning his dead wife, Alcestis. In classical Greece, hospitality was seen as a litmus

test ‘Greekness’ and civilization, whereas violation of the guest-host-relation was seen as archetypal monstrosity and villainy, and it is this exceptional sense of hospitality that makes Phoebus Apollo to always intercede for him against the fates. Heracles too rescues Alcestis in gratitude for his host’s extraordinary hospitality. Karuna Shanka Misra, in *The Tragic Hero through Ages*, praises Admetus of possessing “tolme” which means “nerve for courageous and decisive commitment and resolute action” (29). However, Admetus, although initially fated to die young as a result of transgressing against the goddess Artemis, desires to elongate his life, something that he achieves when his loyal wife, Alcestis, offers to die for him.

In Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the tragic hero is Odewale, the new king of Kutuje kingdom. On top of being a person of a noble stature as king of Kutuje, Odewale is also presented as possessing great military prowess as evidenced in the way he immediately organizes the once cowardly people of Kutuje in launching a successful military onslaught against their external invaders from Ikolu. As a king, he is very concerned about the sufferings of his people and is willing to do anything within his powers to avert the plague. He, however, suffers from a quick temperament and overweening pride. He kills king Adetusa just for calling him a bush man, hence, demonstrating a high level of tribal pride and prejudice. After learning that Kutuje is accursed for harbouring, unwittingly though, the murderer of king Adetusa, he quickly pronounces harsh judgments for the murderer. He is so inquisitive to know the murderer of the Adetusa despite warnings from Baba Fakunle and Ojuola. So pride, short temperament and curiosity are some of Odewale’s tragic flaws that trigger his downfall, just like Oedipus in Sophocles’ Geek play, *King Oedipus*. King Odewale is, thus, the Yoruban (Nigerian) Oedipus figure.

In Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, the tragic hero is Pentheus, the new king of Thebes. Although not so much an admirable person especially in the way he reigns through an iron-fist, he nevertheless strives to put order in his kingdom by attempting to squelch the Dionysian-revelry that seem to have made everyone in the kingdom crazy. He is, however, too proud to listen to any wise counsel especially from his grandfather, Cadmus, and Tiresias, the Theban soothsayer. He is also impetuous especially in the way he immediately orders for the arrest of god Dionysos. Trying to defy god Dionysus is king Pentheus' biggest error of judgment that ultimately leads to his downfall. Soyinka's Pentheus is made exactly in the same mold as that of Euripides.

3.5.1 Reversals (Peripeteia)

According to Aristotle's treatise, the *Poetics* (XI), a reversal simply refers to a shift or change in the fortune of the tragic hero, usually from good to bad. In other words, it is the sudden shift from upward glory to tragic decline. It is also known as Peripeteia and is regarded as the turning point in the action of the tragedy after which the plot moves steadily to its denouement. Usually, the dramatic effect of a reversal is to bring down a noble-statured person into an emotional despair or ethical dearth. This classical convention of a tragedy prominently features in African drama.

In Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, the dramatic reversal (peripeteia) is seen when the chorus of women come to perform ritual cleansing in Edufa's house in the hope of driving away evil from the home, and by implication, restore Ampoma's life. Edufa is happy that his wife, Ampoma, is at least improving on her health, and he throws a party for his friend Senchi, to which the chorus of women is invited. In an incredible twist of events for Senchi and the Chorus of women,

Ampoma breathes her last when the merry-making has just started. The time that was meant for celebration turns out to be one of great mourning in Edufa's household. It can, thus, be deduced that the sacrifices made by both Alcestis and Ampoma in offering to die in their husbands' places, causes great grief to both Admetus and Edufa.

There are many instances of dramatic reversals in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* which are framed along Sophocles' Greek text, *King Oedipus*. For instance, Baba Fakunle, the old Ifa Priest is invited by king Odewale and his chiefs to unleash the mystery of the king Adetusa' murderer. At first, king Odewale is confident that the Ifa priest's revelations will help him solve the conflict, only for the priest to tell him to his face that he is the murderer and the cause of the people's suffering in Kutuje. This revelation from the priest is misconceived by Odewale whose tribal obsession makes him think that the old priest is perhaps conspiring with others to have him (Odewale) dethroned, hence, soiling the relationship of the king and the priest. Another instance of peripeteia is the visit of Alaka, king Odewale's childhood friend from Ijekun. Having already been implicated by the Ifa priest as the murderer of the late king, Adetusa, and therefore, the cause of the misery in Kutuje, king Odewale is at first thrilled by the news from Alaka that his "father", Ogundele, is dead. This, in Odewale view, exonerates him from the alleged murder of Adetusa. However, he becomes heartbroken when Alaka tells him in the face that Ogundele is not his biological father – Ogundele is just a foster parent. The excitement that Odewale had at first on hearing that Ogundele is dead degenerates into great sadness on learning that he was just a foster son to the latter.

Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, like its Greek source-text, Euripides' *The Bacchae*, also has instances of peripeteia, although not entirely on the model of Aristotle's posits in the *Poetics*. One instance of a dramatic reversal is king Pentheus' arrest of Dionysus

hoping to end his Bacchic rites, only for the god to escape from prison and embark on a mission to manipulate the young king and trigger his dire end.

3.5.2 Recognition (Anagnorisis)

In classical tragedy, and especially as opined by Aristotle in the *Poetics* (XI), Anagnorisis is the Greek term for "recognition" which means a "change from ignorance to knowledge, and it leads either to love or to hatred between persons destined for good or ill" (71). Usually, in recognition, the tragic protagonist gains important knowledge that was unknown to him before, and this knowledge (discovery) is usually startling, and according to Aristotle, "the most effective form of recovery is that which is accompanied by a reversal, like the one in *King Oedipus* …" (71). It should also be stressed that situations involving recognition (Anagnorisis) are ironic because the audience already knows the information that the characters do not know. As is the case in Greek tragedies, the aspect of anagnorisis or discovery is central to the tragic actions of African drama, especially for evoking the feelings of pity and fear in the audience.

In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, anagnorisis occurs when king Odewale is told by his childhood friend, Alaka, that he is not a biological son of Ogundele and Mobike. Alaka recounts how Odewale was handed over to him by a messenger from Kutuje and he just took him to his master, Ogundele and his wife, Mobike, who having no child of their own, where happy to foster Odewale. The messenger in question is Gbonka, who confirms that Odewale is actually a son of Adetusa and Ojuola. At this point, Odewale recognizes how he has transgressed beyond redemption. He gouges out his eyes, asks for Aderopo's forgiveness for the allegations of plotting to dethrone him and leaves for exile. Ojuola also recognizes how she has transgressed by marrying Odewale, a biological son. This is too much for her to bear and she commits suicide,

arousing pity and fear from the audience. In view of anagnorisis in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, Odewale's speech at the end is quite revealing:

> ODEWALE No, no! Do not blame the Gods. Let no
> one blame the powers. My people, learn
> from my fall. The powers would have
> failed if I did not let them use me. They
> knew my weakness: the weakness of a man
> easily moved to the defence of his tribe
> against others. I once slew a man in Ede … (71)

The aspect of recognition (anagnorisis) in Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, alludes to Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. A messenger reveals to Oedipus his true birth and identity, that Jocasta, the woman he had inherited and bore children with is actually his biological mother, and that Laius, the man he murdered at the crossroads, was his biological father. Therefore, Oedipus realizes that he himself, and not any other person, is the cursed murderer and the cause of Thebes' misery. Unable to bear all these transgressions, he plucks off his eyes and banishes himself into exile, drawing pity and fear from the audience.

Sutherland also features anagnorisis (recognition) in her play, *Edufa*, but unlike in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, much of the recognition in *Edufa* is mental (psychological) in nature. Edufa blames himself for having let his ailing wife, Ampoma, to join the celebrations. Ampoma's constant falling during the celebrations makes Edufa very uncomfortable and serves as a sign that his beloved wife's death is imminent. He also realizes the futility of having swapped his death for his wife's life as he degenerates into utter madness after the death of Ampoma–in essence, Edufa too dies. In Euripides' Greek version, *Alcestis*, Admetus too realizes the futility of hanging on for life, but happily for him, his wife, Alcestis, is brought back to life by Heracles, in a show of gratitude from the latter. At first, Admetus does not know that the covered woman in Heracles' hands is his wife, but later recognizes her and he is very happy.

Anagnorisis in Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* is evident when king Pentheus, having been tricked by Dionysus to dress like a woman in his attempt to grotesquely spy on the Bacchantes, recognizes his own mother, Agave, among the women hitting objects at him. Although he recognizes her and pleads for forgiveness, Agave is under a spell from the vengeful god, Dionysus, and will not relent to her son's pleas. Later on, however, Agave realizes that the person she has helped kill is actually her own son, Pentheus. She is actually helped to recognize this filial atrocity by her father, Cadmus. Realizing that she had committed so monstrous an act, she becomes speechless.

3.6 The Three Classical Unities

According to Aristotle's the *Poetics*, a play should have three unities, namely: unity of action, place and time.

