

COURSE GUIDE

ENG 861 STUDIES IN WRITTEN AFRICAN DRAMA



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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of the major works, playwrights, and theatre traditions in contemporary written African literature. The course will be an in-depth critique of the way playwrights appreciate and respond to the major historical, social, political, philosophical and moral issues in Africa. Emphasis will be placed on content and dramatic style. The major purpose is to sharpen the insight and intelligence with which we read the probing dramatic artefacts of the time. Authors to be studied include Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong O, Athol Fugard, Sarif Easman, Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Kole Omotoso, Ola Rotimi, Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Zulu Sofola, Tess Onwueme among others.

AIMS

This course will enable you to build on existing knowledge and acquire an in depth critical perspective of written drama in Africa. It will be a basis for evolving an independent perspective and broad approach to the written plays from North, West, East and South Africa. All these issues are discussed within historical, social, political, philosophical and moral cultural contests in Africa.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course you will become familiar with different dramatic genres that have been dominant in written African drama and other forms of written African drama that has evolved. To achieve this, you will at different times in the modules, be required to consider issues on genre, class, gender, as well as ideological commitment. It is vital to also consider the levels of literacy of the writers that are examined as vital points to note particularly they and the issues discussed continue to influence the writing of drama in Africa. Our discourse will begin on the history of early and modern written drama its development in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial Africa.

Class Strategy

Your tasks, among others, in this course will be to read painstakingly through the study units to analyse several of the plays that make up the African Dramatic folio and locate the same within their social and political context, taking account of early modern methods, socio-cultural conditions, compositions and other such parameters.

You will be required to read and get familiar with actual and not the abridged versions of the works referred to or cited as references, listed under further reading and compiled as selected bibliography.

You will be required to work on the exercises provided at the end of each unit. These exercises provide you opportunities to assess your level of understanding and to aid the same.

You will be required at the end of each unit to submit written essays for further assessment purposes.

You will be required to sit an examination at the end of the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

Major component of this course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Course Outline
3. List of Selected Bibliography and Readings
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation Schedule

ASSIGNMENT FILE

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

ASSESSMENT

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

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MODULE ONE
EVOLUTION OF MODERN AFRICAN DRAMA

UNIT 1

INTRODUCTION

Drama is a term that requires a number of definitions and explications to describe it; it is also one form that excludes specifics in terms of definitions and explications. Bentley (1964) argues that 'drama is human'. His opinion is drawn on his views and beliefs that to see drama in something is to, on one hand, perceive the elements of conflict and to respond emotionally to these elements, on the other. He further pursues his argument by stating that if drama is a thing one sees, there has to be the one to see and that that makes it human. Dasyuva (2004) in *Studies in Drama* describes dramatic literature as drama in literary expression which also facilitates the understanding and appreciation of drama among other things (2). One can therefore describe dramatic or drama texts or plays as they are also described as performance in literary expression.

We would constantly need to be reminded of the profuse and enormous pleasures as well as the oddment and the seemingly perpetual eccentricities the world of drama continues to offer the people of the world in a most worthwhile manner. Universally, the diversity and perspectives to drama is endless and, the overflowing abundance of familiar and unfamiliar plays that have been written over thousands of year attests to this fact. Even in Africa which is our concern in this course, the list of plays and playwrights is endless; confirming the obvious on the relevance, the viability as well as the continued significance of the form in contemporary times.

In several institutions where drama is taught, the text is often separated from the performance. A historical overview of drama and dramatic forms in most parts of

the world reveal that performance predated and influenced the written form that drama now takes. As researchers in this field, one ought to keep this as a fundamental ideology in studying, national, intercontinental or world dramas.

Drama, theatre derives its source and finds its relevance in diverse aspects of human life. According to Hughes (2009), theatre does not and cannot exist in isolation: history, theatre, and literature are a part of the social and artistic infrastructure of the world in which we live ... (20). She observes that it is of great significance and even in contexts where literature and theatre is written for purposes of pure enjoyment and not with the intent to educate, both still make up a significant part of what she describes as ‘social and artistic infrastructure ... in the making and recording of history’(20). The primitive theatres in most continents and individual nations of the world (Africa inclusive) are the sources and influences of their theatrical and dramatic traditions.

Modern African Drama refers to the specific type of dramatic activity, an identifiable body of works, critical discourses and theatrical institutions in Africa that emanated from primitive theatres as well as contacts and encounters with European and other foreign theatrical and dramatic influences during the colonial and post colonial periods. African literature as a whole reflects the experiences of Africans, often portraying a nostalgic pre-colonial era to the imperialist ruled colonial era and a post-colonial era marked with diverse contradictions and propositions. These experiences usually form the basis of the themes and setting of African literary works and in this case African drama.

In this module, we will attempt an overview of representative dramatic traditions in Africa which we will necessarily have to delimit because of the number of nations and zones that make up the African continent. Africa is officially recognised as a continent with 54 countries classified into five regions namely Northern Africa, Western Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. In this course we shall study developments and trends in modern African drama in these regions. We shall also focus on playwrights, forms and ideologies

that have defined modern African drama and that suit the recommendations of the course description.

It is important to state here that the prefix 'modern' placed before the phrase 'Africa drama' denotes a form of African drama which has evolved from various forms of theatrical and dramatic performances in African history and a form of theatre which is still evolving. Drama in Africa has evolved through various stages of development. Several scholars have written on the evolution of Modern African drama from the traditional forms of drama and theatre that existed in the pre-colonial era. However, this explication approaches the evolution of modern African drama from three perspectives which other scholars have described as phases.

UNIT 2

THE FIRST PHASE (TRADITIONAL DRAMA AND THEATRE)

Ogunbiyi (1981) describes the evolution of the traditional African drama as an expression of the relations or state of connectedness between man, society and nature. Drama rose out of basic human needs, which includes veneration and entertainment. This period was identified with ritualized performances. Therefore African drama is often described as a form of drama characterized by orality largely because of the folkloric tradition it sprouted from; a tradition which portrays dominant features found in performances in pre-colonial Africa.

Drama in West Africa

Questions have been raised about the existence of the popular theatre tradition before Africa was colonised. Taking developments in Nigerian drama as a template, one finds Ogunbiyi's (1981:11) clarification germane to other national dramatic forms. He makes a distinction between the Nigeria popular traditional theatre in Nigeria and the European tradition that was to become a dominant influence in Africa as a result of colonialism. Popular theatre such as vaudeville, burlesque, circus and musical comedy in the Western style are identifiable as

sources which also serve as influences from the European tradition. This is also true of the other African countries. The Nigerian template is adopted as West African in this class because of the strategic position Nigeria occupies in the continent, the position its dramatists have occupied in dramatic history globally and because this course is being offered in Nigeria and most Nigerian students can identify with this historically or socially. Suffice to note that the first Nobel Prize in creative writing to be awarded to an African was awarded to Wole Soyinka and it was a Nobel Prize informed by his dramatic works. Popular traditional theatre in Nigeria include the Annang drama of the Ibibio, Yoruba *Alarinjo* theatre, The Tiv *Kwag-hir* and Bornu puppet shows and the Hausa comical art of Yankamanci. Most of these theatrical forms, just as it takes place in most theatres of the world, emerged from ritual performances and became deritualized as noted by Ogundeji (2007).

Following the long drawn out arguments of critical scholars of African drama like Ossie Enekwe or M.J.C. Echeruo, drama in Nigeria and in Africa will always be ritualized or de-ritualized. Scholars like Kalu Uka, argue that traditional drama is not drama but simply aspects or elements of drama. J.P Clark opines that the origin of Nigerian drama are likely to be found in the early religious and magical ceremonies and festivals of the Yorubas, the *egwugwu* and *mmo* masquerade of the Igbo, and the *owu* and *oru* water masquerade of the Ijaw. He considers these ritualistic performances as drama typical of the Nigerian national repertory still widely unacknowledged today (Clark, 1981:58). In the same vein, Rotimi in his essay on drama asserts that African ritual display involves ‘Ritual display that reveal in their styles of presentation, in their purpose, and value, evidences of limitation, enlightenment and or entertainment...’(Rotimi, 1981:77).

The hydra headed opinions on drama in Africa still hinges on the ritual origin which is found in almost all theatrical traditions of in the world. Adedeji, in his study of Yoruba traditional theatre, conceives of it as emerging from three stages; the ritual, the festival and the dance. Traditional forms of performances earlier stated translated into more developed forms of dramatic enactment and

theatricality. J.P Clark's seminal essay on aspects of Nigerian drama separates traditional drama in two aspects: the religious form and the secular forms. He cites the annual performance of Obatala and Oshagiyani at Oshogbo and Ejigbo as example of the sacred kind of traditional drama. Clark discusses religious forms of dramas, mythical and ancestral plays from one perspective, and the masquerade plays and drama from different cults and age group from another. His analysis of the secular form of traditional drama is into five types: magic or tricks plays, pastoral or puppet plays, civic drama, dance or song dramas and narrative or epic dramas. He however, concludes that elements which make performances pleasurable and which entertain cannot be separated from the ecstasy and the devotion that transpires during religious worship (Clark,1981: 58-61).

Though Ogunbiyi, describes Clark's classification of drama as outdated and constrictive, one finds that it provides an operational structure and platform for studies in African drama. Ogunbiyi classifies the forms of traditional drama as, dramatic ritual, the popular tradition and Yoruba travelling theatre. Traditional festivals and ritual ceremonies where drama is patently discernable and the serious masquerade performances, he classifies under the sub-section of dramatic ritual and he describes popular traditional theatre as art that is commonly approved and widely liked by the 'common' people in an ever growing urban culture' such as the Yoruba *Alarinjo* and the Bornu Puppet shows.

Drama in North Africa

The North African stage is as dynamic as the West African. The Egyptian theatre is largely symbolic of the Northern African theatres. Zaki (2004) takes on an explicative analysis of the development of the Egyptian theatre. It has been observed that the foundation of the unique style that characterises the Egyptian theatre appeared in Egyptian theatre over five thousand years ago (13). This period of traditional theatre in Egypt is referred to by Zaki as the era of the Pharaonic period, which represents thirty dynasties of Pharaonic rulers. This period is also divided into the old kingdom, the middle kingdom and the new

kingdom. The Pharaonic period was characterized by the strong persuasions of belief in rebirth and regeneration of man which culminated into the beginning of special ceremonies specifically connected to rites of passage. The ruling dynasty also passed judgement and embellished traditions during the Pharaonic period.

At this time, religious and ceremonial observances dominated special ceremonies and also informed the existence of a priestly caste, who were persons assumed to be intermediaries between the Pharaohs and the gods. The privileged position occupied by this class gave them access to wealth, since they were primarily workers in the temple and the temple was a sort of domain for them. An example of grand ceremonial drama first appeared in written form on the Shabako stone, which is a copy of the probable origin of drama in Egyptian history, also known as the Memphite drama. The drama portrayed rivalry between cities of Heliopolis, the centre of worship of the Sun god Amon Ra, and Memphis, the Nile port city situated on the border between the two lands, the new capital of the then newly united country and whose god was nature, Ptah.

During this period, one of the religious ceremonies that attracted thousands of pilgrims was the re-enactment of the Abydos Osiris passion play which tells story of the betrayal, death and dismemberment of the fertility god Osiris by the evil Seth who then proceeds to scatter Osiris body parts up and down the Nile, from where they are rescued by his consort Isis and his son Horus after which Osiris returns to life. The passion play was re-enacted by the priesthood, a strong indication of the bond between religious ceremonies and the origin of drama in Egypt.

Some of the elements of Egyptian traditional ways of life and entertainment during this period also contained elements of drama. According to Zaki (2004), music, a popular form which the people were endeared to, was regarded as sacred art in the temples and had royalty and aristocratic ladies performing it in religious ceremonies (16). As it is with several theatrical traditions in the world, Zaki restates that drama in Egypt evolved from various religious and ceremonial rituals, as well as aspects of the tradition of the Egyptians in the Pharaonic era.

Drama in East Africa

According to Chiarunji and Mwangi (2004:206), Traditional drama in Kenya is rooted in a belief system that acknowledges the existence of a relationship between human beings and the cosmos and the relationship between the human and the supernatural world. Here again, we observe that drama largely emerged from the need of the people to communicate with the supernatural beings, either in supplication to the supernatural powers that are thought to control all things or in the occurrence of natural disasters or to venerate in order to avert such disasters. The use of incantation or dramatisation of religious poetry as it is recorded in most communities were engaged to invoke supernatural powers that are good in and in warding off powers regarded as evil. These dramatic forms were placatory and entreat the supernatural beings for favour.

Kenyan drama emerged as the leading dramatic voice of East in Modern Africa. This came as result of the revolutionary fire and posture that erupted in the period defined by Fashina (2014) as the second phase of African literature. The speeches, critical essays, plays and creative writings of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan revolutionary and nationalist and against colonialism and neo colonialism placed Kenyan drama in the spotlight in East African Drama. The Kenyan people's philosophy on death and mortality also contributed significantly to the development of drama in Kenya. Death is not considered as the end of life; rather, it is viewed as part of the growth for the living, particularly where the deceased was regarded as an elderly person. Elaborate dramatic performances were engaged to help the living come to terms with the phenomenon of death and to help them transmogrify the new ancestor into a world believed to be elevated.

At this point in the dramatic history of Kenyans, drama played a significant role the rites of passage and other rituals. It symbolized the core of the Kenyan custom and its traditions. Drama also played a significant role in the context of child's play in pre-literate Kenya. Most of the games children played involved dramatic forms of role playing. This is important because it helped in gender stereotyping and the stratification of a society in which each individual's role is

clearly defined. Role-playing however, was culture-specific. In the Massai community where house building fell on the shoulders of women, the girls played at roles that portrayed home and house building.

However, in certain communities it would be unthinkable and almost a taboo for a female to participate or play a role in the process of home construction. Drama therefore played symbolic and signifying roles in the pre-colonial society in Kenya. It reinforced the prevalent cultural thoughts, customs, traditions and religious beliefs. This continues to reflect in almost every sphere of the Kenyan life.

Drama in Southern Africa

Starting with the assertion that “Any history of theatre in an African region must stumble against the conceptual boulder of indigenous performing arts,” Kerr (2004:265-273) gives ample examples of rituals, festivals and indigenous ceremonies drawn from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Southern Africa. Kerr gives the example of the San, where the main proof of performing arts is evident in the rich artistic engagements of cave paintings and engravings which are found virtually in all parts of Southern Africa including what is now South Africa.