3.6.1 Unity of Action

By unity of action, the play is thought to having only one main action that it follows and with no subplots. In other words, the play's action is limited to a single set of incidents which are related in a cause-and-effect manner, and the action of the play having a beginning, middle and an end. The unity of action has been adhered to by the African dramatists under scrutiny. For instance, in Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, there is a single action which is the sickness of Ampoma, Edufa's devoted wife that eventually leads to her death by the end of the play. The beginning of this action (Ampoma's sickness) is Edufa's obsession with the elongation of his life that prompts him to consult a diviner from where he learns that his death was imminent, but that it would be averted if he got one of the members of his family to die in his stead. Reaching home, Edufa jokingly asks who of his family members loved him so much as to even die for him, and

Ampoma, his wife unwittingly swore under a powerful charm. The middle of the action is Ampoma's ailing nature as a result of having sworn an oath to die in her husband's place. This phase of the action is characterized by Ampoma's usual confinement in her bedroom, the shutting of the once always open gate of Edufa's home to prevent the outside people from knowing the mystery in Edufa's home, and the sleepless nights spent by Abena and Seguwa in their attempt to prepare the herbs that become futile in averting the Ampoma's death. The end of the action is the death of Ampoma and the subsequent degeneration into madness by Edufa. The action in *Edufa* parallels Euripides' Greek text, *Alcestis*, whose single action is the sickness of Alcestis, the devoted wife of Admetus, as a result of having (willingly) sworn to die in her husband's stead.

Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, like its Greek source-text, *King Oedipus*, centres around a single action which is the tragedy of king Odewale in which, like in Thebes, a plague has befallen the kingdom of Kutuje as a result of unwittingly harbouring the murderer of Adetusa, the kingdom's former king. The beginning of the action involves the citizens of Kutuje's arrival at the king Odewale's palace asking for answers to the plague that has befallen them. The middle part of the action involves king Odewale's attempt to solve the plague by seeking to know its cause; being later on told that the cause is the murderer of Adetusa who is currently living in the kingdom and the struggles to know the actual murderer living the kingdom. The end of the action is king Odewale's discovery that he is the cursed murderer and, therefore, the cause of the great misery in Kutuje; queen Ojuola's suicide, Odewale's gouging of his eyes and his subsequent abdication of the throne, and then leaving Kutuje for an unknown destination (exile).

Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, dramatizes a single action, much like its Greek source-text, *The Bacchae*. The action basically centres on god Dionysus' desire to execute revenge against his mortal family, the royal house of Cadmus in Thebes, for refusing to honour him as a god, and instead alleging that his mortal mother, Semele, was a slut who was struck dead by Zeus' thunderbolt for lying that Zeus was the cause of her pregnant. The beginning of the action involves Dionysus' announcement that he has come to Thebes to claim his patrimony and explaining the bizarre circumstances leading to his birth. The middle is king Pentheus' enragement after hearing that the women in Thebes, including his own mother, Agave, have given in to the "Bacchic rites" and his subsequent order for the immediate arrest of Dionysus. The end is king Pentheus' tragedy in which he is killed by the Bacchantes, chief among includes his own mother, Agave, on suspicion of insolent spying on the Bacchantes.

3.6.2 Unity of Place

Here, the play should cover a single physical space and should not attempt to compress geography, nor should the stage represent more than one place. That is, the action of the play should be limited to a single locality. Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* subscribes to the unity of place as the entire action takes place at the home of Edufa, just like *Alcestis* whose entire action takes place in the home of Admetus.

Unlike Sophocles' *King Oedipus* which purely subscribes to the unity of place as the entire action takes place in one place, Thebes, specifically in front of the royal palace of king Laius and Queen Jocasta. Ola Rotimi's play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* makes a deviation from the unity of place. Although much of the action takes place in Kutuje, at the palace of king Odewale, we

are told, in the mime, that Odewale meets with king Adetusa and quarrel in the latter's garden from where Odewale kills Adetusa.

In Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, the unity of place is not also observed. The action takes place in various parts of Thebes such as king Pentheus' palace and in the mountain of Cithaeron. For example, Dionysos is arrested and imprisoned in the palace of king Pentheus where, using his divine power, he flees himself from the prison cell. The Bacchantes (maenads) practice their Bacchic frenzies in the mountain of Cithaeron. The tragic end of Pentheus takes place in Cithaeron.

3.6.3 Unity of Time

By unity of time, the action of the play should take place in no more than twenty-four (24) hours. This, by implication, means that the unity of time limits the supposed action to the duration of a single day. The actions in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite* subscribe to the classical unity of time. However, Sutherland's Edufa does not subscribe to this classical unity as we learn of Abena's laments of spending three sleepless watching over Ampoma's medicine. Three nights are more than one day or twenty four hours.

3.7 Reporting of Gruesome Incidents

Although tragedy has been widely regarded as a "representation (imitation) of a serious action on stage …" (64), it is important to note that the presentation (acting) of gruesome incidents live on stage was unheard of in classical Greek tragedy. Richardson B. Rufus (1885), in "The Appeal to the Sense of Sight in Greek Tragedy", contends that Greek tragedy did not permit the live portrayal on stage of gruesome incidents such as murder, suicide and battles. Such incidents were

instead 'reported' to the audience by messengers as acting them live on stage would be a "reckless prodigality in giving up dramatic situations" (41). In other words, the Greeks considered "bloody" deeds as too horrible for the audience's sight, hence, their preference of a "vivid description to sensuous representation" (41). In the *Poetics* (XIV), Aristotle opines thus:

> Fear and pity may be excited by means of spectacle; but they can also take their rise from the very structure of the incidents, which is the preferable method and the mark of a better poet. For the plot should be so ordered that, even without seeing it performed, anyone merely hearing about the incidents will shudder with fear and pity as a result of what is happening … (74)

The above quotation, ironically by Aristotle, slightly deviates from the critic's earlier notion that tragedy is "an action on stage". Aristotle seems to realize that certain incidents of the tragedy may be too horrible to be acted live on stage, hence, requiring just narration or vivid description. In this case, sight of such gruesome incidents may be attractive, but very inartistic. This view is concretized by Horace, a distinguished Roman literary critic, in his treatise, *Ars Poetica*, especially on his postulations on "Decorum" (literary propriety) as he advises that barbarous (repulsive) acts be reported instead of being shown on stage.

Gruesome and bloody deeds were not only too horrible for the eye in classical Greece alone, but also in Africa. Therefore, like their Greek counterparts, the African dramatists under scrutiny offer rich descriptions, as opposed to displays, of the gruesome incidents that feature in their drama texts. These, they do with the modification guidelines of Genette's notion of hypertextuality.

In Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, the eventual death of Ampoma, Edufa's wife who has been very sick does not occur live on stage. The audience, through the dialogue between Seguwa and the Chorus of, learn that the Ampoma had finally breathed her last.

SEGUWA Oh, speak, tongue! Women, you did your ceremony here, but you left the evil one himself behind you. Edufa. He is in there with his victim. This is the day when Edufa should have died. Another has died for him. His wife, Ampoma. She loved him and she has died to spare his life.

CHORUS ONE Died? For him? People don't die such kind of death.

CHORUS: Died? No. We have eaten here with her, laughed with her. (151)

From the above excerpt, it is evident that the death of Ampoma, which is considered too horrible for the public eye given the respect that Africans accord to the dead, is reported to the audience from the speech interchange between Seguwa and the chorus. In the Greek hypotext, *Alcestis*, the leader of the chorus reports the death of Alcestis, "She is gone! The wife of Admetus is no more" (16). Zeus' striking-dead of Asclepius, the son of Phoebus Apollo, and Apollo's later slewing of the Cyclops in retaliation for his son's murder, is reported by the god Apollo in the prologue.

In Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A communion Rite*, like its Greek source-text, Euripides' *The Bacchae*, horrific deeds are reported to the audience, instead of being acted live on stage. For instance, Zeus' thunderbolt that struck Semele dead is reported to us by god Dionysus in the prologue, and so is the despicable death of king Pentheus narrated to us by one of the kingdom's officials. The official narrates Pentheus' death, thus:

OFFICIAL There were three of us in all: Pentheus,
and I attending the king, and that stranger
who offered his services as guide …Agave
was mad, stark and possessed by Bacchus,
blind to all plea for pity. She seized the
waving hand by the wrist, then planted her
foot upon his chest and pulled, tore the arm
clean off the shoulder. The tongue of Pentheus
stretched out in agony, his mouth ran blood …
The last I saw, his rib-case dragged, clawed
clean of flesh. They played with lumps of flesh
tossed from hand to blood-stained hand until
the hills and valleys of Cithaeron were strewn

with fragments of his body … (75-76)

The above excerpt narrates the gruesome incident of king Pentheus' demise at the hands of the maenads, chief among which includes his own mother, Agave, and his aunts, Ino and Autonoe. It has a hypertextual semblance with the narration given by the Second Messenger in the Greek source text, *The Bacchae* about the same tragic fall of Pentheus:

> … The women cried in triumph – one brandished an arm, another held a foot – complete with hunting boot – the women's nails tore his ribs apart. Their hands grew bloody, tossing bits of his flesh back and forth, for fun. His body parts lie scattered everywhere – some under rough rocks, some in the forest, deep in the trees. They are difficult to find. (48)

The above excerpt sensually describes the horrific end of king Pentheus. Even when such death is not acted live on stage, the description itself is vivid and graphic enough to evoke from the audience emotions of pity and fear.

The keeping off-stage of horrific incidents is further observed in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, and like in its Greek source-text, *King Oedipus*, such deeds are effectively reported. For instance, the constant invasion of Kutuje kingdom by the people of Ikolu shortly after king Adetusa demise, and the subsequent re-organization of the people of Kutuje into a final military onslaught that decisively defeats the former are reported. Also, the suicide committed by queen Ojuola and king Odewale's self-blinding after learning of their transgressions are reported as opposed to being performed live on stage. Of queen Ojuola's suicide, the dialogue below is insightful:

> ADEROPO Where is my mother?
>
> CHIEFS (*pulling him back*) Patience, young man–He wants nobody in there–
>
> FIRST CHIEF (*emerging from the bedroom with a blood-stained dagger*) Oh … Ogun …it is all over.

OGUN PRIEST Is he dead too?

FIRST CHIEF Gods! I have seen deaths before.
As a warrior in this land of Kutuje,
I have seen deaths, at home, in battle.
I have seen deaths. But the death of a
Woman with a knife pushed deep by
Her own hands to reach her very womb
… Gods! (69)

As already indicated, Africans have a high regard for the death and as such, horrific deeds like suicide were kept off-stage and instead narrated. But even then, the narration of queen Ojuola's self-inflicted death (suicide) is vivid enough to catharsis in the audience.

3.8 Conclusion

In the classical literary tradition, especially the drama of Euripides and Sophocles, as well as Aristotle's salient postulations on tragedy in his treatise, *The Poetics*, lead African playwrights, such as Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka found a great inspiration to effectively dramatize the pressing socio-economic and political aspects of their respective African societies. The playwrights' skillful infusion of the classical stylistic elements such as the prologue, plot, chorus and characterization into drama meant for an African stage (audience) is remarkable. There is little doubt that the classical Muses have since migrated from Greece into African theatre.

CHAPTER FOUR

CREATIVE NOVELTY

4.1 Introduction

In a more basic perspective, the term novelty refers to the quality of being new, fresh and innovative. In the context of this study, therefore, creative novelty is used to refer to the way the African dramatists under scrutiny, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka, have consciously or otherwise diverged, both thematically and stylistically, from the classical literary tradition of Euripides and Sophocles by adding 'new things' to the adapted African drama texts, *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, undoubtedly to suit the African context.

The necessity of creative novelty is well emphasized by Thomas Stearns Eliot (1919) in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent", arguably an influential essay in modern literary inquiry. Although T. S. Eliot, in this essay, believed that it is the artist's treatment of his position within the historical context that demonstrates talent, and by extension, greatness, he also runs the argument that, in as much as the present is directed by the past, the past should be altered by the present. He asserts, thus:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. … (37)

In the above quotation, T. S. Eliot's considers the artist's adherence to canonical works (tradition) a benchmark for his literary greatness. He, however, further contends that this adherence should not be a mere repetition or regurgitation of the past; novelty should be

undertaken through slight readjustments of the canonical works, perhaps to suit context. He is quoted:

> …The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past … (37)

In the above quotation, T. S. Eliot's argument is that the order of art is complete before a new literary work is written, but with the writing of a new literary work, the prior works forming an ideal tradition are modified, and the tradition itself altered. Artists are, thus, encouraged to modify tradition as "novelty is better than repetition" (37).

This chapter contends that although Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka have embellished their drama with the fundamental elements of Euripides' and Sophocles' classical literary tradition, as Chapters two and three have elaborately shown, they are not copycats of the classical tradition. The dead poets, have no doubt, "asserted their immortality vigorously" in *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, but modifications have been ensured by the dramatists so that their stories suit the African context. Guided by Gerard Genette's concept of hypertextuality in which the new text (hypertext) modifies the old text (hypotext), this study shows how the dramatists in question somehow depart, both thematically and stylistically, from Euripides and Sophocles.

4.2 Novelty in Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*

The remarkable thematic and stylistic intertextual dialogues between Sutherland's *Edufa* and Euripides' *Alcestis* notwithstanding, there are also instances of diversion between the two texts.

As is always the case with Genette's hypertextuality, the hypertext, *Edufa*, has modified the hypotext, *Alcestis*, to make the play meaningful to a Ghanaian or African audience.

4.2.1 Title and Setting

The first instance in which Sutherland departs from Euripides is in the choice of the title and the setting of her drama text. Euripides' title is *Alcestis*, named after the unwaveringly devoted wife of Admetus, while Sutherland titles her play *Edufa*, named after the husband of Ampoma. Important to note, however, is that Edufa is the eponymous hero of Sutherland's play, while Alcestis is not the heroine of Euripides play. This twist in the character status of the persons named after the title still points at the parallelism of the low status of women in the predominantly patriarchal Greek and Ghanaian (African) societies. It also seems to suggest that the Ghanaian society of Sutherland's time was perhaps more male-centric than its Greek counterpart as to have a tragedy at least bear a female name, although the hero would no doubt be a male.

The setting of the two drama texts also differs: the hypotext, *Alcestis*, has a Greek setting. The geographical setting is Pherae, outside the palace of Admetus, the king of Thessaly, Greece; the temporal setting is around 438 BCE when the Athenian drama festivals in praise of the god Dionysus were still highly observed. The hypertext, *Edufa*, on the other hand, has the geographical setting in Ghana, in the courtyard of the expensive home of the rich and prominent African elite, Edufa, husband of Ampoma. The temporal setting is in 1967, a decade after Ghana had attained her political sovereignty from imperial Britain; the Akan society that Sutherland dramatizes in her play is characterized by a predominance of male-chauvinism, low status for women and the emergence of an African elite class who harboured great ambitions for material

wealth and had superficial regard for the African tradition, as demonstrated by the eponymous character, Edufa.

4.2.2 Change of Characters

Although the story in Sutherland's *Edufa* mirrors Euripides' *Alcestis*, the characters in the former were changed to suit the African stage. In other words, the characters that Sutherland creates in *Edufa* are "equivalents" of Euripides' *Alcestis*. This is because Sutherland is an African playwright whose intention was to dramatize the pressing issues in her Akan (Ghanaian) society by drawing from the semblances of life she sees between her Ghanaian society and Euripides' Greek society. Consequently, in *Edufa*, we have such lead characters as Edufa, Ampoma, Kankam, Senchi and the Chorus of Women who are the African (Ghanaian) equivalents of the classical Greek characters as Admetus, Alcestis, Pheres, Heracles and the Chorus of Old Men in Euripides' play, *Alcestis*. Noteworthy, also, is the fact that Sutherland does not merely change the names of her characters, but also makes slight changes in their character-roles to make them credible for an African audience, which of course is in some ways different from the Greek audience.

Edufa, the Admetus figure in Sutherland's play, is slightly different from Euripides' hero both in name and personality. Edufa's material fetishism and selfishness make him consult a diviner from where he learns that his end (death) is eminent, but that it could be averted if he finds a member of his family to die in his place, something that his wife, Ampoma, offers to do, unwittingly though. This is, however, different from the tragedy of Admetus, Euripides' hero in *Alcestis*, which is as a result of powers far beyond Admetus' control. It ought to be recalled that Admetus had married his devoted wife, Alcestis, by emerging winner of the bride-contest

arranged by Pelias, the father of Alcestis. Although his victory in the contest was due to the help from both Phoebus Apollo and the goddess Artemis, Admetus greatly angered the goddess of the hunt by not including her in his matrimonial sacrifices. Therefore, Admetus' tragedy (death), unlike that of Edufa, is pronounced by an offended deity, the goddess Artemis. Sutherland's diversion from Euripides in the nature of the tragedy that befalls her hero is rather deliberate. She is intent on caricaturing Edufa, a symbol of the breed of African elite class, whose superficial brand of modernity has made them lose contact with the African tradition and shared human values.

Furthermore, Ampoma's decision to offer her life for her husband, Edufa, is an unwitting one. Although her love for Edufa is indisputable, she is duped into swearing to die in her husband's place. Perhaps, she thought she was merely responding to a joke from her husband, Edufa. And at some point in the play, she seems to regret it. The dialogue between Edufa and his father, Kankam, is quite revealing about the unwitting nature of Ampoma's act of self-sacrifice:

> KANKAM Towards evening you returned. The rain
> had stopped, and we of the household were
> sitting here, in this very place to catch what
> warmth there was in the sickly sunset. You
> seemed brighter then, for which change we
> all expressed our thankfulness. In fact,
> contrarily, you were cheerful, though still a
> little restless. How could we have known you
> were carrying on you the hateful charm? …
> How could we have known it was not a joke,
> When you suddenly leaned back and asked
> Which of us loved you well enough to die for
> you, throwing the question in the air with
> studied carelessness? Emancipated one, how
> could we have known of your treachery?
>
> EDUFA (*Rising*) Incredible drivel! Incredible. Is this the man
> I have loved as father?

KANKAM You had willed that some old wheezer like me should be the victim. And I was the first to speak. 'Not me, my son', said I joking. 'Die your own death. I have mine to die.' And we all laughed. Do you remember? … Then Ampoma spoke …(111)

From the above excerpt, we learn that Edufa was sneaky in his attempt to get someone from his family to die in his stead. The question as to whether there was someone in his family loving him as to even die for him was posed in a rather joking manner and shows Edufa's web of deception that unfortunately preys into Ampoma's naïve psyche. Perhaps if Ampoma knew the gravity of the question, she may have thought otherwise. Even when she is later on told by her husband about the gravity of the oath she had sworn, she had nothing in her power to reverse it. Edufa's revelations were a mere show that he cares about his wife, a case of two little, too late. Alcestis, Admetus' wife, on the other hand, does not make the decision to die in her husband's stead unwittingly. She is fully aware of her husband's fate to die, and her decision to die for him is voluntary.