Kerr further gives the example of the Chewa and Manganja people, with their Gule wa Mkulu (Big Dance) of the Nyau cult of ancestral masquerades. This cult is a patriarchal secret society which performs a complex set of spiritual and secular functions such initiation ceremony and the funeral of chiefs. The Tswana people are also said to exhibit dramatic performances through initiation ceremonies for both males and females. These are known as Bogwera and Bojale respectively.

The people of Zambia and Malawi also show instances of traditional theatre through female initiation rites which gave instruction and guidance to pubescent girls on sexuality and social etiquette through songs, mimes and short dramatic sketches. The Incwala ceremony among the Swazi people also satisfies the nature

of drama and theatre in traditional Africa. This ceremony was a symbolic way of expressing mutual rights and duties with respect to the king, princes and commoner.

This cursory view at four representative regions in Africa further reinforces the claim that most of African drama as we know it emerged from rituals. This indicates that even Modern African drama evolved from or alongside ritual performances in the traditional theatre.

Self Assessment

Exercise 1

1. Examine the features of traditional theatrical performances, the social relevance and significance of these features across the four nations described in this section.
2. Compare the regional features of drama in the four regions.

UNIT 3

THE SECOND STAGE (FOREIGN FEATURES AND INFLUENCES)

Drama in West Africa

This stage marks the period when the incursion of foreign influences first began to make way into African drama. In West Africa, especially Nigeria, Adelugba and Obafemi (2004:143) refer to this stage of the development of theatre in Nigeria as the nationalist phase. In Nigeria, the European churches employed theatre as an effective way to Christianise and enlighten the natives about their ways and religion. This eventually culminated in the success of the imperialists to achieve full imperialism which was inclusive of religious, political, linguistic as well as

cultural imperialism, a determined plan to replace the African ways and beliefs with a European version. As early as 1839, the first batch of immigrants started to arrive. Several of the natives began to receive Western education and as a result absorbed the infallibility of the tenets and models of Western civilisation as represented by Christianity. Ogunbiyi (1981:17) states that, “this class of Nigerians imported the Western and European forms of the concert and the drama which were to constitute the basic framework of the early modern Nigerian drama.

Subsequently, groups and circles that were exposed to these Western forms of drama began to promote these forms to evolve. In 1866, the leading figures in the Lagos society got together and opened ‘The Academy’, a place designated to the promotion of the arts, culture science and social enlightenment.

Between 1866 and 1910, several forms fashioned after ‘The Academy’ were also founded. Some of these groups include The Philharmonic Society which was founded by Otunba-Payne in 1873, the People’s Union which was founded 1904, the Lagos Glee Singers founded in 1910 among others. Virtually all these groups organize shows of their own. Most of the shows featured recitations, musical glee, love songs, duets and solo that were dominant in the programme and content of performances in the English music halls known to enjoy high patronage in the late 1860s and the early 1870s. Dramatic performances that were performed included excerpts from popular books and most of these performances were musical (Ogunbiyi, 1981:18). These performances enjoyed patronages as well as played to full house audiences that were drawn largely from the emigrant elite society of Brazilians, Sierra-Leoneans, Europeans, and a minority of the elite as well as the unlettered indigenous Lagosians (Adelugba and Obafemi, 2004:144).

However, there were other types of entertainment in which drama was fully represented in Lagos at this time. The Roman Catholic Church was the pioneer of this tradition. The French order of the catholic priests, when faced with the challenge of conducting church business in Yoruba to a predominantly Yoruba-

speaking community and Portuguese-speaking Brazilian emigrant group, was compelled to rely on the power of the theatre for effective communication. Thus, from 1881 when St. Gregory's school was founded by the French priest to the end of the century, annual end of the year performances were held. However, although these contributions are crucial, they did not lead to the beginning of a truly modern Nigeria drama.

Adelugba and Obafemi state that in the nineteenth century, the proliferation of groups and the organisation of concert led to the rivalry between the groups and church missions, since the concert were central to the doctrinal and convert-seeking aspiration of the churches. As a result of this rivalry, the churches started pandering to the traditional theatrical tastes of the public. Ogunbiyi (1981:18) states that 1890, a major schism had occurred within the protestant church in Lagos which led to the establishment of fourteen secessionist churches by 1917. This was as a result of the call for cultural nationalism within this period. The secessionist churches promoted the culture of the African race. Ogunbiyi states in his essay that; 'Not only was the call made for independent African churches where Yoruba music and language could be freely used, there were beginning to emerge attempts to blend European and African materials in entertainments. This lead for such 'innovations' came from Abeokuta and Ibadan, but especially from Abeokuta where, for instances, traditional masquerade songs were reworked into church songs as a means of wining over convert from traditional religions. Secessionist churches and more pertinently, the Abeokuta mission, gave form and purpose to the rise of the native drama tradition in Nigeria (Adelugba and Obafemi, 2004:146).

An example of truly Nigerian drama that came from these churches is *King Elejigbo and Princess Abeje of Kontagora* which was written by Dr. D. A. Oloyede under the joint sponsorship of Bethel African church and St Jude church. On April 22, 1904, the play received public performances at the Glover hall; thus, earning for itself the distinction of being the first appearance of church drama group in a public hall.'(1981:19).

However, despite all the hue and cry about the indigenization of the church and the surge towards cultural nationalism, most of these shows were not popular affairs but were limited to a small circle of “Victorian” Lagosians. The majority of the population who were illiterate and ‘uncivilized’ were cut off from the cultural life which the elite group promoted and actively supported. In effect, the theatre of this period was not popular and it relied on the small class it catered to for support. Once that support was no longer forthcoming, the theatre was bound to collapse, and it eventually collapsed when professional and political interests diverted the attention of the elite that it was relying on’ (Ogunbiyi, 1981:20). For a while after the collapse of this theatre, the combined effects of the First World War and the Cinema served to dampen the effects of the following years. It took the efforts of Hubert Ogunde to revive that interest. Ogunde with the richness and virtuosity of his stagecraft and the popularity of his early plays such as *The Garden of Eden* and *The Throne of God*, created a form of indigenous drama, that became known as the Yoruba operatic (travelling) theatre. This subsequently became an established theatrical tradition in Nigeria.

Drama in East Africa

Ciarunji and Mwangi (2004)’s study on East African drama engage Kenyan drama, they recognise the phase during which theatre practice in Kenya was dominated by the English colonial government. This stage is described as constituting significant foundations and a second pillar in the development of modern Kenyan drama.

In the stead of traditional theatrical forms that were communal performances and closely associated with rituals, the colonial period introduced dramatic forms which were more for the stage. In contrary to the traditional forms wherein the line between the performer and the audience was very thin because the two were usually actively involved in the course of performances, the forms introduced during the colonial period established an evident gap between the performer and the audience. More so, the forms were audience-sensitive as a particular form determined the type of audience.

North Africa

The Egyptian example suffices for North Africa, the Graeco-Roman period, Christian era and Islamic period identified by Zaki (2004: 18-2) can be subsumed under this stage. In addition to this is the period of British domination of Egypt (Brockett, 2011:280).The Graeco-Roman period was both of Greek and Roman social and political values. For the Greeks it started when the Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king, entered Egypt after his conquest of Persia and Syria. He founded the new city of Alexandria north to the Mediterranean after taking over the capital city of Memphis. This Greek occupation is known as the Ptolemaic Period. It ended after three hundred years with the demise of Cleopatra VII in 30BC.

After this, the Romans started exercising a total control over Egypt to the extent that it was no longer an independent state with its own capital and kings. That Christian era began with the arrival of Saint Mark in Alexandria in about 40AD and the subsequent official recognition of Christianity in Egypt by Emperor Theodosius. The Islamic period started in 640AD when Alexandria was captured by an Arab army sent by Caliph Omar. With this, Islamic influence spread throughout Egypt and North Africa to the extent that Arabic and Islamic became the accepted and official language and religion respectively. Because the Arabic-Islamic culture frowned at theatrical performance, there was gradual decline in it.

This continued until the nineteenth century when Egypt was under British domination. Thus, playhouses were being built and theatre companies began to appear again. European styles of theatre and forms of productions began to be available after 1870. Singing and dancing as performances came to the fore in this period and men played all the roles. Essentially, during these periods, Egyptian traditional dramatic and theatrical values experienced a continuous imposition of foreign dramatic ideals and orientations.

In other North African countries like Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, this phase experienced extensive control of theatre by the French colonists. However, it was used against the interest of these countries for politicisation of cultural questions and national issues and not as artistic expression.

Southern Africa

In Southern Africa, this phase of evolution of African drama has been termed colonial theatre (Kerr, 2004: 277). This stage was dominated by European theatre which flourished at the expense of all forms of theatricality and performance in pre-colonial Southern Africa.

This theatre of the colonialists served the function of providing white settlers and colonial officers with psychological support and connecting them to European culture and the function of educating and enlightening Africans – natives – into western culture and civilisation.

Self Assessment

Exercise 2

In what remarkable ways did the incursion of Western theatrical and dramatic forms influence the traditional African aesthetics, the African theatrical taste, and the audience?

UNIT 4

THE THIRD STAGE (MODERN DRAMA AND THEATRE)

West Africa

This stage can be further broken down into two sub-sections namely: the theatrical tradition, with emphasis on performing arts and the literary theatre which focuses on writing. Hubert Ogunde pioneered the theatrical tradition in Nigeria with his travelling theatre. When Hubert Ogunde first appeared on the artistic scene, a new kind of drama called the Native Air Opera had become popular due largely to the efforts of the church movement, but more specifically to the efforts of A.K Ajisafe who started to relate church hymns to native airs at

the United African Methodist Church. He was followed in that tradition through the years by renowned theatre artistes such as E.A Dawodu, Ajibola Layeni, A.B. David, G.I Onimole and A.A. Olufeye. Ogunde's arrival on the scene in 1944 was to determine the course of Yoruba theatre for over three decades. He freed the Native Air Opera from its strict confinements, imbuing it with a sprinkling of Yoruba songs and dances.

The fact that the Church of the Lord founded in Ogere in 1931 by Josiah Oshitelu was less fundamentalist in its approach than its parent body was also a factor that contributed towards Ogunde's innovations. In 1946, encouraged by the success of his first two plays, *The Garden of Eden and the Throne of God*, which was initially done as a church play and *Worse than Crime*, which told the story of the slave trade, Ogunde decided to resign from the police force and go become a fulltime professional theatre artiste. He also founded the African Music Research Party which marked the advent of professional theatre in Nigeria. Ogunde was actively involved in the struggle for self rule, an involvement which not only influenced the subject and themes of his works, but also led to his encounters with the colonial authorities.

Basing his work on the premise that theatre must reflect the reality of the society, Ogunde boldly retold the tragedy, hopes, dreams and triumphs of his time and age. He boldly reflected the realities of the society in his dramas, sometimes at great risk to his safety. He did not confine himself to Lagos but subjected himself to gruelling tours of the country, taking his theatre wherever it was needed at any point in time. On one of these tours, he met a man named E.K. Ogunmola, and he remained close to him till his death. This began a long tradition of influences ranging from Duro Ladipo to even the comic Yoruba artists such as Moses Olaiya. It is a rarely known fact that Moses Olaiya's company (The Alawada) was actually a group from the Ogunde theatre. It is also rarely acknowledged that most of the theatrical techniques which other artists of the tradition rely upon were first established by Ogunde. What is remarkable about the Yoruba Travelling Theatre

is how firmly established it has become. It is believed that there are about one hundred Yoruba theatre groups which make up the Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners, and this is excluding the groups stationed in the Republic of Benin where they perform to Yoruba-speaking Beninois.

We will begin our discussion of the literary tradition with a brief examination of the drama of the Onitsha market literature. Although the drama is hardly mentioned in literary studies, it provides us with useful insights into the meaning of the lives of an important segment of a part of the Nigerian society (Ogunbiyi, 1981: 25). What is now known as Onitsha market literature was the product of several socio-economic centre and the upsurge in the acceptance of an egalitarian form of literature at the end of World War I. Onitsha market literature are pamphlets, novelettes, plays/styles and stories written by members of an emergent literate class of traders, artisans and working class persons for a mass literate audience. The interesting thing about Onitsha market literature is the fact that after the narrative genres, the plays come next in number. In fact, most of its most interesting pieces are plays.

The plays deal with a wide range of subjects and themes, ranging from the imprisonment of Adolf Hitler to the dramatized biographies of African leaders, love theme and strictly didactic pieces. Obiechina identifies three or four broad themes in Onitsha market literature namely: didactic love themes, marriage and family tussles and religious and moral themes. These themes are adequately taken care of in the plays. The most prolific playwrights of this tradition are perhaps Thomas Orlando Iguh and Dr. O.A. Ogali. In language and style the literary pieces written in this period are simple and loosely structured, but they serve as models of James Ene Henshaw's better structured and popular plays which are now regarded as the first examples of conscious literary drama in Nigeria.

The rise of drama regarded as serious and relatively contemporary drama in Nigeria is credited to a set of playwrights and dramatists. Ogunbiyi (1981:27) traces the origin of serious contemporary drama to 1960, the year that Wole Soyinka founded 'The 1960 masks'. However, this group was not the only amateur group on the scene at that time. There was also John Ekwere and his Ogui players, which he later called the 'Eastern Nigerian Theatre Group' in the East. However, most of what was known as serious theatre was centred on the then University College, Ibadan. This was as a result of the introduction of drama and theatre courses at the university in 1957 as part of an educational theatre programme organized jointly by the English Department and the Education Faculty (Ogunbiyi, 1981:71).

Amateur theatre formations thus provided the main source of growth for the literary theatre of this generation. A binding cord of literary theatre is their being involved in indigenous theatre traditions from which total theatre evolved. The playwrights in this tradition were also trained in the western tradition and education from which they inherited the dual heritage of dramaturgy and the language of expression (Adelugba and Obafemi, 2004:153). Some of the plays of this period satirized the Nigerian government at that time.

The theatre ideal of the succeeding generation of dramatists is characterized by its materialistic bent. Most of these dramatists were trained outside Nigeria. The thematic preoccupations of most of the plays in this generation are committed to social and historical reconstruction through class struggle and a proletarian consciousness. Their theatre deals with the problems associated with a neo-colonial society such as poverty, corruption, violence, disease, among others. Examples of leading figures in this era are Kole Omotosho, Femi Osofisan, Sam Ukala, Tess Onwueme amongst others. Some notable plays in this generation are: Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Tegonni*, Bode Sowande's *Farewell to Babylon*, Tess Onwueme's *Reign of Wazobia* among others (Adelugba and Obafemi, 2004:15).

The latest dramatists that have emerged since the nineties can be said to be producing protest dramas more in line with the theatre for development. Most of them are influenced by happenings on the world stage. Some of the new Nigerian dramatists and drama include Felix Okolo's *Mekunnu Melody* and Ben Tomolaju's *Jankariwo*.

North Africa

This stage which has been identified with postcolonial North Africa is characterized with attempts by nations of this region to get rid of their multi-cultural roots in colonial drama decolonisation and by implication, a search for indigenous dramatic forms and structures. Evident in this stage is the point that theatre is a mode of expression. The works of playwright during the early period of this stage (postcolonial) focus on social and political injustice perpetrated by colonial governments in the region. Later on, attention shifts to drama and performances that address postcolonial issues.

There are differences among various North African theatres mainly because of the different cultural and political roots of the nations constituting the region. However, all these theatre share in common the reflection of a postcolonial sensibility informed by the situation of North Africa after independence.

In Egypt there was the emergence of playwrights like Tewfik Al-Hakim (1898-1931) and Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006). Al-Hakim was among the most important Egyptian dramatists of the early twentieth century. In 1935, his play, *Sleepers in the Cave* was produced as the opening production of the Egyptian National Theatre. Naguib Mahfouz won the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature and became the second African writer to win the prize (Brockett 2011 and Zaki 2004).

East Africa

This stage assumed its full growth in postcolonial Kenyan theatre. At the outset, it was characterized with the establishment of theatre as a tool for entertainment and as an agent of anti-colonial crusade among Kenyans. The Kenyan National Theatre which was opened on 6th November, 1952 became the hub of dramatic displays and theatrical activities. The other influential instrument in the development of this phase in Kenya is the Kenyan Schools of Drama Festivals, initiative of the British Council and the East African Theatre Guild (Chesaina and Mwangi, 2004:217).

A very notable play at the beginning of this phase in Kenya is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The Black Hermit* which was written to mark Uganda's independence from Britain in September 1962. Though not a dramatic masterpiece, the play is important because explores the tension between African traditional values and modernity ushered in by colonialism.

Southern Africa

At the outset of this phase postcolonial Southern Africa, it was largely continuation of some aspects of the colonial theatre. For instance, in Zambia for the first ten years of independence, white playhouses still continued to be almost exclusively for white expatriates. This was also the case in Malawi. Later on, with strong movements of nationalist patriotism which was geared towards African cultural expression, expatriates began to leave the region; hence the shifting of attention to an African form of theatre and drama.

The most important of these forms was dance which had earlier played a significant role in arousing the consciousness of southern Africans during agitations for independence. In the words of Kerr (2004:283), "Several southern African governments tried to mobilise this spirit of choreographic nationalism in order to help build a pan-ethnic consensus. This included the National Dance Troupe under Edwin Manda which was created the Department of Cultural Services in Zambia. This troupe usually performed prominent dances of the various Zambian ethnic groups.

In southern African countries such as Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana with homogenous ethnic and linguistic formations, traditional dances were used to promote national pride and renew interest in important pre-colonial political rituals. In Swaziland for instance, the monarchy was accorded powerful control over the organs of state. In order to give value to the role of the postcolonial monarchy, two pre-colonial rituals – *Umhlanga* (the Reed Dance) and the *Incwala* ceremony – were given dramatic relevance and political significance.

Self Assessment

Exercise 3

The third stage in the evolution of African drama represents what is now modern African drama. Expatiate on this.

MODULE TWO

THEATRE TRADITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY WRITTEN AFRICAN LITERATURE

UNIT 1

INTRODUCTION

Theatre traditions in contemporary written African literature have experienced a rapid growth only after the independence of various African states. All the same, these traditions benefit significantly from the resources and influences of Western dramatic forms and traditions. Though still evolving, these traditions of African drama and theatre in contemporary written African literature have been categorised into four based on their thematic thrusts (Dasyuva 2004). They are culture plays, national drama, rational drama and neo-rational drama.

UNIT 2

CULTURE PLAYS

Africa plays in the category probe the newly acquired European values, depicting a constant conflict between the African cultures and the European values. Sometimes both cultures are satirized that there is a justification of the ideals of the African cultures over the other. Such plays includes; *The Blinkard* by Kobina Sekyi, *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka. *Marriage of Anansewa* by Efua Sutherland, and *This is our Chance* by Ene Henshaw.

UNIT 3

NATIONAL DRAMA

The plays in this category express the dissatisfaction of the people, and consciously awaken their political consciousness with the solo aim of making them realize and resist colonial or postcolonial disillusionment and general oppression. These plays are preoccupied with political struggles and nationalist objectives. Such plays are; *The State Visit* by Niyi Osundare, *The Island* by Athol Fugard, *Hungry Earth* by Maishe Maponye, *Kinjeketile* by Ebrahim Hussein among others

UNIT 4

RATIONAL DRAMA

Rational drama is comprised of plays that blend both cultural and nationalist objectives. Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*, *Death and the King's Horseman* and *A Dance in the Forest* are relevant examples.

UNIT 5

NEO-RATIONAL DRAMA

African plays that fall under the neo-rational theatre tradition are plays that draw their materials from African folkloric tradition to pursue nationalist objectives. Under this category, there are attempts at redefining and reshaping mythology to cater for the present social realities. Femi Osofisan is the most prominent playwright that belongs to this category.

UNIT 6

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, modern African drama is yet to evolve fully. There has been the tradition from the traditional phase and the phase whence largely influenced by foreign forms and norms. However, the easiest way to invalidate indigenous African drama is to judge it by standards other than those found within its cultural context.

Self Assessment

Exercise 4

Discuss how theatre traditions in contemporary written African literature have been able to portray the atmosphere and realities of postcolonial or independence Africa with regard to their thematic preoccupation, portrayal of characters and style.

MODULE THREE

PLAYWRIGHTS AND PLAYWRITING IN CONTEMPORARY WRITTEN AFRICAN LITERATURE

Objective

UNIT 1

INTRODUCTION

UNIT 2

Wole Soyinka – West Africa

Born on 13th July 1934, Wole Soyinka is a dramatist whose work can be seen as belonging to not just the best of African literature, but world literature. He is a celebrated personage within and outside Africa in terms of his artistries and intellectual efforts. Soyinka's career as a playwright which has been exemplary and representative of African cultural essence and socio-political situation started with his establishment of the 1960 Masks in the eve of Nigeria's independence and the production of for the celebration of the independence.

Wole Soyinka is a multiple-award winning African playwright and writer in other literary genres. In 1986, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is the first African and Black to win this most prestigious prize.

UNIT 2.1

Alapata Apata

Wole Soyinka's latest play, *Alapata Apata*, is a satirical comedy and a rational play. That focuses on the fading state of political and cultural values in the present day society.

UNIT 2.2

Dominant Themes

The dominant themes and styles in it include

Cultural Alienation as a Vicissitude

Cultural alienation can be said to be the most dominant theme in the play. This is evident in the analysis of the title of the play by the author. Using his culture, Yoruba, as a reference, the playwright explains that it is 'a play for Yorubafonia', 'class for Xenophiles', that is, the play is for member of his plural rich Yoruba culture who, however, celebrate or value foreign (western) culture at the expense of theirs. Moreover, it is, unarguably, what informed the writing of the play as can be seen from the playwright's note.

The neglect of cultural idiosyncrasies as well as cultural alienation as a vicissitude is portrayed through the actions and inactions of some characters that are dominant in the texts. For instance, as a result of negligence of the Yoruba language, senior Boy is unable to put the right tonal markers on 'Alapata Apata' and even, does not get it right after the illiterate Alaba as it were, has put him through. As a young boy, his inability to use tonal markers show that this vicissitude starts evolving from childhood. His failure as the senior boy of a secondary also speak ill about how other pupils could use their mother tongue(s) efficiently, and that senior boy is not a complete, capable leadership.

Pre-eminence of Corruption and Abuse of Power in the Contemporary Society

Corruption or abuse of power is pre-eminent in the contemporary Nigeria socio-political setting. The playwright shows how those in the position of power in the present day society always attempt to manipulate things for their personal and selfish interest.

This theme is clearly presented through the characters of Daanielebo and General. A politician and governor, Daaneilebo is never satisfied with all that he

has acquired opportunistically; instead he looking for opportunities to acquire more wealth.

Thus, having heard that some mineral resources are beneath the rock Alaba has made his abode, he is eager to get the rock by all means such that he attempts to bribe Alaba and resorts to using charms because Alaba refuses to be bribed.

General is also corrupt element. Instead of using military resources at his disposal for the benefit of the society, he is busy utilizing the resources on his 'Operation Longathroat'(p.42) all to make sure he outsmarts Alaba and take over the rock .

These characters are archetypical as they represent the political and military personalities. Who, generally in Nigeria situation are unabashedly corrupt.

Portrayal Character Types – the Earnest and Upright

As the playwright condemns socio-political and cultural vices through the roles of some characters, attempt is simultaneously made to present the importance of earnestness and uprightness through the actions and the inactions of the character of Alaba.

The character of Alaba is a model of a modestly upright personality; socially and culturally. The frame of Alaba, as a reader gets to know, is not just because he is a veteran butcher, but more because of the simply upright life he lives. He is a man who tries as much as possible to correct anything wrong. It is for this reason that Alaba that scolds Dele who does not bring his second wife into his house because he was afraid of his first wife.

Most importantly, the playwright shows that being earnest and upright is not being perfect but being ready to accept one's fault. Alaba is evidently always ready to accept his fault. Even though his intention is to straighten the bent globe. Alaba remains haunted by his breaking of the globe.

Self Assessment

Exercise 5

Examine the manifestations of cultural and national objectives in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* through its thematic preoccupations and character portraiture.

UNIT 2.3

Style as a Dramatic Tool

Satire

The playwright is able to effectively use satire to enrich the aesthetics of the play, and at the same time, as a social and political 'weapon' to make comment on, and correct the status quo of events in the contemporary society.

In the part one of the play, on page sixty-nine (69) Alaba satirizes the unbecoming, ridiculous and shameless act of government who ought to be accountable and responsible to the citizens. The attention of the reader is called to the pensioners; old men and women, who are made to stand on long queue, in the hot Nigeria sun, for hours. Whiles on this queue, some of them who are already weak, faint. Alaba says:

I am a pensioner – I pensioned myself with my savings. I don't have to queue at the government pension office every month and faint and drop dead while waiting to collect my pension.

The government can effortlessly pay pension but their greed for wealth and material acquisition keeps intoxicating them. The delay in paying the money is yet another 'politics' employed to steal the little money the old men and women should subsist on.

Again, the playwright, through the character of Daanielebo also satirizes the corrupt and rotten maggots who called themselves leaders. Between pages 141 - 142, the playwright portrays the foolishness and stupidity of Daanielebo, who has come to bribe Alaba in exchange for the rock beneath which are some mineral deposit. After Alaba refuses the bribe, Daanielebo resort to charms, stripping himself naked to reveal to Alaba “the full armoury of grenade, gas canisters pistol... bante made of fresh leaves, amulets... Sheathed knives ... juju necklace, a leg charm...”All this shows how desperate political leaders are to accumulate wealth.

Daanielebo however, flees like a madman at the sight of the boy whom he takes to be a dreaded spirit because of the painting on his face and the bunch of broom he is holding.

Finally, it is important to note that this aspect of style is presented in a mild, gentile yet contemptuous and mockery manner. This type of satire is described by Dasylya and Jegede (2005), as Horatian satire.

Humour Strategy

Humour is employed in the play to instigate laughter. The outcome of the conversation among Alaba, mother, Daughter and Dele, for instance, is very hilarious. Mother and daughter have come to report Dele to Alaba about his extra-marital affair. They want Alaba to stop Dele from this. However, having heard the side of Dele, Alaba encourage him to bring the new lady to his house.

The reader also laughs at the solution Alaba gives three ‘okadamen’ who come to complain about the inability to buy crash helmet as enforced by the government. Alaba therefore gives the three motorcyclists three clay pot helmets. When they attempt to protest he responds:

What is your problem? If you hit this helmet it won't it crash?

The playwright, through this humour, tries to imply that there is always a way out in every challenging situation.

Wordplay

Wordplay is evident in the different tonal interpretation given to the tacit title of Alaba, Alapata Apata. The title roughly means the butcher of the rock', indicating that Alaba abode is the rock. Through his incorrect use of tonal marks, major takes it to be another expression that refers to a person in the quarrying of rock. More also, Baby Picasso's and senior Boy's misplacement of tonal marks makes the expression to mean a traditional honorary title.

Relevance Diction and Oral Literary Device

The diction used in the play is very rich as it combines the trio of English, Nigeria pidgin and Yoruba. With the mixture of the three languages, the playwright has made the play open to all readers and not just students and scholars of literature.

Different devices traceable to oral literary traditions are used in the play. They include proverbs, song and praise. These devices make the text culturally rich.

These oral literary devices especially proverbs, are mostly use by Alaba. This makes him a central figure. The teacher also makes use of praise in a number of occasions as compliments for Alaba. The commonest among this is 'Alapata to n fie ran dara' and means 'the butcher that make wonders with meat'.

Self Assessment

Exercise 6

With close reference to the diction, actions and inactions of the characters portrayed, examine Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* as a satirical comedy.

UNIT 3

Tawfiq Al-hakim – North Africa

UNIT 3.1

ABSURDIST THEATRE: *FATE OF A COCKROACH*

The theatre of absurd originates from the writings and philosophical thoughts of Samuel Beckett. Situating the theatre of absurd African dramatic ambit brings to the fore Tawfik al-Hakim's *Fate of the Cockroach*. The very essence of absurdism is seen in the frustrations of the characters particularly the king of the cockroaches and the husband who represents the oppressed man.

The play is an absurd comedy and it transports audience from the bathroom floor, to where cockroaches rules, to a hard working, middle age couple morning rituals. When the husband (Adil) commits himself to the king cockroaches struggle to escape from the bathtub, neither his wife (Samia) nor the family doctor can liberate him from his queer state of mind.