The depiction of Senchi and the character-role ascribed to him in *Edufa* is another instance of the novelty that Sutherland adds to Euripides' Greek story in *Alcestis*. In *Edufa*, Senchi is the equivalent of Heracles. Like Heracles is to Admetus, Senchi is a close friend to Edufa, and like Heracles, he makes a visit to his friend, Edufa, when the latter's adorable wife is on the verge of death. Like Heracles, Senchi is unaware that Ampoma is sick at the time of his visit to Edufa's home. And like Heracles, a party is made for Senchi even when the host is faced with a huge crisis, the near-death sickness of his wife, Ampoma. However, the Heracles figure in *Edufa*, Senchi, is modified to appeal to the African audience. Unlike Euripides' Heracles, Senchi is a sort of constant visitor at Edufa's household where he expects to be treated with utmost comfort by his rich friend. Edufa's dialogue with Senchi is quite revealing:

EDUFA (*With a great sigh*) Oh, Senchi! This has been quite a day.

SENCHI (*Suddenly serious*) Tired? Between you and me, my friend, I'm downrightly weary in my b-o-n-e-s myself. I've become quite a wanderer, you know, tramping out my life. It isn't as if I don't know what I'm looking for. I do. But oh, the bother and the dither. … I'm worn out with travel. Lead me to a bed in a quiet corner, for some sweet, friendly, uncomplicated sleep. (124)

Senchi, a close friend he is to Edufa, is depicted as someone whose constant wanderings for "comfort" have almost worn him off. His friendship to Edufa is rather parasitic and he is obviously one of the targets of Sutherland' satire in the play. Senchi is, however, contrasted with the semi-divine and heroic Heracles in Euripides' *Alcestis*. The friendship between Admetus and Heracles is reciprocal: Admetus treats his friend to a banquet even when he is grieving the death of his dear wife, Alcestis. In return, Heracles rewards his friend's heroic decision of treating him well even in his grief by going down Hades and rescuing Alcestis from death. It should, however, be noted that Heracles' heroic act of retrieving the life of Admetus' wife would not be realistic on the African stage. In Africa, people do not come back from their graves once buried. But the parasitic mode of friendship that Senchi embodies is something very familiar in the African society. In fact, we have many "Senchis" in modern Africa.

Sutherland also makes modifications on the father-figure in her play, *Edufa*. Kankam, the father of Edufa, is obviously the equivalent of the Greek Pheres, father of king Admetus. Like his Greek counterpart, Kankam refuses to die in his son's stead sarcastically telling, Edufa, to "Die your own death. I have mine to die" (111). And both fathers part ways with their sons over disagreements. There are, however, conspicuous differences between the two father-figures, Kankam and Pheres. Pheres in Euripides' *Alcestis* comes back to meet his son, Admetus, in

Pherae (Thessaly), after the death of the latter's wife, Alcestis. In a way, Pheres comes to offer comfort to his grieving son, Admetus. He unsuccessfully tries to advise on how Alcestis should be buried, something that Admetus refuses to heed. The dialogue between the two is quite reveling:

PHERES My son, I have come to share your sorrow, for the wife you have lost was indeed noble and virtuous–none can deny it. But these things must be endured however intolerable they may be.

Take these garments, and let her descend under the earth. Her body must be honoured …

ADMETUS *furiously*
It was not my wish that you should come to this burial, and I deny that your presence is that of a friend! …(27)

In the above excerpt, Pheres has made a cameo at his son's home under the guise of comforting him in his sorrow. His son, Admetus, refuses to acknowledge his offers of comfort as he feels let down by his father's refusal to die in his stead since he was already old and having lived the best years of his life anyway.

However, in Sutherland's *Edufa*, Kankam, the father to Edufa, makes a rare visit to his son's home after an absence of three years. Unlike in Euripides' story, Sutherland's father-figure comes before the death of his daughter-in-law, Ampoma. Therefore, he has not come to offer condolences to his son, like Pheres does, but to chastise his son's decision to mortgage his wife's life for him. Like the exchange between father and son in Euripides' *Alcestis*, the dialogue between Edufa and Kankam is very engaging:

EDUFA (*Seeing his father and recoiling*) You? What do you want? (*His eyes shift uneasily as KANKAM stares hard at him. He comes down the steps*) What do you want? Three years ago you declared me not fit to be your son and left my house.

Had my position not been well evaluated in this town, you might have turned tongues against me as the man who drove his own father out of his home. What do you want now?

KANKAM (*Walking deliberately to the seat near the kitchen*) Yes. It has burnt down to loveless greetings between father and son, I know. What do I want? I will tell you presently. (*He sits*) Don't let us fail, however, on the sacredness of courtesy. Had I entered the house of a total stranger, he would have given me water to drink, seeing I'm a traveller ...

……..

EDUFA What do you want, I say?

KANKAM (*With terrible self-control*) The life of your wife Ampoma, from you. (107-109)

This exchange between father and son after three years without being on talking terms could not be more dramatically appealing. Much as Edufa is wealthy and very popular, in the African setting he still remains a "child" answerable to his father, or at least tradition warrants so. In the African tradition, dying in someone else's place was unheard of. Kankam has, therefore, come back to tell his Edufa, point blank, that he has greatly erred in mortgaging Ampoma's life. Doing the right thing by denouncing the charm is the only "manly" for Edufa.

4.2.3 The Ending

Efua Sutherland also modified the ending of her play, *Edufa*, to make it slightly different from Euripides' *Alcestis*. Although Euripides dramatizes a tragic action in which the king of Pherae, (Thessaly), Admetus, is destined for early death due to his failure to honour the goddess Artemis during his matrimonial offerings, the play actually ends on a happy note with the dead Alcestis brought back to life by Heracles. There is, thus, an element of deus ex machina in *Alcestis* in which Heracles, a semi-divine agent, rescues Alcestis from the jaws of death, restores her back to

life and to Admetus in contravention to the Aristotelian concept of the ending of a tragedy. Euripides' play is, therefore, a tragi-comedy, and not a tragedy.

Edufa, on the other hand, ends on a note of tragic finality as there is no rescue for Ampoma from the jaws of death. Not even the herbs that she bathes or the incense burnings in the house or the chorus' ritual cleansings could avert her death. Sutherland's *Edufa* conforms better to the central notions of a tragedy by its ending than Euripides' *Alcestis*. The decision to have her ending depart from the hypotext could have been motivated by a desire to satirize the new breed of African elites whose material fetishism and selfishness had made them lose touch with reality. She seems to be mocking the superficial notions held by the Edufas of this world that one can actually escape death by having someone die in his stead. Death, in Efua Sutherland's view, is an inescapable call that all mankind must answer at some point in time.

4.2.4 Deviation from the classical Unity of Time

According to the Aristotelian notion of the unity of time in a classical tragedy, the tragic action should be performed in a time period not exceeding twenty-four hours or should take roughly a single day. In *Edufa*, Sutherland violates this classical notion of time. The play shows instances that show Sutherland's deviation from the unity of time. In the prologue, for instance, Abena, Edufa's sister, tells us that she has been spending long sleepless nights watching over Ampoma's herbs. Abena narrates:

> … Night is long when our eyes are unsleeping. Three nights long my eyes have been unsleeping. Keeping wakeful watch on the dew falling …from the eves … (97)

From Abena's lament of the three long wakeful nights she has endured keeping a watchful eye at Ampoma's medicines, it is clear that the action in *Edufa* does not abide by the single day (twenty four hours) time-lag prescribed by Aristotle's the *Poetics*.

Furthermore, we learn that Edufa's father, Kankam, retraces his footsteps at his son's home after a three-year absence following a disagreement between father and son. The dialogue between Seguwa and Kankam reveal the three years:

SEGUWA (*Approaching him hesitantly*) Grandfather!

KANKAM (*Quietly*) Yes. It is me. Three years, is it? Three years since I walked out of that same gate, a disappointed father. Three years. Well … tell him I am here.

SEGUWA Tell Edufa?

KANKAM Yes, the man whom nature makes my son. (107)

Following a disagreement between Edufa and his father, Kankam, it took the latter three years to go back to the former's home. Kankam is a major character in this drama since he is the Pheres figure in the play. The play, *Edufa*, does not subscribe to the Aristotelian unity of time. Sutherland seems to suggest that what matters for the African audience may not necessarily be time, but the seriousness of the action.

4.2.5 Chorus

In her play, *Edufa,* Sutherland further makes an amendment on Euripides' chorus in *Alcestis*, although both choruses play the similar roles as actors ("collective characters") as well as making commentaries on the actions of the plays. Deviating from Euripides' Chorus of Old Men in *Alcestis*, she adopts the Chorus of Women in *Edufa* to firmly express her feminine sentiments about the plight of women in the Akan society of Ghana, specifically, and Africa as a whole. From her play, she makes it clear that women of the Ghanaian society of her time were the ones

charged with the degrading responsibilities of driving away bad spirits from the community and even mourning the dead, and so finds using women as the chorus far much more appropriate than men in a predominantly patriarchal Ghanaian society. Unlike Euripides who merely affirms the predominantly patriarchal Greek society in *Alcestis*, Sutherland, on the other hand, is very satirical of this wanton male-dominance that has for so long characterized Ghana and many societies in Africa. Through the Chorus of Women, therefore, Sutherland criticizes the predominantly patriarchal African society that has deliberately kept women at the periphery.