We see people striving to find freedom and, at times, these rights are found but not paying the price for it. Married couples, for examples, must apparently live happy and portray this happiness to the entire society regardless if at home, they live miserably and cannot escape their fate. The satire that the playwright uses in the play provides the reader with the necessary information to know that he is mocking the social order of marriage as an institution that is sacred, yet to those in it, it is suffocating as an insecticide.

Some notable features observable in the theatre of the absurd theatre include dynamics of wordplay, nightmarish or dreamlike atmospheres marked with the protagonists confusion at the irrationality of being and nothingness. Often it is marked with a plot structure and story line that is not plausible and meaningless actions take place in most cases. The plot structure does not conform with the norm of a beginning an end or a sequence of actions, it is a deliberate staccato

portraying life as disorganised as it can be; the repetitive rendering of lines, portraits of characters who are trapped in unthinkable situations engaging the audience in a deliberate manner to shock them out of their lethargy or question the position they safely assume in the society. The popular opinion among writers of the absurd theatre is that life is absurd and meaningless. They often engage the principles of existentialism. Worthy of note is the fact that not all of the elements discussed here necessarily have to feature in a given play but these elements are observable in different dimensions and proportions in different forms of plays which vary from different cultural perspective.

UNIT 3.2

ANALYSIS OF FATE OF A COCKROACH

Al-Hakim in *Fate of a Cockroach* satirically creates a cockroach to symbolise the political disillusionment which exists during the socialist revolutionary regime under Gamal Nasser, who was the prime minister of Egypt from 1950-1970. The play can therefore be described as a political allegory. The play is divided into three acts; act one consists of cockroaches that are personified by being given human attributes of a shallow minded ruling class while act two and act three employ human character. The playwright is able to convincingly juxtaposes of the attributes of humans particularly the couples in both settings.

Just as Esslin and his colleagues were faced with the aftermath of World War II, Al-Hakim also witnessed the coup and the removal of British colonialists from Egypt. During this period, arts thrived in Egypt and women were given the right to vote. Nasser introduced the socialist system of government distributing land equally among the Egyptians. The tomato in the play is representative of a number of failures that this land reform caused which is the material failure to produce food which is direct indictment of the agrarian reforms carried out shortly after the June coup. The falling of the king cockroach into the lake is referring to Nasser's large scale Aswan High Dam Project. The play is a direct analogy to the state-owned lake, Nasser Reservoir, into which water surplus was redirect after the dam construction. Through this, Al-Hakim puts forward one of

the failures of the post 1952 government in its distracting itself with various project of industrialization at the expense of crucial and more critical issues.

The play also somehow satirizes the political gong at the time and after World War II. Even though Al-Hakim did not involve in politics, the writer uses the play to indirectly criticize the prime minister after placing his predecessor on house arrest, and after all his life struggle and the wars he caused, suffered a heart attack at the age of 52, which led to his demise. Same with the cockroach who appoints himself king, ends up struggling in the tub to get freed but is unable to change or stop the inevitable which was death at the hands of an indifferent human.

Al-Hakim's attempt at portraying some of the things that happened in post 1952 government in Egypt is done through the use of certain features of the absurd theatre. For instance there are arguments between the couple that engage word play and less meaning. Dominant issues relating to gender issues, particularly in marriage, are also portrayed in both kingdoms. The fear of death is also seen in the animal kingdom, Queen constantly asks her husband to find a lasting solution to the terror of ants and she also demands a leadership position in the governance of the kingdom.

Another observable feature is the involvement of the audience in drawing conclusion from the actions or proposals made by characters in the play, an instance is the self appointment of the King cockroach who thinks himself most qualified because his whiskers are longer than the other roaches. This is a suggestive way of drawing attention to the unjustifiable but absolute manner in which some positions are assumed in some African communities, an example is the assumption that the oldest person should be its king. This occurred in the case of Nasser in Egypt who introduced the socialist system of government and the one party system. The dictatorial style also portrayed in the play is to raise inquisitions and inquires in the minds of the audience.

Furthermore, the protagonist becomes overwhelmed by the chaos and irrationality that characterizes his environment. This feature in the play is

representative of the characters of Adil in the play who praises the cockroach unrelenting effort as it continues to fight its way in order to come out of the bath tub. Adil expresses his displeasure over Samia's action of wanting to kill the cockroach.

Most African societies are afflicted with irrational implementation of certain policies regarding the masses, despite various projects supposedly carried out by the leaders to provide masses with amenities that promote better living, but they still hoard these amenities, and enrich themselves. Egypt suffered this during Nasser's reign. Despite his claim of land reforms, these lands under socialist measure were in large scale under productive and unproductive and went unused. Through the sanitization of a dishonest society like Egypt which lacks the distinction between fantasy and reality, which was highly reflective of the post 1952 government, Al-Hakim mirrors some of the shortcoming of various governmental regimes in Africa.

Self Assessment

Exercise 7

1. Examine the features of absurdist theatre in Tewfik Al-Hakim's *Fate of Cockroach*.
2. Discuss Tewfik Al-hakim's *Fate of Cockroach* as a political allegory.

UNIT 4

ATHOL FUGARD – SOUTH AFRICAN DRAMATIST

UNIT 4.1

NATIONALIST PROTEST IN ATHOL FUGARD'S *SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD*

Sizwe Bansi is Dead by Athol Fugard is a satirical tragicomedy in which the playwright laments on the racial discrimination and segregation caused by the apartheid system in South Africa. The thematic preoccupation of this satire is to portray the reality of the apartheid policy on the Black indigenous majority being ruled by the White minority in South Africa. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is a work in which the characters through monologues and flashbacks present their experiences.

The play which is also historical in a way background of the play is based on the life experiences of the Blacks in South Africa. This in itself makes the setting, the theme and the plot of the play plausible. Fugard was moved by these occurrences wrote the play on the basis of his experiences while working as a law clerk at the Native Commissioner's court in Johannesburg. During this period, identity books that were restrictive in terms of movement and employment were made compulsory for every black above eighteen years of age. Fugard witnessed the repercussions of this law as black offenders were jailed in large numbers.

The 1950s witnessed the passing into law, the pass laws, this was also an influence in the writing of the play. also influenced the writing of the play. The pass laws, enacted in 1797, were typically internal passport systems that mandated South African black sixteen year olds and those above to have a passbook as a form of identification on them. These laws were purposive and they achieved the goals of those who created it as they segregated the populace,

the movements and mobility of the South African blacks, and was a form of stratification in allocating migrant labour. The pass laws were employed as a tool of oppression against the South African blacks and were effective in keeping them away from accessing areas allocated to the whites.

UNIT 4.2

THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION IN FUGARD'S *SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD*

Apartheid and racial discrimination are the dominant thematic preoccupation of Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. None the less there are several minor themes in the play and they include survival syndrome, identity and identity crisis, life and death are also juxtaposed as archetypal themes, hope and hopelessness are also juxtaposed in like manner.

APARTHEID AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION: Apartheid a system of racial segregation in South Africa was enforced through by the National Party from 1948 to 1994. Under this dispensation the rights of the majority black inhabitant became limited and Afrikaner minority rule was promoted. This policy established the discrimination that became the bane of the life of the South African blacks and their white counterparts. The policy promoted the subjugation that turned the blacks into 'second class citizens' on their father.

Portraits of apartheid and racial prejudice along its raving consequences is the dominant preoccupation of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. The play paints the picture of the people characterised by hardship, acute suffering and strife. The psychological trauma the South African blacks suffered were depicted as oppression and segregation in the hands of their white counterparts which was unfortunately legalized by the system of government.

The play was therefore in many ways a protest to combat the apartheid regime that was the political setting as at the time of its publication. Hence, the theme of the racial discrimination runs throughout the fabric of the play. Fugard also

employs his characters in as a vehicle for driving his position. These characters portray the sufferings and agonies borne by subjugated and oppressed blacks in South Africa.

Styles typifies this as seen in his, dramatic monologue at the beginning of the play which gives the reader insights into the plight of an average South African blacks within the system. Styles a photographer is intelligent and literate. His comments on the issues he reads of in the newspapers are marked with humour through his monologue the audience understand the details of his experience as a worker in an automobile plant. There he is exploited, dehumanised and oppressed. The order is for them to work to generate maximum profit. His experience with Ford Motors is typically representative of the structure of a capitalist system, his responses to the car plant expansion reflects his full understanding of the system. The impression one gets is that the South African whites consider the black men the employ not better than slaves or inanimate beings whose existence should only enrich the life and well being of the whites this.

Stop

The playwright portrays the black Africans as being certain that the white community is callous and inhumane. He depicts a setting that indicates that they know what is right and they refuse to do it, the hypocritical stance of whites when the 'Big Baas' visits is also instructive. The basic and vital signs that should be put up to ensure the safety of the workers are not hung up until 'Big Baas' is expected. Styles is also exposed to work related hazards and is unprotected for six years because he loses his apron and asbestos gloves. It is clear that safety of the black workers is neither vital nor important to their employers. The workers are also forced to appear joyful by singing and putting on a joyful countenance even though they are miserable.

They oppress the South African blacks with backbreaking work, driving them to them off the cliff, as it were, to get maximum profit, but yet adopt a posture that covers their inhumanity and brutality to their workers.

Style, a really figurative character, was sired by a father who was a victim of racial discrimination. He had served meritoriously during the Second World War but had been alienated upon his return by being stripped of his uniform and given a bicycle and a snuff box for his efforts while his white counterparts were rated as national heroes. This experience is a fundamental factor in his relationship with the White South Africans.

Style, his studio and his battle with cockroaches symbolise a number of issues and many interpretations have emerged from these symbols. The studio and the activities that take place in it is representative of South Africa and its many struggles. The battle against the parasitic occupation of the roaches is the yet to be productive struggle rid South Africa of the ruling white minority. The insecticide 'Doom', the cat represents the feeble and the more aggressive efforts made respectively by the blacks against the whites who are referred to in this context as vermin.

The recurring theme here is that the South African blacks have to make concerted efforts to be free. The poor diet of the cat is also a metaphoric manner of referring to the deprivation of the black citizen, the segregation and stratification of the blacks leading to them living in despicable conditions.

Sizwe Bansi also typifies the theme of racial discrimination. The first impression one gets at his first appearance is a character that is contemplative; he is portrayed as shy as well as hesitant (Fugard ,7:). This character created by Fugard somewhat represents the state of mind of the average or most black South Africans during the period. The indication is that the people, harassed, subdued and subjugated.

Bansi lacks formal education and thinks it is a disservice to him. He is defensive about his information and embarrassed he has to reveal it. What is perceptible is the fact that the restrictive laws in the country made it difficult or impossible for the average black South African, at the time the work depicted, to acquire formal education (21).

Sizwe Bansi is therefore a typical example of a character that is racially discriminated against. He seeks a land full of milk and honey when he leaves King William's town for Port Elizabeth and to his dismay, just like other black South Africans before him that he is not qualified nor permitted to stay there (25). His passbook is his limitation and it states that he is 'endorsed to King William's town' (25).

Sizwe Bansi and Bantu are used by the author as voices lamenting the limitation of the numerous restrictions placed on the black South African. Sizwe remains in a dilemma, his passbook, doesn't endorse his stay in his supposed land full of milk and honey, and he cannot destroy it because doing so will put him in a precarious situation with the authorities.

We are told that the only place the blacks are permitted to work without particular adherence to the pass laws are in the mines. The determining factors here are purely economic, the seemingly indulgent posture is because of the love of the gold. The blacks who work in the mines are constantly in danger of sudden death because the rocks do fall and trap or kill the miners. valueless, as far as the whites are concerned.

Bantu's experience is used to depict the realities of racial discrimination. He is a young literate man who fully understands the working of the apartheid system he lives in. We learn that although he is married with a child, he is deprived of the joy of living with his family. He works as a live-in domestic help while his children live with his wife's mother. This aspect of Bantu's life represents the breakdown of the families in South Africa as a result of apartheid. Bantu's marriage is portrayed as a model atypical of the experience of the average black family. It is evident that apartheid has a devastating effect on the social structure

and family system which also has its implication for the society at large. The family, which is supposed to be one unit, becomes fragmented to enable the individual members of the society cope better within the apartheid regime and its social structure.

Buntu is also a victim of this law enacted by the South African whites to make the life unbearable because of the challenges of accommodation in Port Elizabeth, his being born there notwithstanding. The theme of racial discrimination continually rings in the work. *Sizwe Banzi is Dead*. However, there are various sub themes that are subsumed under the major thematic preoccupation.

IDENTITY CRISIS: Identity crisis is one of the most important sub themes in the play. The quest for or loss of identity affects most of the major characters. Due to racial discrimination, most South African blacks lost their sense of self respect and self confidence. The oppression of South African blacks stripped them their self esteem, dignity and pride.

For Styles, identity means several things, his decision to become a photographer and own his own photographic studio informed by his desire forged a new identity for himself. Through his dramatic monologue at the beginning of the play, we learn he quits working at the factory because he realizes the futility of spending most of his life working for the South African Whiteman (10). He tells his father “...daddy, if I could stand on my own feet and not be someone else tool. I’d have some respect for myself. I’d be the man.” This denotes his desire to define his image and create a new identity for himself that is free from influences of racial discrimination. Styles’ dialogue with his father also reveal styles to be representative of a younger generation of south African blacks who are bold and determined to cast off the identity or lack of it that has been forced on them by the oppressive South African whites.

Styles is described as “a dapper alert young man wearing a white dust coat and bowtie.” This tells the audiences that Styles pays attention to the way he dresses. He wants his dressing to not only carry a stamp of his identity, but also to add an overall aura of dignity and self confidence to his person.

It appears that Styles makes conscious efforts to his keep appearances in order to be treated with respect. Through his work, he also recorded the identity of the South African black who comes to his studio to take picture. In the course of his dramatic monologue at the beginning of the play, he describes how some people walk into his studio “all smart in a suit, then off comes the jacket and socks...” Styles’ studio is a place where the South African blacks can have a reprieve from the bleak realities of their society and also enjoy a brief moment in which they are anything they want to be. Styles himself refers to the studio as a “strong room of dreams,” a place where the South African blacks can dream, live their dreams and explore their own unique identity, even if it is only for a few moments. Styles represent the revitalization of identity and heritage of the South African blacks.

On the other hand, Sizwe Bansi represents the essence, as well as signifies the absolute loss of identity suffered by the South African blacks within the apartheid system. Even the title of the play denotes this theme of total loss of identity as a result of racial discrimination. In the play, the playwright simply calls Sizwe ‘man.’ He does this to emphasise on the fact that Sizwe stands for the South African blacks who lost all sense of self-esteem due to the oppression they were subjected too.