4.2.6 The prologue

Both plays, Sutherland's *Edufa*, and Euripides' *Alcestis*, feature prologues that provide very enriching backstories to the plays' conflicts that prompt the audiences' curiosity. However, Sutherland has modified her prologue to make it suitable for the African stage. In *Edufa*, the prologue stars Abena, sister of Edufa, lamenting about the sleepless nights that she has to endure watching the dews fall in a black pot, something that she has been assigned to do by her brother, Edufa, and something she does without necessarily understand the reason the reason (s) behind it, much as she is aware of the sickness of her sister-in-law, Ampoma. In the same prologue, Abena tells us of the remarkable change of fortune in her brother's home due to Ampoma's sickness. The home that used to be a place of joy and merriment has suddenly become a place of despair as no one laughs.

Euripides' prologue in *Alcestis*, on the other hand, stars the god Phoebus Apollo who recounts to the audiences the circumstances leading to his rendering services in the household of Admetus, king of Pherae, Thessaly (Greece). The god also tells us that it was through his intercession with Thanatos (Death) that Admetus was allowed to escape imminent death if he could find a member

of his family to die in his stead. All his family members, including his father, Pheres, refused to die for him. Only his loyal wife, Alcestis, offered to sacrifice her life for him. The deviation of Sutherland's prologue from Euripides' is in two ways: first, whereas Euripides' prologue stars a deity, god Apollo, Sutherland's prologue has a mortal, Abena. Using a mortal in a prologue for an African play is more credible for the African audience because the African concept of gods and divinities is a sacred one. In Africa, gods, including ancestral spirits, are too respected for them to "stoop low" and serve in the household of a mortal as is done by Apollo. The other difference is that in Sutherland's prologue, we are only told how things have changed for the worst in Edufa's household, but not given the reason for the change of fortune. Although we know that Ampoma's sickness is the reason for the misery in this once cheerful homestead, we learn of the cause of her sickness later on. This contrasts with Euripides' prologue where the god Apollo immediately tells us of the impending death to Alcestis for having offered to die in her husband's stead. However, both prologues play a similar role of providing the audience with vital background information to the conflicts in the two plays, but each is constructed to suit the (stage) audience of its society. Therefore, Sutherland's prologue suits an African stage (audience), while Euripides' prologue suits an ancient Greek audience.

4.2.7 Use of African Symbols

Much as Sutherland's play, *Edufa*, parallels the style of a classical tragedy, its success in the African theatre has also been realized through Sutherland's skillful infusion of the classical aspects with elements from the African oral tradition, notably from the Akan people, Ghana. The symbols used in the play include the sun, owl, Ampoma's waist beads, et cetera. In the play, the sun becomes a great image. For instance, we are told that the sign of the sun is drawn on the doorstep; Ampoma also implores to talk with her husband, Edufa "a little longer in the sun

before I step into the dark where you cannot see me" (104); as "The sun is shining on the world, and I am …. falling) (102), and Ampoma's remark that "Over me, the sun is getting dark" (105). In the African tradition, the sun is a giver of life, power, strength and energy. The presence of the sun in the play is a great symbol for life and its absence in Ampoma's bedroom symbolizes her lack of life and imminent death in place of her husband, Edufa. The owl that Sam keeps is also another African symbol that Sutherland uses in her play, *Edufa*. In the African tradition, owls are regarded as forerunners of bad luck, ill-health and even death. The hooting of Sam's owl in Edufa's home, is symbolic of the imminent death that will strike at Ampoma and cause more catastrophe in the household of Edufa. No wonder Edufa feels uncomfortable Sam keeping the owl with him. Ampoma's offer of her waist beads in a casket to her husband, Edufa, is symbolic of the formers imminent death for love's sake and a plea that both Edufa and Ampoma should remain in love even after the latter's death. The waist beads also symbolize womanhood in Ghana, and putting them around Edufa's neck is a veiled mockery of Edufa's lack of true manhood: he is not man enough to die his own death, and therefore, not any different from a woman. These symbols are not present in Euripides' *Alcestis* and they spice-up the "africanness" of the play.

4.3 Novelty in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*

As is the case with Efua Sutherland's *Edufa*, the Nigerian playwright, Ola Rotimi, structures her play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, along the model of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. Although the two plays have remarkable thematic and stylistic semblances, they also have noticeable differences as Rotimi, adhering to Genette's theory of hypertextuality, modified Sophocles' play to suit his intended African audience.

4.3.1 Title and Setting

The first remarkable instances in which Rotimi departs from Sophocles is in the way he chooses his title and the setting, both physical and temporal, of his play. Rotimi deviates from Sophocles by titling his play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, by which he intended to straight-facedly tell his Nigerian compatriots to be initiative and embrace hard work so as to solve the many challenges that befell the nation after independence, instead of just resigning everything to divine agents. This is unlike in Sophocles' *King Oedipus* where there is great emphasis in the belief and obedience to the gods for all the solutions to the challenges that mankind in classical Greece was facing. By choosing such an advisory title, Rotimi hints to the audience that unlike in Sophocles' play, the tragedy in *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is a communal one, rather than personal.

Rotimi also changes Sophocles' entire setting in *King Oedipus* to suit his Yoruba, Nigerian (African) audience. Instead of Thebes, he uses the fictionalized Kingdom of Kutuje that is not only suffering from the great plague as a result of unwittingly harbouring the "cursed polluter" of their kingdom, but has also been a victim of external attacks from the neighboring people of Ikolu kingdom, as his physical (geographical) setting. His temporal setting also differs from Sophocles' in that his story focuses on the events affecting Nigeria in the 1960s (1968) as opposed to the 429-420 BCE temporal setting for Sophocles' play. Therefore, although the events and characters in Rotimi's play greatly allude to those in Sophocles', *The Gods Are Not* to *Blame* is a dramatization of the predicament that the Nigerian nation found itself in shortly after her independence.

4.3.2 Change in Characterization

Characterization is another area in which Rotimi diverts from his Greek counterpart, Sophocles. There is a deliberate alteration of the lead characters' names in the hypotext, *King Oedipus*, and

even an addition of other characters in the hypertext, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, to suit the best interests of the African (Nigerian) stage. King Adetusa, Queen Ojuola, Odewale, Aderopo, Baba Fakunle, Alaka, Gbonka, Ogundele and Mobike are the African equivalents of the Greek characters in *King Oedipus* as, King Laius, Queen Jocasta, Oedipus, Creon, Tiresias, Shepherd, Messenger, Polybus and Merope, respectively. Even though Rotimi's characters are the African equivalents to the Greeks, they have noticeable differences.

Adetusa, the late king of Kutuje kingdom and former husband of Queen Ojuola is the Laius figure in Rotimi's play. Like king Laius, his first born-child is ill-fated to commit the despicable crimes of patricide and incest; like Laius, he orders the immediate killing of the ill-fated child in a futile attempt to avert fate, and like king Laius, Adetusa is eventually unwittingly murdered by his son, Odewale, in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Ifa Priest (oracles). However, Adetusa is slightly different from Laius in many ways. Whereas king Laius and his queen, Jocasta, of Thebes produced the ill-fated Oedipus as their only child, King Adetusa and his queen, Ojuola of Kutuje kingdom, were blessed by the gods with another son, Aderopo. Rotimi seems to be pointing at the significance of having children, especially male children, for the royal house as they are the heirs apparent to the throne. Also, children in the African societies, no matter the calamity they may cause to their families, are still revered as they are a source of respect and a blessing from the powers that be. Moreover, in the African past, a childless man, no matter the grey-hairs he had, could not be accorded the same respect that was given to a young and even poor man with children. So, the importance of children in the African society is demonstrated by Rotimi's decision to have Adetusa and Ojuola produce another child after the deciding to part ways with the ill-fated one. The other conspicuous difference between Adetusa and Laius is that the former was killed trying to usurp his murderer's garden, but most importantly as a result of

belittling the murderer's tribe: Adetusa called Odewale's Ijekun tribe a tribe of "bushmen", something that greatly angered Odewale into committing the murderous act. On the other hand, king Laius is murdered as a result of a quarrel with a stranger, Oedipus, over who had the right of passage. To the African audience, a mere quarrel over the right of way is so trivial that it could not make people kill each other. The concept of tribe is, however, a very sensitive thing in the African tradition as people strive to belong. Given the fact that Nigeria lost many human lives once it degenerated into a civil war, the Biafran War 1967-1970, in which tribe was a major cause, murdering someone for insulting one's tribe is a believable thing. The cause of Adetusa' murder appeals best to the African audience than Sophocles' mere quarrel over the right to path.