Sizwe lacks a name which is crucial to establishing the identity of an individual, and this is the same for the blacks in apartheid South Africa. They have been so thoroughly dehumanized, subjugated and oppressed that they no longer know who they are. When Sizwe first appears in the play, he is described as wearing ‘an ill-fitting new double breasted suit...his manner is hesitant and shy’ (17). The suit Sizwe is wearing is symbolic. Although the audiences doesn’t know it at this time, he has just taken on another person’s identity and he carries his identity the same way a man would wear a clothes that are not made to suit him. The identity he’s carrying is not his, and it is as ill-fitting as his clothes.

On pages 34-39, the reader learns that Sizwe eventually loses his identity and has to take on a dead man’s own. He resorts to desperate actions to ensure that he is allowed to stay in Port Elizabeth. Initially, Sizwe displays his black man’s pride in

his name when he tells Buntu that he does not want to lose his name. However, Buntu reminds him that his passbook is more important than his name. Without a legal one, he cannot work or take care of his family.

Through Sizwe, Fugard presents the extent of dehumanization suffered by a typical black in South Africa. Their passbooks were the passes with which they were recognized. As important and as symbolic as a name is the name of a South African black held no value and was therefore inconsequential. The South African whites, in refusing to acknowledge the humanity and the existence of the South African blacks, gradually and increasingly caused disillusionment; a dominant factor in the misery of the South African Black was existence without identity. They suffered this void and accept the loss of their uniqueness and individuality as a way of life in order to cope in the harsh apartheid system.

Buntu also typifies the theme of identity loss. He is an educated black man who understands the workings of the apartheid system. Buntu represents the new and younger generation of the South Africans that is no longer content to just sit down and take whatever the South African whites dish out to them. He represents a new generation of blacks in South Africa who dares to use the apartheid system to their own advantage. This is seen when he exchanges the passport in Sizwe Bansi's passbook for that of a dead man's and vice versa. This scene portrays him as a smart man and quick thinker.

However, he also represents the resignation of the black man to the loss of their identity. Through him, Fugard portrays the meaninglessness of life under apartheid for the South African blacks. When Sizwe complains that he does not want to live his life as another person's ghost, he retorts, "wasn't Sizwe Bansi a ghost" ... when the white man looked at you in the labour bureau, what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with ...numbers? Isn't that a ghost? ... all I'm saying is be a real ghost, if that is what they want, if that what they've turned us to"(38).

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LIFE AND DEATH: The concepts of life and death are interwoven in the play. We find that most of the South African blacks are so callously treated and oppressed by the whites that they believe they can only find a lasting reprieve in death. The location of Styles' studio beside funeral parlour helps to place emphasis on this theme.

Styles' studio is symbolic. It represents a place where the blacks go in order to get temporary relief from the harsh realities of apartheid. It is an emblem of life of freedom for the South African blacks. In his words "this is a strong room of dreams. The dreamer? My people. The simple people, who you will never find mentioned in the history books who ever get statutes, erected to them... people who would be forgotten, if it wasn't for Styles."

Thus, styles' freedom is not just an emblem of life; it records and relives the lives and dreams of the South African blacks. Through his camera, Styles immortalizes them forever and allows them to live their dreams for the brief periods they spend in his studio. He translates their dreams on paper; thus giving them a form of immortality. An example is the family card Styles takes where the old man dies two days later. The man's family have reasons to smile through their tears because they have what to remember him with.

Styles' studio affords the blacks opportunity to forget about the meaninglessness of their existence in the shadows for the few moments and allows them to be happy, confident people with hopes and dreams. Thus, styles' studio and even styles' himself represent life and hope for the South African blacks in a cruel and unyielding society.

Dhlamini's funeral parlour on the other hand, represents death. The blacks believe that death is the only escape from their pitiable condition in South Africa. Buntu touches on this belief when he tells the story of Outa Jacob, a black man who suffered a series of tragedies in his life before he eventually died. He also goes on to say that, "the only time we'll find peace is when they dig a hole for us and press our face to the earth." This statement mirrors the belief of the South African blacks in the apartheid system.

However, Fugard's placement of Styles' studio beside Dhalamini's funeral parlour is symbolic. By doing so, he is saying that the South African blacks have two choices; life or death. They can either choose to live a life of freedom and happiness or continue to live the meaningless life where they are treated as ghosts.

The author, through placing this side by side is covertly saying that until the South African blacks make a conscious choice to rid the society of the oppressive minority white rulers, racial discrimination will continue to be a problem in South Africa.

Self Assessment

Exercise 8

1. Paying attention to its tragicomic and satirical forms, examine *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* as a social and protest drama.

UNIT 5

TRAGIC DRAMA IN AFRICA

UNIT 5.1

J.P CLARK AND TEWFIK AL-HAKIM

Tragedy is from the Greek work *tragoidia* which means song of goat. It is a literary or dramatic work dealing with tragic event and having an unhappy ending.

UNIT 5.2

AL-HAKIM'S *SONG OF DEATH* AND J.P CLARK'S *SONG OF A GOAT* AS TYPES OF AFRICAN TRAGEDY

In examining both plays as African tragedy, there would be an attempt at discussing the unifying features seen in both plays. However, it should be noted that there is no clear-cut features established conventions defining African tragedy. This could be seen as a result of either absences of universal truth in the African believes system or non-conformity as to feature defining African tragedy though for a play to be ascertained as being African, it must be written by an African and its thematic trusts should be African.

Song of a Goat and *Song of Death* are also depicted as African tragedies through their setting and the thematic thrusts. The issues discussed in the text reflect African culture, traditions, beliefs and the playwrights are Africans.

Setting

The two plays are set in Africa. The play *Song of a Goat* is influenced largely by the Izon tradition and philosophy which holds that it is man who determines his fate on earth and not the gods. If a man discovers that his fate is unfavourable, he can seek the advice of the gods through the oracle on how to change it but tragedy only occurs when after consulting the oracle, the petitioner refuses to obey the advice of the deities. This is why the overwhelming pride of Zifa and Ebere in rejecting the solution given to them by the gods on how to change their fate leads to their misery. In Izon religious beliefs, choices are free and any consequence can be reduced or altered through propitiation to the gods in atonement for wrong actions.

Similarly, *Song of Death* is set in Arab; Egypt to be precise. As established in the pre-Islamic account of Jahiliyah (period of ignorance), Arabs tended to be unforgiving, revengeful and violent. The story discusses the Upper Egyptian misnomer ideology of seeking revenge for family's death. Families in Upper Egypt can spend almost all their lives of coming generation to seek revenge for the death and killing incident from long ago. The blood routines goes on and on

as long as there are young brave men usually the sons of the dead man, who will seek revenge for the families by killing any man from the family which killed the dead person. This continues until someone is sick and tired of the vengeance done out of ignorance or blindness. As seen in plays, it is understood that the different African societies from which the text emanates from the influenced the plot of the texts.

Thematic Preoccupations

The dominant themes in these texts weave around the African issue of infertility and revenge respectively. The issue of infertility is a crucial issue in African society as seen in *Song of a Goat*. Like we mentioned earlier, culture and traditions usually influence African tragedy and this is portrayed with the issue of infertility in this; the Izon society believed that having just a child is as good as having no child. Clark summarise so well for us the attitude of the Izon society towards infertility; ‘the business of reproduction is a life and death matter in my home area. If a man does not bear, he is not loved’. The problem encountered in the text is caused by the production of infertility.

The theme of revenge and vengeance is presented in *Song of Death*. This play portrays the belief of the Arab society in an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. They see the inability to take revenge as a very shameful act. Asakir represents a typical example of this society by resolving to kill his only son because of his refusal to avenge his father’s death, the reason he was sent to Cairo for learning. Other themes raised in the texts include the evil of incest, the evil passion for revenge and the conflict between old and modern tradition.

Self Assessment

Exercise 9

Examine setting as a social and cultural concept and discuss how it informs the major thematic thrusts of *Song of a Goat* and *Song of Death*.

Plot

The plot development gives us a clue to the cause and effect of actions that makes up the story of the texts. In the *Song of a Goat*, Zifa is rendered impotent through the curse of the gods because he brought the dead spirit of his dead father home too early thereby polluting the cosmic wellbeing of his community. The father was struck with leprosy by the gods because he killed within his clan which is a taboo among Izon.

In Tewfik Al- Hakim's *Song of Death*, Alwan has been destined to avenge the death of his father by taking vengeance on Suwelian Thawi, the murderer of his father. He was taken to Cairo on account of this at the age of two to be trained as a butcher. However, Alwan ran away to joined Al- Azhar University in Cairo. This marks the beginning of his misfortune.

Tragic Flaws

The inherent weaknesses and sentiment which the protagonists are given to also makes their unpleasant ends unavoidable. On the one hand, Asakir's unyielding passion for vengeance destroys her own family more effectively than her supposed enemy Suwelian Tahawi could have ever done. She has abruptly wiped out the new generation, so the family line has come to an end. This is rather tragic than hateful because like Sophocles and Elektra, she is true to the logic of tradition that creates her.

On the other hand, Zifa and Ebere's overwhelming pride to accept their fate as posed to them leads to their destruction. Ebere rejects the advice of the Masseur who tells her to re-knot marriage tie with his husband younger brother by observing a sacrifice with the material for it being a goat, cowries, a big gourd of palm wine and kolanuts. The sacrifice is to be made to the gods so that she might give birth to. Zifa who is made impotent by the gods cannot accept the reality of the condition; he rejects the instruction of the priest.

Form and language

The play, *Song of Death*, is written in acts and scenes while *Song of a Goat* is written in movement which can be categorised as one act of the four scenes. This in particular set the text as type of African tragedy.

Song of Death has a prosaic presentation of its ideas while *Song of a Goat* is written in verse and embedded with the use of metaphorical lines. In *Song of a Goat*, the playwright's use of indirect devices and riddle add riches to the Masseur's formal poetic languages and increases the tension of the play. More so, his use of imagery and symbolism makes his thought more profound and satisfying for those who study and understand his imaginative use of language.

Orukorere uses symbolic language to convey her thought. She is a character who is doomed by the gods to see vision but will not be believed because of her overwhelming vanity and pride in her beauty and high position. In moment two she foretells the disaster that will befall her family through illicit love affairs between Ebere and Tonye. Her cry that she hears the cry of a goat is symbolically stating that somebody will be killed in the family because goat is a sacrificial animal.

Character Portraiture (*Song of Death*)

Asakir is one of the tragic characters in the *Song of Death* she is a peasant and was brought in the old vendetta tradition. This is so much part of her that she simply cannot work out any other way of life. To her, family honour is the supreme honour. Therefore, the loss of respect in the family and village is the greatest shame and ultimate misfortune. Asakir waited for years for the one murderous action that will restore honour to the family and avenge for her husband death. She wishes Alwan to be the avenger of her husband's death and restorer of family honour but she got disappointed in her son.

Alwan is a tragic hero whose change of fate brought misfortune to his life. The change in his world view from parochial to universal values spurred his early cut off. He is a typical idealist young student in Cairo. Alwan as the son who escaped the village believes in brotherhood not vengeance. His utter fall fathoms his mother's traditional values. He represents the conflicts between traditional vengeance and freedom through education from such deadening and destructive prejudice of his culture and tradition.

Sumeida is the son who stayed behind and he is also a tragic figure is entirely destroyed by Asakir. Sumedia is certain to be punished, perhaps executed for the murder so that he is an example of lost generation denied the chance of the enlightenment of the new ideology of the new state and of the city.

Character Portraiture (*Song of a Goat*)

Zifa in *Song of a Goat* is a fisherman and part-time fish pilot. He is made impotent by the gods for bringing the spirit of his dead father home too early, thereby polluting the cosmic wellbeing of his community. His father was stroke with leprosy by the gods because he killed within his clan, a taboo among the Izon.

Ebere is the wife of Zifa. The frustration caused by her husband's impotency leads her into incestuous relationship with Tonye, her husband's younger brother. It is this act of shame that leads to total destruction of her family.

Orukorere is Zifa's half-possessed aunt. She is cursed by the sea god of the land to see vision, which no one believes because of her refusal to be her handmaiden. As a girl she did not consider the appointment worthy of her beauty and status.

Tonye is Zifa's younger brother assistant fisherman. He hangs himself at the end of the play rather than allow his brother to kill him after he discovers his incestuous relationship between him and his wife.

Masseur plays the role of a priest, family doctor, confessor and gynaecologist. He relays the cause of Zifa's problem and gives the solution that is required of

him by the gods. He assures Ebere that she is not the source of her problem, but the husband and that she can still give birth if she will agree to be betrothed to her husband's younger brother Tonye after observing the sacrifice specified by the gods.

Dode is another tragic character who watches helplessly the people he loves destroy themselves. Dode, like Tonye, is a victim of circumstances; a goat in that he is also sacrificed for personal happiness of his mother. Dode is the figure that arouses pity in the reader for his life is changed from happiness to misery through no fault of his.

Self Assessment

Exercise 10

Attempt a comparative examination of the tragic figures in *Song of Death* and *Song of a Goat*.

UNIT 5.3

ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY IN AL-HAKIM AND J.P CLARK'S PLAYS

Reversibility of the tragic conflict: In an African society, the fate of a man to a as believed is determined by the same, which could be consciously or otherwise. This is made possible in the African tragedy through the freedom given to the tragic figures and their choice of action over realities surrounding them.

This is evident in *Song of Death* in which Asakir, the tragic heroine, could have opted for the better option of seeking revenge or justice as the case may be through the civic law as suggested by Alwan. Also in *Song of a Goat*, tragic figures Zafi and Ebere could have averted the later doom should they have chosen the option suggested by the Masseur, which is customary after designated ritual.

Influence of the supernatural and the society: In a typical African milieu, there is the mystic belief that there are supernatural interventions in the physical occurrence of phenomena. In African tragedy there is an overpowering effect of the supernatural and the societal orientations felt on the tragic personae, which aid the tragic conflict. In *Song of the Goat*, the family of Zifa is cursed by the gods. Zifa is plagued with impotency for violating the conduct of the society. His impotency fostered his doom and the societal belief held by the Izon people (setting of the play) that man's inability to procreate is of serious magnitude which likely might not to be in other regions, that drives the play's tragic course.

The societal factor only applies to *Song of Death* set in the Upper Egypt where inability to revenge is seen as a shameful act. Revenge is not seen as a shameful act; rather, it is an act taken seriously by this people. In this situation, justice should have been primal aim of Askir in avenging her husband's death, which could have been made possible through the civic law, but as a result of social orientation exsanguination effect or process of revenge is of primal motive. Revenge, the social misnomer in the play numbs the tragic heroine's senses to better option and triggers the actualization of the tragic conflict.

Tragic personae in African tragedy: In African tragedy, the case of tragedy is often justified through the lapses of the tragic personae imbued with the will and freedom defined or limited by both tragic flaws as well as external forces (society and supernatural forces).

In African tragedy there is a cathartic representation of the suffering of man inflicts on other men or him. In *Song of Death*, Asakir is seen inflicting societal biased judgement of the death of her son while in *Song of a Goat*, Zifa and Eber's refusal to go by the advice given by the gods inflicts doom on them and Tonye, an innocent character like Alwan in *Song of Death*. In essence, these major characters can be said to be the main drive of tragic conflict in the play.

Also tragic figures depicted as frail and hardly equal to the demand on challenges posed by the universe, a calamitous place. Zifa in *Song of a Goat* commits suicide; this shows his inability to bear much pain as he must suffer and, Alwan

in *Song of Death* who couldn't avenge his father's death left his home. This is contrary to the 'Aristotelian' ideology of tragedy that poses the tragic hero as brave and up to the task.

The cyclical nature of tragic conflict: In these two plays, tragic course is seen permeating from one individual to another. Tragedy revolves around each character, which collides resulting into central tragedy. In *Song of a Goat*, Zifa's father killed a member of his clan, so he is cursed by the gods with leprosy and Zifa lays to rest the soul of his father before the appointed time thereby cursed with impotency. Also Orukorere's refusal to be the priestess of the oracle leads to her drunkenness and the misfortune of foretelling the future without being believed.

Alwan's father in *Song of Death* was murdered by Suwelian Tahawi because he believes that Alwan's father killed his father. The vengeful act led to the death of Alwan whose innocence is not enough to save him from the cyclical event of tragedy.

The plays are less dependent upon audience's expectation of tragic effectiveness: This is as a result of the absence of universality and features defining African tragedy. Therefore for a better understanding of an African tragedy by an audience, an enlightenment of the societal beliefs and customs should be ensured. For instance, the audience should be introduced to the societal background of the Izon community for *Song of a Goat* and the Upper Egypt for *Song of Death*.

Self Assessment

Exercise 11

Critically examine Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* as an African tragedy.

UNIT 6

NATIONALISM IN AFRICAN DRAMA: THE SOYINKA AND NGUGI'S EXAMPLE

UNIT 6.1

WOLE SOYINKA'S *A DANCE OF THE FOREST*

The play opens with a prologue by Aroni, one of the forest spirits where he gives the background to the action of the play. The humans are gathered for a festival celebration, a “gathering of the tribe” (a symbolism of Nigeria’s independence) and they ask the deities and the spirit of the sacred groves of the forest to send to the occasion illustrious ancestor as a symbolic presence of the greatness and the glory of the race. The forest spirit, especially the forest head and Aroni (the lame one) is aware of the past crime and evils of individuals and groups in the community, converted the euphoric supplication of the human to a cathartic and purgative confrontation of the gathered tribes with the truth of the past historical experience and reality.

These two restless dead are sent to the humans, accuser and growing spot in the buried collective conscience of the race- dead man and dead woman, who carries a baby, the unborn, “the living” in her grave (5). The name of the dead man “Mulieru” literally means “he-who-is-enslaved.” He confirms the participation of the black Africans in the darkest historical tragedy; transatlantic slave trade.

UNIT 6.2

NATIONAL THEMES IN *A DANCE IN THE FOREST*

Bribery and corruption: This is a phenomenon that has been and is and will forever be. *A Dance in the Forest* presents different images of corruption showing us that corruption is not only in the leadership level but starts from everyone. An instance in the play is the story of a lorry named incinerator. This lorry capacity is 40, but is changed to 20 by one of the council workers because he has taken bribe, thereby endangering the lives of 65 people being burnt to death because the lorry caught fire. Another instance is the case of a historian (Adenebi) who

being by the slave dealer who is also advocating for the sale of the soldiers into slavery. Adenebi is also in the present generation. The simply emphasizes the fact that bribery and corruption are vices that have come to stay.

A call for the embrace of African culture: Wole Soyinka tries to make us see the crime the white men has committed through the black men which still resurface even when they are gone. He tries to make us see the beauty of African culture (Yoruba).

The interrelationship of art and politics: The symbol of the great reunion carved by Demoke (carver) the son of the that was condemned by Eshuoro (the wayward cult-spirit) just because he was carved with oro's sacred tree, arabab and araba's height was diminished. Oromole, a follower of Oro, an apprentice to Demoke fights against the sacrilege (diminishing of araba) to the gods. He wins with the support of the carver who was tied to earth and begins to work above his master's head. Unfortunately for him, he is plucked down by Demoke.

The gap between human world and the realm of the gods: Wole Soyinka also try to bridge the gap between the human world and the realm of the gods by portraying Ogun as the protector of Demoke just because he (Ogun) is the patron of woodcarver, creativity and explorer despite the fact that he is one of the forest dwellers.

A Dance of the Forest by Wole Soyinka is just a method of calling all artistes who believe they could make that positive change in the society as it is impossible for any artist to remain immune to the ills of the society.

The death of justice: One other theme is the death of justice. ~~Soyinka realizes this while he was in solitary imprisonment for eighteen months under the dictatorship regime.~~ The soldiers are sold into slavery by Mata Wharibu, because they do not agree to fight an unjust war. They are not allowed the right to free will or even appeal. The leader who is Mata Whalibu in this book pronounces judgement the way it suits him. He does it in a way that injustice still parades the society. People that are supposed to be condemned to death are still living.

Fatality of human actions: This can also be treated as another national theme in the play. Demoke's attempt to save the half child came to nought. He is portrayed as the hope for future generation. The playwright also employs various elements to achieve confusing and moody atmosphere in the play. The conversation is serious though they are comprised of relative simple diction. The proverbs do not help matters as regards the seriousness and straight forwardness of the play. "Have you seen as a woman throw away her pestle when she really meant to pound yam?"... they say the forest is more cunning anytime of the year of the year, but who ever lay back in the play. The thematic concerns of the play are not to be taken lightly. The Nigeria civil war of 1967 illustrates the severity of the warning raised in the work. The play is an apocalyptic work of the ruling class's failure to heed.

In conclusion, *A Dance in the Forest* has been used by Wole Soyinka to portray the foibles in the society and a proper solution to it by stating how things will get better if their past mistakes were not repeated. The play is a political satire and also helps to promote Yoruba culture through myths, ritual; and even the use of proverbs.

Self Assessment

Exercise 12

How relevant is the nationality of the themes of *A Dance in the Forest* in contemporary Nigeria and Africa?

UNIT 6.3

NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND NGUGI WA MIIRI'S *I WILL MARRY WHEN I WANT*

The plot structure of the play is linear which engenders cause and effect. In the plot Ngugi satirizes hypocrisy of religion, capitalism and the people that use the system for personal gain (greed) at the expense of others.

The storyline centres on a Kenyan peasant farm labourer, Kiguuda, and his family, Wangeci (wife) and Gathoni (daughter). It portrays their effort to hold on to their culture and to protect the small piece of land they own to the pride of imperialists who want to buy it and build an insecticide factory on it.

The title deed hanging on the wall of their home is their pride. Even that is dissatisfactory since they own one and half acres and could have more had they not listened to the Christians who implore them to give up their materialism while other from Mau Mau group who liberated Kenya brought up most of the land and sold them back to the European, American and Japanese imperialist.

The story conflict begins when Wangeci and Kiguuda who have been told by the local Christian church to sanctify their marriage. Later they also learn that their daughter Gathoni wants to marry the son of the wealthiest man in town. Wangeci and Kiguuda turn to Ahab Kioi Wa Kanoru to set up a marriage for their daughter. Kioi Wa Kanoru a deceitful person hiding under the canopy of Christianity tells them that he will only agree to marry his son and their daughter if the Kiguuda are converted to Christians fully by getting married in church. They agreed reluctantly but soon realize they are too poor to pay for the bridal reception for the daughter and even themselves. They sought financial assistance from Mr Kioi but he refuses and instead takes advantage of their gullibility by giving them two option of either selling off their only land or turn the land over as equity or collateral for a bank loan for which he is ready to stand as a guarantor. Kiguuda rejected the first alternatives but agrees to give up his title deed to the bank for a loan.

When Gathoni becomes pregnant with John Muhuuni, Kofi and his family rejected her and refuse to marry her to their son, saying that they are not mature in the lord and their daughter is a prostitute. This brings the story to the head of Kiguuda demands reparation from Kanoru by branding a sword against himself. He and Wangeci agree to have Wa Kanoru sign an agreement but his wife pulls a gun on Kiguuda and whatever advantage the Kiguuda's have diminishes. In the end, the Kiguuda loses their land to the bank who auctions it off to the white imperialist (Kioi).

The play ends on the sad note but it also has a hopeful view the struggle for the true liberation continues.

Self Assessment

Exercise 13

What sociological undertones are implied in the plot of the play?

UNIT 6.4

THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION

Exploitation through marriage: The literary subject matter of the text is marriage even just going by the title of the play *I Will Marry When I Want*. Mr Kioi exploited the Kiguunda's on the bases of their land by taking on their gullibility as peasants with less exposure (ignorance) through marriage. Gathoni, the daughter of Kiguunda is in love with Kioi's son John and because Kiguunda wants her daughter to get married they decide to accept the proposal of getting married in the church so that both (Gathoni and John) can be married. However, they do not know that Kioi who has interest in their piece of land appears to be giving his support so as to get the land which eventually happens at the end. The Kiguunda's lose on both sides. Their daughter, Gathoni, gets pregnant and is jilted by John and they also irretrievably lose their land.

Betrayal: The Kiguundas are betrayed by the Kiois through the latter's takeover of their land, after conspiring with the bank to auction the land out. The Kiguunda's are devastated when they discovered in the end that it is the same person who stands as guarantor for them that also goes behind them to get the only possession that gives them pride.

Self Assessment

Exercise 14

Examine the themes of exploitation and betrayer in the play in relation to postcolonial Kenya.

UNIT 6.5

STYLES

Symbolism

The use of symbolism helps the playwrights to achieve their aim. In the Kenya, land is seen as a pride and treasure. This is evident in the play. Kiguunda's land is his pride as he guards his title deed jealously. There are people in this play who sell their lands to the blacks (Kenyans) that work or serve as watchdogs for the white to relocate to remote parts that are underdeveloped while the minor black elites stay in estates, have good roads and well equipped hospital. The falling of the title deed in the play and the Kiguundas not picking it up, symbolize the letting go of the land by the Kiguundas.

The name "Ahab" and "Jezebel" are also symbolic. As earlier noted, Nguigi Wa Thiong's was a devout Christian and his ability to bring bible characters that are known for their greed and wickedness is another way of attacking the British imperialists and their religion and also let them know he could use their knowledge against them. Ahab and Jezebel in the bible were the ones that coveted Naboth's vineyard even when their own was better than his and ended up killing him in order to have his land. This applies to what happens in the play between Kioi and Kiguunda. Though there is no killing physically but the loss of his land which is his pride is enough to harm or result to death.

Flashback

The use of flashback in the play serves as a reflection on the past about their ways of life, culture and other important events so that the people can realize the worth of tradition, heritage, song, dance, dressing and so on and how they should reject imperialism totally and return to their roots.

Irony

In the play there are features of dramatic and situational irony which shows the style employed by the capitalists to exploit the poor for their selfish reason.

At the beginning, the Kiguundas think that the Kiois are coming to pay them a visit in order to discuss marriage arrangement of their daughter and son but are disappointed when the latter come and discuss their conversion to Christianity.

In the middle of the play, the Kiguundas expect that Kioi being a Christian will be able to help them with the arrangement as well as the preparation for their proposed marriage but are disappointed when he rather gives a difficult option.

At the end, the acre of land that the Kiguundas believes must have been taken over by the bank turns out to be that it is the Kiois that buys the land from the bank.

Music

The musical accompaniment is a way of lightening up the tense conflict of the play as it builds up. Thus, it is an interlude. It also serves as flashback through which the past is recollected.

Self Assessment

Exercise 15

What are the dominant religious allusions that are symbolically employed in this text? How did religious imperialism subjugate the African nations culturally?

UNIT 7

CONTEMPORARY PLAYS: THE EXAMPLE OF AHMED YERIMA

UNIT 7.1

AHMED YERIMA

Professor Ahmed Yerima is one of the contemporary dramatists in Nigeria whose works cuts across the dominant trends on Nigerian drama. He is a graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, formerly University of Ife. Yerima, a director, actor

and scholars has published several plays and written critical writings on drama and theatre in Nigeria. He was for several years the Director General of the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria. He is currently a Dean of Faculty and professor in Redeemer's University Ede.

UNIT 7.2

YERIMA'S *THE WIVES*

The plot of Ahmed Yerima's *The Wives* is based upon gripping story of Chief Theophilus Gbadegeshin Olowokere and raises some very philosophical questions in the mind of the reader and as well exposes several ills in our society. Before the death of Chief Olowokere a wealthy polygamist, he made a decree that his will must be read after his burial. While his sister and wives are still coming to terms with his death and his brother Baba Ajagbe, the head of the family seeks to prepare his corpse for rite of passage to the land of the his ancestors; as a requirement for the ritual, the first son of the deceased is to accompany him with praise chants of the family.

They soon discover that the first son of the first wife (Mrs. Angela Olowokere) is not the first son of Chief Olowokere. The first wife feels there is a sort of conspiracy to cheat her son of his inheritances and makes effort to stop them. The late chief's lawyer reads the will and in the will, he bequeaths all his property to his first son. When the Ifa oracle is consulted it reveals that Chief Olowokere had engaged in incest with his sister and his first son, a product of that illicit relationship is the lawyer; Barrister Solomon Akande.

Self Assessment

Exercise 16

Examine the plot of Yerima's *The Wives*. Attention should be given to its structure and the tools with which it is built.