Sutherland also modified the character of Odewale in *The Gods Are Not to Blame* for the African audience. Odewale, the presumed son of Ogundele and Mobike, and new king of Kutuje kingdom, is the Rotimi's equivalent of Sophocles' Oedipus, the presumed son of Polybus and Merope of Corinth, and the new Theban king. Like Oedipus, Odewale is doomed to kill his own father and marry his own father; like Oedipus, Odewale is immediately ordered by the royal house of Kutuje to be murdered in the evil forest because of his ill-fate; like Oedipus, Odewale is pitied by the person assigned to execute his murder and then handed over to a messenger from another kingdom; like Oedipus, Odewale assumes his "foster parents" to be his biological parents and makes efforts to learn away from them as he fears that he may one day fulfill the Priest's prophecies of his imminent patricide and incest. However, the two heroes also have remarkable differences. For instance, although both suffer from pride, Oedipus is more proud than Odewale and this is seen in their attempts to find solutions for the catastrophes that have befallen their kingdoms. Whereas Oedipus thinks he can single-handedly find the solutions to the

plague in Thebes, Odewale feels he alone cannot solve the plague in Kutuje and urges his people to also try within their means to come out with the solution. He tells the townspeople thus:

> Yes I know. But what have you done about it, I ask. You there – Mama Ibeji – what did you do to save your twins from dying? … 'The land is bad', you all cry, 'we suffer much, we die', you moan. Yet each one of you lies down in his own small hut and does nothing. …If you, in your own small hats are so helpless, so crippled that you now come to me, a single man, expecting magic, then let me tell you that we shall soon all die, hand in hand, in one big grave …Because I, Odewale, son of Ogundele, I am only a person, human: like you, and you, and …you. (12-13)

Odewale acknowledges the immensity of the problem that has befallen the entire Kutuje kingdom and is humble enough to ask for concerted efforts from his people instead of complaining all the time to only one man, Odewale. Odewale thinks it would require sheer magic for only one person to solve such an immense problem. Moreover, some of his people confess to him they have somehow tried, but the solution is not forthcoming. "Your highness … I have tried, in my own house, I have tried … I boiled some herbs, drank them, yet sickness remains" (13), a woman tells Odewale.

Odewale's sense of humility by recognizing that the problem affecting Kutuje is too big a task for only one person is sharply contrasted with the pride and arrogance in which Sophocles' Oedipus views himself in the midst of the plague in Thebes. Unlike Odewale who calls for concerted efforts, Oedipus thinks he, singlehandedly, can get the solution to the problem. He proudly tells his afflicted people thus:

> I grieve for you, my children. Believe me, I know all that you desire for me, all that you suffer; and while you suffer, none suffers more than I. You have your several griefs, each for himself; but my heart bears the weight of my own, and yours and all my people's sorrows. I am not asleep. I weep; and walk through endless ways of thought. … Whatever the god requires, upon my honour, it shall be done. (27)

Such is the arrogant and proud nature of the Theban king, Oedipus. Because he is the king, he thinks all solutions must come from him. By making Odewale ask for some attempts from his people to come out with the solution to the problem, Rotimi seems to suggest that unlike in Sophocles' play, the tragedy in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, is a communal tragedy, and not just a tragedy for only one person, Odewale. Whoever has the solution to the problem is welcome. This also points to the communal aspect of life in Africa, and that if tragedy strikes, the entire society should unite and come out with a solution as a society, rather than wait for a fellow human, kingly as he may be, to come out with a solution to the problem. Perhaps, the reason why Odewale falls like Oedipus is that the people of Kutuje did not heed his advice of a collective effort to find the solution to the conflict. They left king Odewale to deal with such an immense problem alone, and like Oedipus, spectacularly failed.

Ola Rotimi's other instance where he departs from Sophocles is in the feat that Odewale first accomplishes before he inherits the royal throne of Kutuje kingdom. In Sophocles' play, Oedipus first solves the riddle of the Sphinx before he is crowned the new king of Thebes. In classical Greek mythology, the Sphinx was a mythical creature, actually a monster with the head of a woman, the body of a lioness, the wings of an eagle and a serpent-like tail that ruled Thebes both treacherously and mercilessly. It would ask a riddle to whoever wanted to enter Thebes and if the person failed to solve the riddle, the Sphinx would kill the person and eat him. Oedipus is posed with the riddle, 'what is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon and on three at night?' which he rightly solved by answering that it is a human being who walks on four legs by crawling as a child, two legs as a grown-up and three legs as he requires a walking-stick in old age, and subsequently rewarded with the royal throne of Kutuje kingdom.

However, far from solving the riddle of the Sphinx, Rotimi's hero, Odewale, undertakes a military feat in which he mobilizes the seemingly desperate nationals of Kutuje and motivates them into defending their kingdom against external aggression from the neighboring Ikolu. Of this military onslaught that finally brought the people of Ikolu to their knees, Odewale boasts thus:

> … I gathered the people of Kutuje
> under my power
> and under my power
> we attacked the people of Ikolu,
> freed our people,
> seized the land of Ikolu,
> and prospered from their sweat.
> So it is –
> he who pelts another with pebbles
> asks for rocks in return.
> Ikolu is now no more,
> but Kutuje prospered.
> In their joy,
> the people made me
> KING,
> me, of Ijekun tribe. (5-7)

Organizing the once desperate people of Kutuje kingdom into a force that eventually defeated their rivals, the people of Ikolu, was no mean feat and the people of Kutuje installed Odewale as their next king, in appreciation for what he had done for them, although this broke tradition. This feat is obviously Rotimi's African equivalent of solving the riddle of the Sphinx. The Greek mythology about solving the riddle of the Sphinx would not make sense to an African audience like solving the riddle of an external aggressor. Rotimi, in as much as he alludes to Sophocles, had the African audience in mind and that is why he uses things that his African audience would be familiar with in his plot.

Ojuola, the queen of Kutuje, is the Jocasta figure in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Like her Greek counterpart, Jocasta, she is gives birth to a doomed child who is immediately

ordered to be killed so that the ill-fate may be averted. Like Jocasta, Ojuola's husband is murdered by a mysterious person at the crossroad; like Jocasta, she unwittingly gets married to her own son and later on commits suicide after realizing. However, the manner in which the two queens commit suicide is slightly different. In Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, Jocasta just strangles herself to which the attendant describes, thus:

> … We saw a knotted pendulum, a noose,
> A strangled woman swinging before our eyes.
> The king show too, and with heart-rending groans
> United the rope, and laid her on the ground … (61)

From the attendant's description of Jocasta's manner of death, she committed suicide by strangling herself, a very pain death indeed. However, Ojuola's death is more than just committing suicide and its description is more graphic than that of Jocasta. Moreover, the Chief who narrates Ojuola's death concedes to not having seen such a "death of a woman with a knife pushed deep by her own hands to reach her very womb …" (69). Both Jocasta and Ojuola suffer self-inflicted deaths, but Rotimi is more graphic than Sophocles.

Aderopo, the second son to Adetusa and Ojuola and the young prince of Kutuje is Rotimi's equivalent of Creon, but sharply contrasts with the latter. Like Creon, Aderopo is sent to the priest to ascertain who the murderer of king Adetusa could be; like Creon, Aderopo is hesitant to reveal to oracle's answer; like Creon, Aderopo is accused of conspiring against the king's throne. And both inherit the thrones of their respective kingdoms after the falls of their kings. However, the two characters are also different in some way. Whereas Creon is a brother to Jocasta, Aderopo is actually a biological son to Ojuola. Rotimi is fully aware of the nature of succession system in African kingdoms. Whereas it is conceivable for an in-law, Creon, to inherit the kingdom in classical Greece, in Africa, such a thing would not happen. The king's children, or at least close relatives of the king, are the heirs apparent to the throne. By modifying the character

of Creon to Aderopo, Rotimi wanted to dramatize a royal succession system that would be seen as credible by the African audience.

4.3.3 Chorus versus Narrator

The use of the chorus is another instance where Rotimi departs from his Greek counterpart, Sophocles. Unlike Sophocles who uses the chorus both as a collective character and commentator on the plot, Ola Rotimi uses the narrator and chiefs in his play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. The narrator's role is to provide a coherent linkage of the different scenes of the play and provide vital background information. For instance, in the prologue, it is the narrator that provides information regarding the ill-fated birth of Odewale and how Odewale's mobilization of the people of Kutuje made them defeat their nemeses, the people of Ikolu. The chiefs of Kutuje play like a chorus as they act and also make commentaries on the plot. For instance, they participate in the play's action by enthroning Odewale as the next king of Kutuje and they send Aderopo to the Ifa Priest to ascertain the murderer of Adetusa, and finally make commentaries on the action of the play, like the manner in which Ojuola kills herself and king Odewale's eventual self-blinding. In the African traditional mode of leadership (royalty), the ruler (king) does not work alone. He is always assisted by his chiefs, which was not the case in classical Greece. To make the story a credible dramatization of the tragedy that befell an African cultural institution, the king had to be portrayed as having chiefs.

4.3.4 Ethnic distrust and Tribal Animosity

Another point of departure between Ola Rotimi and Sophocles is in the way the former has used his play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, to satirize notable vices that were so common in the Nigerian society, shortly after independence. Deep ethnic divisions and distrust was a major vice

that characterized not only the young Nigerian nation after independence, but the entire African continent, even to date. In the play, there is an overriding element of tribal pride that triggers tribal tensions among neighboring societies. People have their tribes at their hearts' cores; they can fight and even kill at the slightest insult of their tribes. Odewale and Adetusa are examples of people who take matters of tribe too far. In fact, the conflict between Odewale and Adetusa is triggered by sentiments of tribal pride and arrogance. Adetusa, the king of Kutuje is too culturally arrogant and proud that it does not take him time to insult Odewale's Ijekun tribe as the "bush tribe", much to the annoyance of Odewale and the subsequent brawl that results in the murder of Adetusa.

OLD MAN (*Stops laughing*) You from the bush tribe, come to
These parts and boldly call me 'THIEF'?

ODEWALE Where am I from?

OLD MAN (*Calling his men*) Gbonka …Olojo–come, come
Come quickly–come and listen to this
Man's tongue.
(*Two men run over with their hoes*)

ODEWALE'S VOICE That is the end. I can bear insults
to myself, brother but to call my tribe bush,
and then summon riff-raff to mock my
mother tongue! I will die first. … (46)

As already noted, the Nigerian people were so proud of their tribes that the first thing in a conflict would be an attempt to degrade the other's tribe as we see Adetusa do. On the other hand, people are so tribal sensitive that they can endure anything, but not an insult on their tribes. It is because of the tribal pride and arrogance that makes Odewale murder king Adetusa.