UNIT 7.3

THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION

Polygamy and its Inherent Challenges: This play talks about salient issues in our society one which is polygamy. It is true that many polygamous families live in peace and love, but it is necessary for them to be able to tolerate one another. Chief Olowookere is a polygamist, he has three wives and they seem to envy one another and always at loggerheads. Angela and Cecelia rain their anger on Tobi because she got more of chief's attention; the last wife, she is the youngest and most naive. She is taken to prison for the death of her husband but later released when Auntimi intervenes. Even after the release of the autopsy result that Chief died of heart attack, Angela refuses to believe and keeps on calling Tobi the witch and a prostitute who kills her husband. Polygamy brings envy and rivalry to the family.

Cultural Declination: The play exposes the gradual decline in traditional African culture as well as the western influences on it. The children of Chief Olowookere, Seyi (the supposed first son) and the other sons are based abroad (London and Spain) and are absent during their father's burial. We see Seyi's mother (Mrs. Angela Olowookere) complaining in the play that even if her son is around, he does not know anything about these practices and that he has lived all his life abroad. Another fear is that she does not want her son to be initiated into the cult.

The new generation of African children prefer to school abroad, work there and sometimes married to foreigners as in Seyi's case, forgetting home, their culture and language which is their identity. On the other hand, Western influence on our culture is not something to be overlooked. Nowadays, we tend to "Westernize" everything even the most sacred things. The wives and Auntimi are supposed to be mourning wearing the mourning cloth but here; they are dressed elegantly and even make a toast and play a favourite song of the late Chief

Olowookere. In an atmosphere that is supposed to be sorrowful, they celebrate. Agbaye and Ifagbayi are very angry with the wives and spelled it out in the play that women are not supposed to announce the death of their husband especially a man of his calibre and that until the calabash of life is broken only can it be declared by the elders in the family that he is dead.

Religious conflict: This is seen when Chief Olowookere dies and is denied a church burial and funeral service because he is a high chief in his family cult. This conflict is seen when Ifagbayi places the horsetail in late chief Gbadegeshin's right hand and the cross symbolizing Christianity on the other hand. Obviously, the traditionalists see their own rite as sacred and superior and do not want anything to be done to the corpse before their arrival. Even Cecelia, one of the wives also complains that she does not understand how today her husband is a Christian as he goes to the church and still holds the traditional religion in high esteem as he is regaled in his outfit for the shrine where he worships the deities. This she also points as one of the reasons why she leaves the home and the fact that his family are fetish. She even refuses to swear by any other god when Baba Ajagbe asks her to swear that she is still not the one of the wives.

African beliefs, taboo and consultation of the gods: There are certain practices, beliefs and customs that are sacred in the African society. This play exposes the reader to the atrocity committed by Chief Olowookere who impregnated his younger sister, Auntimi. This is incest and it is an abominable act in Yoruba land. Theophilus and his sister keep this act as a secret and that the fact that it produces a child which Theophilus claimed had died after delivery. Auntimi does not know the truth about the child until towards the end of the play when everything becomes clear to her.

Chief Olowookere does not just make his sister a mother but also his wife as he hands her the calabash of life and drives away her lover with a gun. His abominable act is revealed to the reader through the consultation of Ifa and the fact that his death is not normal; his swollen face and body shows this. As in

Yoruba tradition, when asked for the calabash of life, it is the older wife that should have it but in this case, Auntimi, the sister to the husband which automatically made her his wife.

Hypocrisy: In this play, Yerima satirizes the hypocrisy of the church. When Chief Theophilus Olowokeere is alive, the church benefited a lot from him. However, when he dies, the church refuses to give him a Christian burial because he is also a traditionalist. His name is removed from the grand Bishop's chair and the piano he buys. However, the house for the bishop that he builds is not demolished or handed over to the family of the deceased.

Self Assessment

Exercise 17

What is contemporary, new or radical in Ahmed Yerima's thematic portraits?

UNIT 7.4

THE WIVES AS DARK COMEDY

DARK COMEDY

Self Assessment

Exercise 18

In what ways has Yerima proven himself to be a conformist or non-conformist dramatist?

UNIT 7.5

DRAMATIC ELEMENTS

Suspense: Here, we find Yerima deliberately withholding information in an attempt to heighten and sustain the interest of the reader. The information that is important in resolving the problems in the story are released gradually to the reader. This is evident in the discovery of the actual first son of Chief Theophilus Olowookere.

Apostrophe: This is a poetic device but at times, it can be used in plays. As we see, the four wives (the fourth wife being the deceased's sister) talk to the corpse of Chief Theophilus as if it were alive and capable of hearing them.

Soliloquy: this features in the beginning of the play as the plays open with Auntimi talking to herself.

Satire: This is also used in the play to ridicule the society of the play which is characterised the vices and inordinate pride that. The overblown face of the corpse of Chief Olowookere which makes the corpse seem to be smiling satirizes the modern day elegant dressing done to a lifeless body by the high class in the society. Also, through Auntimi's earlier soliloquy, the readers are made to know that the corpse of Chief Olowookere was honoured with the national award of Grand Commander of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (GCFR). The playwright uses this to satirize the Nigerian Government who honours irresponsible and unmerited individual in the society.

Symbolism: The playwright makes the characters represent different ideas. In the play, Ajagbe and Ifagbayi represent traditionalists who are rooted in culture. Angela represents women are not bold enough to assert their right and make decision on their own. Tobiloba, the youngest wife represents modern and young ladies who are naive of marriage and Cecelia is representative of a decisive woman who asserts their right.

Irony: After the wives deliberate on what to do with their lives when the burial is over, they all think of helping Auntimi with money and a shop for her upkeep. Ironically, it turns out she gains more materially when everything her late brother leaves is willed to her son whom she is not aware is still alive hitherto.

UNIT 7.6

YERIMA'S *TUTI*

Ahmed Yerima employs various literary styles in his play. Yerima writes outside the convention of playwriting. Yerima's play is without act and scenes. The play is just one long uninterrupted stretch of dialogue and action. This is new in playwriting and stands Yerima out as one who dares the status quo.

The play is however in strict adherence to the three unities of the classical Greek tragedy; the unity of time, place and action. The play begins and ends in Father's apartment and also does not last more than twenty-four hours. The plot is in unity; there is no conflicting action. This enhances the simplicity of the play as a way of celebrating the simplicity and beauty of the family setup.

The essence of *Tuti* is key to the society but from the angle of individual families. There is the use of character economy connoting the relatively few membership of the family against the larger society. This fewer membership however does not downplay the importance of the family play. Family issues are also worth discussing because the effects are felt in every corner of the society.

Tuti and Ayo are the only characters with a proper name. The focus is on the young and growing family/generation. The subject matter revolves around what the older generation has left for the younger, how the parent generation /family affect the daughter generation/family. Unknown to Father, Tuti negatively reflects on her parents' mistakes. This also portrays the generational gap that exists between a supposedly close knit people.

Yerima employs very simple everyday diction in the writing of his play and also a clear direction. The story however relies on the flashback technique in order to unravel the problem of the play. It is through flashback that Father understands the depth of his betrayal not only to his wife but also his daughter.

The play is didactic in nature. Through the experience of Father especially with regard to his very tragic fall, the reader is encouraged to put up better morals than Father does. The play portrays the need for mistakes of both Father and Tuti to be corrected in the mind of the reader.

In *Tuti*, the question of who exactly is the hero; whether Tuti or Father, is very controversial. Although, Tuti is the one who is properly named and even is an eponymously character, the play centres more on Father. It exposes the fall of Father, the loss of trust in him, his law career among other themes.

UNIT 7.7

STYLE

Yerima's style of plot does not follow the conventional pattern of acts and scenes. In his own way, he portrays the world as fluid and ill-arranged. Events happen without being meditated. At the end, where Tuti realizes the truth about money and her Father's death, Yerima softly tells the world the short comings of women's superficiality.

Yerima's *Tuti* uses characterization so well. The focus of the characters is on their attitude to life. In the seemingly short play, the reader is exposed to the worldview of the major characters in the play. The characters are seen majorly from what they think of them as well as position to critical issues around.

Self Assessment

Exercise 19

Comment of the distinctiveness of Ahmed Yerima's dramatic style.

MODULE FOUR

CRITICAL MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY WRITTEN AFRICAN DRAMA

UNIT 1

INTRODUCTION

UNIT 2

FEMINIST MOVEMENT: GHANAIAN FEMALE DRAMATISTS

THE CONCEPT OF FEMINISM. FEMINISM IN WRITTEN AFRICAN DRAMA. FEMALE DRAMATISTS – THE GHANAIAN EXAMPLES

Self Assessment

Exercise 20

UNIT 3

EFUA T. SUTHERLAND

Efua T. Sutherland (27 June 1924 – 2 January 1998) was a Ghanaian playwright, poet, director and dramatist. Sutherland's works experiments creativity with storytelling and other indigenous forms from Ghanaian traditions. Her plays, based on traditional stories transforms African and folktale conventions into modern dramatic theatre techniques.

UNIT 3.1

THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA AND EDUFA

UNIT 3.2

THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA AS A COMEDY

The Marriage of Anansewa is a comedy (which is one of the major types of drama), in the most common literary application, is a fictional work in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse the audience: the characters and their discomfitures engage the audience's pleasurable attention rather than profound concern, the audience is made to feel confident that no great disaster will occur, and usually the action turns out happily for the chief characters.

In Efua T. Sutherland's *Marriage of Anansewa*, the chief characters, Ananse and his daughter Anansewa, find themselves in a serious fix as the drama develops. However, at the end, the action ends happily as they are able to entangle the knot that hitherto tangles them.

There are arguments as to whether the *Marriage of Anansewa* is a comedy or a farce, that is, whether it is a high comedy or a low comedy – farce. One thing is sure the *Marriage of Anansewa* is a comedy. Nevertheless, there are elements of farce dominant in the drama text. Farce is a type of comedy in which exaggerated character types find themselves in ludicrous situations in the course of an improbable plot, but by the sustained brilliance and wit of the dialogue.

Efua T. Sutherland in the foreword of *Marriage of Anansewa* describes the character – Ananse, who is the chief character in this text, as one who “appears to represent a kind of everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted too.” This description of Anansewa opens the reader's imagination to... imagination as to the kind of picture of Ananse that he is to create in his mind. George Kweku Ananse finds himself in a ludicrous situation: receiving money from four chiefs, using his daughter as a bait, gradually entangling himself by promising to give his daughter's hand in marriage to all four of them, not knowing exactly how to come

out of the mess when it gets really messed up but trusting his units to help him overcome his situation.

When Ananse finally finds himself in a ludicrous situation, all four chiefs come at the same time to pay Anansewa's bride price. He comes up with the idea of faking Anansewa's death (as a means of untangling the knot he has tied with his own hands as a result of his greed and selfishness), a stunt he is able to smoothly pull with the help of Christina Yamoah – a fashionable woman who is in love with Ananse and is willing to go to any length to get his love. Through the dialogue between Ananse and the servants of all the chiefs, he is able to know who exactly among them to choose as a husband for his daughter Anansewa. Marriage of Anansewa achieves its comic effects through the sustained brilliance of its chief character, Ananse. The dialogue between Ananse and his daughter in the opening scene is amusing not necessarily because of the action, but because of the language. It is important to note here that language, in any drama text, comes through dialogue, soliloquy and aside. Characters use language to reveal intimate details about their lives and deepest thoughts.

UNIT 3.3

EDUFA AS A TRAGEDY

UNIT 3.4

ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY DOMINANT IN *EDUFA*

Prologue: This is a precipitating which will later create template for the complex plot to be enacted in the body of the play. In *Edufa*, the prologue of Abena, Edufa's sister soliloquises bitterly in such a way that creates a moody and sad atmosphere that eventually pervades the drama text.

In media res: The play begins in the middle, some actions have taken place already and the solution to the problem that has happened is being acted before the audience. The drama begins with Ampoma, Edufa's wife, being sick while Edufa and Segura rally around, seeking a solution to the problem. The cause of the sickness is not revealed at the beginning of the drama.

Catharsis: In Greek catharsis means "cleasing", "purgation" or "purification". According to Aristotle, catharsis is a psychological purgation of the emotion of fear, honour, pity, pathos and sympathy accumulated in the audience in the course of experiencing tragic actions and moments. In *Edufa*, the tragic death of Ampoma as a sacrificial lamb for Edufa's wealth and a reversal in the psychological well being of Edufa as a result of Ampoma's death in the end, accomplish catharsis.

Tragic hero: Aristotle says that the tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and terror if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both; and also that this tragic effect will be stronger if the hero is "better than we are", in the sense that this tragic hero is of higher than ordinary moral worth. In *Edufa*, Edufa, the tragic hero, is a man of eminent personality, highly elevated in the society and class. So high is his status in the society that his quest to maintain and even elevate it leads to the tragedy that befalls him afterward.

Harmatia/hubris/tragic flaw: The tragic hero is portrayed as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his harmatia, his "error" or "mistake of judgement", although misleading and less literally translated, his tragic flaw. In *Edufa*, Edufa's change in fortune from happiness to misery is as a result of his mistaken choice of action. Four years before then he had consulted a diviner who demanded sacrifice of another life in order to avert the danger – death, which was to befall Edufa. Edufa makes the error of opting for the powerful charm that will protect him and his business, after being teased by his wife that he could not bear for once to shut away from his precious business and society. Unfortunately

for Edufa, Anipoma, his wife, not knowing that he is carrying on him a powerful charm swears to die for him.

One common form of *harmatia* in Greek tragedies is *hubris*; that pride or overweening self confidence, which leads a protagonist or tragic hero to disregard divine warning or violate an important moral law. In *Edufa*, Edufa outright disregards his father's warning. Kankam, Edufa's father, does everything in his power to convince Edufa to either confess or denounce the powerful charm but he remains adamant. In Kankam's words, "pity him, you spirits. He grew greedy and insensitive, insane for gain, frantic for the fluff and flattery. And I continued him. Did I not warn him? I tried to make him stop at the point when we men must be content or let ourselves be lured on to our doom. But he wouldn't listen. He doesn't listen it makes me ill..."

Self Assessment

Is Efua T. Sutherland style successful in the execution of the comic and tragic forms of drama?

UNIT 3.5

ANALYSIS OF BOTH DRAMA TEXTS

Plot

The Marriage of Anansewa has a linear plot structure as there is unity of action (artistic whole). There is a complete and ordered structure of actions directed towards the intended comic effect. None of the prominent component parts or incidents is non-functional.