Important to note also is the fact that tribal pride and arrogance led to untold tribal invasions as we see the people of Ikolu invading and nearly defeating the people of Kutuje kingdom. It is after the arrival of Odewale that the people of Kutuje are mobilized to defeat the people of Ikolu.

Furthermore, king Odewale is always suspecting Aderopo and Baba Fakunle to be in a plot to oust him from the royal seat because he is a stranger, although this does not turn out to be true. Although Oedipus also alleges a plot involving Creon and Tiresias to have him ousted from the Theban throne because he is a foreigner, the tribal sentiments in Rotimi's play are more elaborate than in Sophocles' play, *King Oedipus*, probably because ethnic distrust and tribal animosity was more pronounced in Africa than was in classical Greece.

4.3.5 Deviation from the Unities of Place

Ola Rotimi also deviates from the classical unity of place that limits the action of the play to cover only a single physical space. Unlike Sophocles whose entire action takes place outside the palace of Oedipus and queen Jocasta, the action in Rotimi's play is not only limited to the palace of king Odewale and queen Ojuola. In the mime, we see Odewale and Adetusa in a conflict that culminates in the eventual death of the latter, and this is at Ede, where two footpaths meet and far away from the palace in Kutuje. In the King Oedipus, the murder of Laius is just narrated and no action is evident. Therefore, the action in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, unlike in Sophocles' play, *King Oedipus*, is not confined to the king's palace and therefore does not subscribe to the classical unity of place. What matters for the African audience is not the time or place of the action, but rather the seriousness of the action.

4.3.6 Use of elements from the Yoruba Oral tradition

Like Efua Sutherland's play, *Edufa*, Ola Rotimi has also effectively fused elements of the Yoruba oral tradition with elements from the classical literary tradition. The elements of the Yoruba oral tradition include proverbs, riddles, songs, incantations and black magic. Proverbs were majorly used in the Yoruba society to spice-up speech in enriching traditional wisdom.

Notable instances where proverbs are used in the play include: when the people of Kutuje come to the palace of their king, Odewale, distressed by the plague, the SECOND CITIZEN says, "When rain falls on the leopard, does it wash off its spots? Has the richness of kingly life washed off the love of our king for his people?" (10). The above proverb is suggestive that the people of Kutuje think king Odewale has become too preoccupied with kingly life and therefore, no longer cares about their sufferings. Another proverb is spoken by Odewale to his chiefs, "When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they not do to the flesh of a frog? (23). The proverb shows Odewale's obsession with ethnic distrust. Innocently thinking that king Adetusa was murdered by his own people, he thinks that murdering him (Odewale) would be much easier. There is also a firm belief in black (African) magic as both Odewale and Adetusa charm each other with witchcraft in their fight in the garden at Ede. There is a depiction of Yoruba deities, chief among is Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron. All the prophecies are made at the shrine of Ogun and in Ogun's honour. There are also dances in the play. For instance, the people dance around Odewale, paying homage for his military exploits that enabled them to defeat their rivals, the people of Ikolu, and the people sing as they go the bush to collect herbs. All these elements of the Yoruba oral tradition do not only differentiate Rotimi's play from Sophocles', but also make the play fit for the African stage.

4.4 Novelty in Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*

Although the story of Wole Soyinka's play, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, is in many ways similar to the one of Euripides' *The Bacchae*, there are modifications that the Nigerian playwright makes on the Greek story to suit the African audience (stage).

4.4.1 Modification of the Title

Wole Soyinka modifies Euripides' play, *The Bacchae*, by adding a sub-title, "A Communion Rite", making the full title of the new play to read, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. The play features aspects of communion and sacrifice through the Greek belief that for purposes of achieving fertility in the land and crop growing to flourish, a scapegoat must be sacrificed to the gods. The Theban (state) religion demands the sacrifice of the masses and an Old Slave is chosen as the scapegoat that will be sacrificed in pursuit of the fertility of the land. However, as the play progresses, the burden of the sacrifice shifts to king Pentheus himself whose death at the end of the play is not seen by the oppressed masses of Thebes as mere retribution from Dionysus, but a means of ushering communion (regeneration) in the kingdom of Thebes. In the Euripides' play, the element of sacrifice and communion do not appear, making Soyinka's playa little modified from the Greek play. It is important to note that African societies are historically-rooted in ritual and communion. Soyinka's departure from Euripides' ending is more appropriate for an African audience for which the play was meant.

4.4.2 Two Choruses

The structure of the chorus is another way in which Soyinka deviates from Euripides' original play, *The Bacchae*. Unlike in the hypotext where there is only one Chorus of the Bacchantes, Soyinka, in the hypertext, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, adds the chorus of the slaves to Euripides' traditional chorus of the Bacchantes to make two choruses that both function as actors and commentators on the plot. The addition of the chorus of slaves in the hypertext was a deliberate attempt by Soyinka to satirize Greece's rampant slave annihilation, especially the Helots, the most ill-treated slaves in world history. Soyinka's play is, hence, a reaction against

Euripides' 'loud silence' on the fifth-Century imperialistic Athens' dehumanizing treatment of non-Greeks.

4.4.3 Modification of Characters

Soyinka has also made modifications on some of the characters in his play, *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. For instance, the god Dionysus in Soyinka's version is made to look a little moderate and at some point, a Christ-figure. His divine enigma is revealed to the audience, much as Pentheus is too blind to see it and will try everything to undermine him, much to his tragic end of course. Agave, Pentheus' mother is another character that Soyinka has modified. In Euripides' play, when she becomes sane and realizes that she has murdered her own son, things become worse for her. However, in Soyinka' play, she learns to subdue herself because of her former Bacchic madness. Agave looks more reformed in Soyinka's version than in Euripides'.

Also, Tiresias' mode of persuading Pentheus to accept Dionysus as a deity differs in the two versions. In Euripides' play, Tiresias advises King Pentheus to worship of Dionysus as a way of self-abandonment, while in Soyinka's version, Tiresias regards Pentheus' acceptance of the god as a fundamental step towards self-knowledge and this is important for an African audience given the dogmatic reverence of divinities in Africa.

4.4.4 Parallelism between Ogun and Dionysus

Wole Soyinka viewed Euripides' play, *The Bacchae*, as being mythically and culturally relevant to his Yoruba tradition as he see Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron, as having a "twinhood" with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and unrestrained revelry. In his introduction to the play in which he cites a passage from an earlier essay of his, "The Fourth Stage", Soyinka points out

inter-cultural penetrations where the two deities merge, while pointing out differences between the two gods. He asserts:

> The Phrygian god and his twinhood with Ogun exercise irresistible fascination. His thyrsus is physically and functionally paralleled by the *opa* Ogun borne by the male devotees of Ogun. But the thyrsus of Dionysus is brighter, it is all light and running wine, Ogun's stave is more symbolic of the labour of Ogun through the night of transition … (v)

According to Soyinka, the Yoruba deity, Ogun, is comparable to the Greek deity, Dionysus, as they have many things in common, chief among which includes the carrying of a thyrsus, although the latter's thyrsus is brighter. Besides, Soyinka likens Dionysus' journey with his worshippers (Maenads) from Asia to Greece with Ogun's migration from Asia via Egypt and Sudan. Such a parallelism between the two deities does not exist in Euripides' play.

4.4.5 New Ending

There is also a deviation of the ending of Soyinka's play from its Greek source-text. Euripides' *The Bacchae* ends with retributive justice from the god Dionysus in which the people of Thebes are sentenced to slavery in other lands for dishonoring him as a deity and threatening him with violence, especially Pentheus' decision to have him arrested. There is a noticeable change in the ending of Soyinka's version where the sense of retribution is not as violent as the Euripides'. In *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*, the people of Thebes drink wine flowing from the head of king Pentheus as a communion (regeneration) for the re-ordered Theban kingdom by the god Dionysus.

4.5 Conclusion

Much as the African playwrights under scrutiny, Efua Sutherland, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka, have used the structures, plots and characters from the classical literary tradition in their drama

texts, they have also made changes to the original Greek texts to suit the African context. Using the New historicism literary theory and central ideas of intertextuality, they have modified classical Greek drama for the African stage. Noticeable alterations to the Greek drama texts have been done in the titles, settings, characterization, the chorus and "Africanizing" the themes in *Edufa*, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *The Bacchae of Euripides*: *A Communion Rite*. The dramatists in question are, therefore, African playwrights, and not Greek playwrights in Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, conclusions and recommendations are made based on the three specific objectives of the study, namely: the underlying classical themes; the classical style used by the authors, and the creative novelty in the selected plays. The content scope of this study was in a threefold: the first was the classical themes and ideas, then the classical style used by the authors, and lastly, the creative novelty in the selected plays.

5.2 Findings and Conclusions

Regarding themes and ideas, it was found out that the thematic aspects of the selected plays were based on the underlying classical themes. The classical themes featured include: fate versus freewill with the idea that man cannot escape his fate, despite his desires and attempts to do so, and that freewill is merely delusional; Sin and retribution with the underlying message that no wrong goes unpunished; Patriarchy, subjugation of women and misogyny in which it was discovered that male-dominance is not only oppressive to women, but that it also empty; Human suffering was another classical theme that was featured in the plays in which a society would suffer, both physically and psychologically, the transgression of a leader, and lastly the folly of overweening pride in which it was discerned excessive pride leads to self-destruction. In dramatizing themes that were recurrent in classical Greece, the playwrights underscored the essence of a shared humanity in all aspects between classical Greece and Africa, irrespective of the geographical and temporal distances that separate the two.

Regarding the classical style, it was found out that the African dramatists under study were greatly inspired by the classical literary style to dramatize the socio-economic and political aspects of their respective societies. Notable elements of style that was used include: the use of prologue that provided a backstory to their conflicts; the chorus that worked both as actors and commentators to the actions of the plays; plot structure involving a unified plot, with a beginning, middle and end, and characterization, especially the attributes of a tragic hero such as being a person with a high social rank, having a fatal (tragic) flaw and falling as a result of both fate and freewill.

Regarding creative novelty, it was found out that much as the African dramatists under scrutiny were greatly inspired by the classical literary tradition, did not mere copy the drama of Euripides and Sophocles to just reproduce for the African stage. Guided by the theories of intertextuality as advocated by such critics as Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Gerard Genette, they skillfully infused classical referents with elements from the oral tradition of their respective societies in a bid to make their plays appeal to the African audience. They, therefore, added new things by sometimes deliberately diverting from the original Greek drama texts because they had an African in mind at the time of creating the plays. Creative novelty was seen in such things as the titles, setting, characterization, the endings and elements from the African oral tradition.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- Future literary scholars should investigate the role of classical literature in promoting imperialistic agenda in Africa.

REFERENCES

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. London: Wadsworth, 2005.

Acheraiou, Amar. *Rethinking Postcolonialism*: *Colonialist Discourse in Modernist Literature and the Legacy of Classical Writers*. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2008.

Agard, Walter R. "Fate and Freedom in Greek Tragedy." The Classical Journal, vol. 29, no. 2, 1933. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3290417

Alfaro, Maria Jesus Martinez. "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept." Atlantis, Vol. 18, no.1/2, 1996. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41054827

Aristotle. *Poetics* Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997.

Asuamah, Adade-Yeboah. "The Tragic Hero of the Neo-Classical Revival." International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 2, No. 14 (Special Issue), July, 2012.

Baker-White, Robert. "The Politics of Ritual in Wole Soyinka's 'The Bacchae of Euripides," Comparative Drama, vol. 27, no.3, 1993. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41153657

Brian, Crow. *Studying Drama*: *With an Introduction by Dapo Adelugba*. Longman Group Limited, Essex, UK, 1983.

Carla, Willig. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*: *Adventures in Theory and Method*. Second Edition. Open University Press, Berkshire, England, 2008.

Chris, Baldick. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford University Press, New York, USA, 2001.

Christopher, W. N. Kirunda. *Hybridity and Christopher Okigbo's Poetry*. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda, 2010.

Deborah, Cartmell (Ed). *A Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation*. Blackwell Publishing Limited, South Gate, Gichester, West Sussex, UK, 2012.

Edgar, V. Roberts & Henry E. Jacobs. *Literature*: *An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Second Edition, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1989.

Eliot, T. S. "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*." *The Longman Anthology of British Literature.* Vol.2B. Ed. David Damrosch et. al. New York: Longman, 2000. 2439-2444.

Emily, Greenwood. *Afro-Greeks*: *Dialogues Between Anglophone and Caribbean Literature and Classics in Twentieth Century*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Goff, Barbara and Michael Simpson. "*History Sisters: Femi Osofisan's Tegonni: An African Antigone*." *Crossroads in the Black Aegean.* Ed. Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

Hanna, Roisman M. (ed). "The Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy." First edition, John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2014.

Hardwick and Stray (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Classical Receptions* (2007); Martindale and Thomas (eds.), *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (2006).

Helene, P. Foley. “Female Acts in Greek Tragedy”. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2001.

Ian, C. Storey and Arlene Allan. *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama*. Blackwell Publishing Limited, Malden, USA, 2005.

Idowu, Odebode and Cynthia Eke-Opara. “Ethnography of Communication in Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not to Blame*: A Pragmatic Study.” British Journal of English Linguistics, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 2015.

Jerome, Beaty & Paul J. Hunter. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. 7th Edition, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1998.

Karuna, Shanka Misra. *The Tragic Hero through Ages*. Northern Book Centre, New Dheli, 1992.

Katrak, Ketu, *Wole Soyinka and Modern Tragedy: A Study of Dramatic Theory and Practice*, Greenwood Press, 1986.

Kehinde, Ayo. “*Intertextuality and the Contemporary African Novel*.” *Iba: Essays on African Literature in Honour of Oyin Ogunba*. Ed. Wole Ogundele and Gbemisola Adeoti. Ife: Obafemi Awolowo UP Limited, 2003. 161-177.

Khosravi, Shakib Mohammad. “Inevitability of Arts from Intertextuality.” Frontiers of Language and Teaching, vol. 3, 2012.

Malik, Gaines. *Black Performance on the Outskirts of the Left*: *A History of the Impossible*. New York University Press, New York, 2007.

Marianne, McDonald. *Black Dionysus*: *Greek Tragedy from Africa*. University of California, San Diego, USA, 1999.

MLA: *An Introduction and Overview*. 8th Edition, DSC-UCF Writing Centre, August, 2016.

Murfin, Ross, and Supryia M. Ray. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.

Obafemi, Olu. "*Intertextuality as Radical Aesthetics and Ideology in Osofisan's Theatre*." *Politics and Aesthetics: Essays in Drama, Theatre and Performance.* Ed. Olu Obafemi. Ilorin: Haytee Press and Publishing Co, 2008.

Omolara, Kikelomo Owoeye. "Classical Temper and Creative Ingenuity in Osofisan's Tegonni: An African Antigone." Synthesis, Fall, 2013.

Oyibo, Eze Norbert. "Overthrowing the Status Quo: Interpreting Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* from a Marxist Perspective." International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences, vol. 1, Issue 3, December, 2015.

Paolo, Gaibazz & Marco Godin. *The Work of Fate and Fortune in Africa*: *Critical African Studies*. Vol. 7, No. 302-209, 2015.

Patrice, D. Rankine. "Black is, black ain't: Classical Reception and Nothingness in Ralph Ellison, Derek Walcott and Wole Soyinka." Revue de literature Comparee, 2012.

Peter, Woods. *Successful Writing for Qualitative Researchers*. Second Edition. Routledge, New York, USA, 2006.

Reeves, Charles H. “The Aristotelian Concept of the Tragic Hero.” The American Journal of Philology, vol. 73, no.2, 1952, pp. 172-188, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/291812

Richard, V. Cudjoe, et al. “The Fall of the Tragic Hero: A Critique of the “Hubristic Principle”. Journal of Arts and Humanities, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2011.

Richard, Rutherford. *Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World*: *Classical Literature*: *A Concise History*. Blackwell Publishing Limited, Malden, USA, 2005.

Richardson, Rufus B. “The Appeal to the Sense of Sight in Greek Tragedy.” Transactions of the American Philological Association (1869-1896), vol. 16, 1885, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2935781

Robert, Baker-White. *The Politics of Ritual in Wole Soyinka’s The Bacchae of Euripides*. Comparative Drama. Volume 27, published by Western Michigan University, USA, 1993.

Rotimi, Ola. *The Gods Are Not to Blame.* London: Oxford UP, 1971.

Sayyed, Ali M. and Elaheh Soofastaei. “Gerard Genette and the Categorization of Textual Transcendence”. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 6, No. 5, MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, 2015.

Sharon, K. Hall (Ed). *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Volume 3, Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan, USA, 1980.

Simoes, Tony da Silva. “Myths, Traditions and Mothers of the Nation: Some thoughts on Efua Sutherland’s Writing.” UOW Library, Faculty of Arts – Papers (Archive), 2005.

Simon, Goldhill, *Love, Sex and Tragedy*: *How the Ancient World Shapes our Lives*, Chicago – University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Simon, Malphas and Paul Wake (Eds). *The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*. Second Edition, Routledge, New York, USA, 2013.

Sophocles. *Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone. The Theban Plays*. Hammondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1975.

Soyinka, Wole. *The Bacchae of Euripides.* London: Eyre Methuen, 1973.

___ . *Myth, Literature and the African World*. London: Cambridge UP, 1979.

Sutherland, T. Efua. *Edufa.* London: Longman, 1967.

Thomson, Gale. "Classical Literature: American History through Literature 1820-1870." Encyclopedia.com, 16 April, 2019.

Uwem, Affiah & Ndubuisi Osuagwu. "Ethnodramatics: Towards a Theory for Indigenous African Drama." IOSR Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 5, Issue 2, (Nov. – Dec., 2012).

Veenstra, Jan R. "The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt: On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare." History and Theory, vol. 34, 1995, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2505620

Watson, G. J. *Drama: An Introduction.* London: Macmillan, 1983. Lynn, Steven. *Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature with Critical Theory*. 2nd ed. NY: Longman, 1998.

Weiner, Albert. “The Function of the Tragic Greek Chorus.” Theatre Journal, vol. 32, no. 2, 1980. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/327113

Wetmore, Kevin J., Jr. *The Athenian sun in an African sky*: *Modern African Adaptations of Classical Greek Tragedy*. McFarland and Company, Inc., North Carolina, 2002.

Wilkie, Brian & James Hurt. *Literature of the Western World*: *The Ancient World through the Renaissance*. 4th Edition, Volume 1, Prentice-Hall, New jersey, USA, 1997.