The plot of the drama develops from exposition of the characters. The audience is introduced to the major characters, Ananse and his daughter, and actions of the drama to complication/rising action, which is where the conflict begins. The complication in the drama starts when in act one, Ananse argues with his

daughter, Anansewa, over her marriage to the chiefs so as to take care of his financial and material needs. After the exposition and the complication, is the crisis/climax. This is the point where Ananse receives the news that all the chiefs that he has been collecting gifts and money from are coming to pay his daughter's bride price at the same time.

The falling action at this point Ananse seems to control the cause of events until denouement which in French means unknotting. This is the point where Ananse gradually sends off the servants of the chiefs that have come to give their condolence to the supposed dead Anansewa. Being a comedy, conflict is settled in Ananse's interest and therefore, the play ends happily.

In *Edufa*, the plot is designed to achieve tragic effects. Resolution, a frequently used alternative term for the outcome of a plot is lacking here because it denotes an end with settled conflict. In case of *Edufa*, it is catastrophe. At the end of the drama, despite Edufa and Seguwa's efforts to save Ampoma's life, she ends up losing her life, while Edufa loses his mind, seeking to deal with death for taking his wife.

Suspense and Surprise

As the plot of the drama evolves, it arouses suspense in the audience/reader as he patiently waits to see/read on to know how Ananse overcomes the situation he has put himself because of his greed and selfishness. There also is an element of surprise at the end of the drama because what happens is contrary to the expectation of the audience. Ananse wittingly and skilfully unties the seemingly "impossible to untie" knot at the end.

Characters

In the *Marriage of Anansewa*; as in most farce comedy, even the chief character is flat/ two-dimensional. In the case of this comedy, there is no exception as all the characters are flat. The method of characterization employed by the author is known as telling where the author/playwright intervenes authoritatively in order to describe and often to evaluate the motives and dispositional qualities of the

characters. In the foreword, the author attempts to inform the reader who Ananse is: “Ananse appears to represent a kind of everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve society as medium and psychology of human passions, ambitions and follies as revealed in contemporary situation. The author also informs the audience that “laughter is the main social response to Ananse as a character.”

Confidant: (feminine form is confidante) is a character who plays only a minor role in the action, but serves the protagonist as a trusted friend to whom he/she confesses intimate thoughts, problems, and feelings. In drama, the confidant provides the playwright with a plausible device for communicating to the audience the knowledge, state of mind and intentions of a principal character without the use of stage devices such as soliloquy or aside.

In *Edufa*, Seguwa serves as Edufa’s confidante. In Seguwa’s words, “...you have chosen me to share this present burden with you...” In *The Marriage of Ananewa*, Christe serves as Ananse’s confidante.

Chorus/choral character

Among the ancient Greek, the chorus was a group of people, wearing masks, which sang or chanted verses while performing dance like movements at religious festivals. A similar chorus played a part in Greek tragedies, where (in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles) they served mainly as commentators on dramatic actions and events who expressed traditional, normal, religious, and social attitudes; begging with Euripides, however, the chorus assured primarily a lyrical function.

In *Edufa*, there is a chorus of women from the town who from time to time comment on the events of the drama.

Parade: this is the aspect of the play, upon which the chorus comments. They make a kind of intellectual comparison of the event/action in the play.

Self Assessment

Exercise 21

Identify Sutherland's feminist voice and temper in these two plays.

Settings / Stage Description

The overall setting of a dramatic work is the general locale, historical time and social circumstance in which its action occurs; the setting of a single scene within which the work is the particular physical location in which it takes place.

When applied to a theatrical production, "setting" is synonymous with decor, which is a French term denoting both the scenery and the properties, or movable pieces of furniture, on the stage. The French *mise en scene* (playing on stage) is sometimes used in English as another synonym conception, stage and directing of a theatrical performance.

In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the author/playwright gives a stage description of the positions of the actors and organization of properties for the drama. While in *Edufa*, the playwright clearly indicates the setting to be the courtyard and inner court of Edufa's expensive house.

Atmosphere

This is the emotional tone pervading a section or the whole of a literary work, which fosters the reader's or (more commonly) terrifying or disastrous.

In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the atmosphere initially was that of uncertainty especially during the crisis stage of the plot. However the atmosphere later changes to a happy one as the drama ends happily (which makes it a comedy). While in *Edufa*, right from the prologue to the end of the drama, there is a gloomy atmosphere that suggests to the reader/audience that the drama is a tragedy.

Comic relief

This is the introduction of comic characters, speeches or scenes in a serious or tragic work, especially in a drama. Sometimes they occur merely as episodes of

dialogue or horseplay for purpose of alleviating tension and adding variety. In *Edufa*, comic relief is achieved through the character of Seachi. – both monologue and dialogue, the seriousness of drama is alleviated.

Self Assessment

Exercise 22

How does the dramatist portray her mood? Is this in anyway symbolic of a feminist ideology?

UNIT 3.6

THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION

Efua T. Sutherland's *Edufa* is driven with several themes these includes :

Absolute Love and Sacrifice: This is portrayed in the play through the character of Ampoma, Edufa's wife. She loves her husband dearly that she cannot help sacrificing herself for his life. When Edufa tells her the consequences of her decision, she cries a lot but does not change her stand. Her love for Edufa is a true love. Edufa is sorry and tells her that she should not have made that fatal promise.

Ampoma is aware of the fact that she will die. She decides to come into the garden to enjoy life and dances with the chorus. Although she falls three times, she still puts on the gait look that all is well.

Divinity in the African context

In the play, there are instances of the traditional beliefs in divinity. There are instances where the use of herbs features. Edufa asks Segunwa to keep burning the incense while he and Ampoma bathe in the herbs. Also, he sends Sam to a place to heal Ampoma of her sickness. Africans believe that these traditional herbs can cure illness and they place so much faith in them.

Ego , pride and prejudice

In the play, Edufa is a proud man that does not want to dampen his ego no matter the cost. Owing to this, he keeps Ampoma's illness away from the people who can sympathize with him and help him.

When his father confronts him with the issue of his wife's illness, and the role he, Edufa, has played, he refuses his father's advice to denounce the charm before the whole house because of his pride and ego.

Deceitfulness

Edufa deceives many of people in the play. He deceives his mother-in law. He tells her that he and Ampoma want to enjoy themselves as husband and wife. He sends his children to stay with his mother –in law. Edufa deceives the chorus into believing that all is well with Ampoma. He deceives his own sister by refusing to tell her the main cause of Ampoma's sickness.

However, Edufa does not succeed in deceiving his own father, Kankam because his father confronts him with the truth. Edufa deceives himself also. He thinks that Ampoma will live after the purification rites but she later dies.

The following themes are present in The Marriage of Anansewa:

Greed and self centeredness

Ananse is a greedy and self centeredness man. Because of his greed, he takes the photography of his daughter and travels around the world. His self centeredness attitude leads him to decide to give out his daughter in marriage to one of the chiefs.

The mason is also a greedy man. It seems that work is scarce in that area and he wants to make the best use of the opportunity given to him to work with Ananse. The mason, painter and the carpenter are supposed to work for three weeks but the mason insists on five weeks and later doubles it to ten weeks just for him to have enough money in his pocket. The entire play is full of deceit. Ananse

deceives a lot of people particularly the chiefs. He also deceives his mother and aunt in a bid to send them away so that he will be able to carry out his next plan which is Anansewa's pretended death.

UNIT 3.7

A COMPARATIVE READING OF *THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA* AND *EDUFA*

The Marriage of Anansewa and *Edufa*, are plays written by the same author, Efua T. Sutherland. Both plays texts have feminist undertone; they both focussing on gender issue of gender/feminism particularly as it relates to women and their relationships with the other gender.

They both have, as a thematic preoccupation, the trading and sacrificing of a woman in exchange for wealth. Similarly, both drama texts have a woman playing the role of the confidante to the protagonist which is significant to the theory of the feminism that the playwright portrays.

UNIT 3.8

CONTRAST

The Marriage of Anansewa is a comedy, while *Edufa* is a tragedy. In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, there is a choral character, while in *Edufa*, the author makes use of the chorus instead.

Self Assessment

Exercise 23

1. How do you engage both plays in a comparative reading?
2. Attempt character portraiture of the major female characters in the texts and juxtapose them with that of the major male characters?

UNIT 4

AMA ATA AIDOO; BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ama Ata Aidoo also known as Christiana Ama Aidoo was born on March 23, 1942 to Chief Nana Yaw Fama and Maame Abba. She was raised as royalty, a princess among the Fanti people of the town of Abeamzi Kyiakor in the South Central Region of Ghana. In the home of her parents, anti-colonial sentiment was an unavoidable emotion in the wake of the murder of Aidoo's grandfather by neocolonialists. In spite of this murderous tragedy, Fama acknowledged the superiority of Western education and sent his daughter to attend the Wesley Girls High School in the Southern Seaport town of Cape Coast, Ghana, after which she was admitted to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in University of Ghana; a period within which she wrote and published her first play *Dilemma of a Ghost*.

Ama Ata Aidoo is a leading voice among female writers in Africa. She has taught in many universities in the United States and in Africa, including the University of Nairobi Kenya. Ama Ata Aidoo was appointed Minister of Education in 1982, an office in which she served before resigning after eighteen months. She also served as a lecturer in English at the University of Cape Coast and was appointed chair in the same institution. Her publications include plays; *Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) and *Anowa* (1970), both of which are our concern in this study, collections of short stories, collections of poetry and a novel.

UNIT 4.1

ANOWA

UNIT 4.2

CLASSIFICATION – TRAGEDY

Anowa is a tragic play.

One of which is tragic flaw. Anowa as the heroine of the play is stubborn as said by the old man and the old woman...(She refuses to marry any of the sturdy men who have asked for her hand in marriage. No one knows what is wrong with her) (7) from the prologue. She listens to her own tales ... follows her own advice.

Also the presence of old man and the old woman can be said to be parody of chorus in classical Greek tragedy. The comment on character and actions. There are also catastrophes in the play which are done off stage but reported on stage by the old man.

Also in Anowa, the heroine Anowa is influenced by the supernatural forces(gods). This has been achieved through the statement of Anowa herself in phase two pg 33 (it seem this is how they created me). This statement has predestined her catastrophe.

The play as a tragedy has also been achieved through the use of foreshadowing. This is seen in the statement of the old woman and abena badua in page 8. There is also foreshadowing through the suggestion of the playwright at the last phase that African funeral music or drums should be drummed. This foreshadows the tragic happening of the couple.

UNIT 4.3

PORTRAITS OF FEMINIST DRAMA

As a feminist oriented play, many of Ama Ata Aidoo's protagonist are women who defy stereotypical female roles. Ama Ata Aidoo is a feminist. How and why? Her father sent her to school against the whims of the society. Schooling during her time was believed to be exclusive reserved for men, women are seen as mere properties to be taking. An old man observed ... beautiful as Korado Ahima, someone's thin-thread. A deity little pot well baked, and polished smooth to set the noble man's corner (7). Anowa is "thingified" she uses the character of Anowa to demonstrate the specific moment of transition. Anowa shift from typical

African woman who listen to other peoples advices (elders). The old man also says (“she listens to her own tales follows her own ideas. A woman who cannot bear a child in her husband’s house is seen as one who is not yet part of the husband’s family no wonder, Anowa fights like cat and mouse” (7). to seek an end to her barrenness. Generally, it is believed in Africa that barrenness is caused by the woman but Ama Ata Aidoo tells us in this play that barrenness could be the fault of the man. Just as Anowa has pointed in the play when she realizes that her husband is impotent; (62)“now I know, so that is it, my husband is a woman now”.

The burden of child upbringing as depicted in the play is left to the women. This exemplified in Osam’s statement on page 11 that you that i am a man and getting daughters married is one of my duties. Also,the old woman statement on page 8 “other think that her mother Badua has spoilt her shamefully”. Badua herself accepted the claim that was her fault, perhaps it was my fault too”

Self Assessment

Exercise 24

How connected is Anowa’s life to the ideologies of the dramatist? Are there indications that the authorial comments and tempers speak through Anowa or are represented in Anowa?

UNIT 4.4

ALLEGORICAL FEATURES

The play can also be classified as an allegory. Allegory has been achieved through the use styles, structures that are evident in this play. There are some characters in the play whose actions are said to be symbolic. Anowa in a sense becomes a symbol for Africa, her destruction represent its conquest and the ensuing breakdown of morality, spirituality, and the strength of African society.

In the play, Anowa's dream recounts her remembering of some questions directed to Nana about the white colonizers and their slave trade. In the dream, Anowa's body symbolises the whole of African continent as it is implied in the page 106; "I dreamt I was a big big woman." In Anowa's dream, she saw the lobsters which symbolises the whiter colonizer and the slave traders who has been described earlier in the play before her dream by Nana.

Kofi Ako's role in the play is symbolic of bourgeoisie. He buys slave and accumulates a lot of wealth through the work the slaves do for him. In the play, there is a speculation that he uses his manhood to attain his affluent. As we all know that dealing in slave trade endangers Africa continent during the colonial period, Kofi Ako in this act has also seriously implicated him as a bourgeoisie dealing in slavery as it has catastrophic effect on him at the end of the play, when he commits suicide by shooting himself.

The drastic effect of slave trade in Africa brings brutal tragic in the play to Anowa and Kofi Ako. Anowa is betrayed by Kofi Ako; a representation of bourgeoisies through his male figure by refusing to yield to Anowa's insistence on not buying or engaging in slaves. Anowa's tragic suicide can be said to be symbolically victim of Slave Trade as her husband Kofi Ako engages in the practices.

UNIT 4.5

SOURCES OF THE PLAY

One of the sources of the play is from oral tradition narratives. The play emerges from a folktale in Ghana. There is the use of stage, songs, chorus which really depict the oral traditions of the people of Ghana. Another dominant source of the play is the Bond of 1844. In 1844 the Fante, on behalf of Gold Coast (now Ghana), signed a pact with the British which led to the colonization of the region and the later development of the act of seeking and buying of human being into slavery. There is a traditional saying in Aburiland that anyone who engages in slavery, there must be downfall or catastrophe in such household perhaps, this is the

reason why Africans were able to subdue the Europeans and gain independence from them. This traditional saying of the Aburaland is said by the old man at the end of phase 2 on page 100.

UNIT 4.6

INFLUENCES

One can see many ways in which the playwright's use of traditional story telling influences the narrative structure. For instance, there is the use of a mixture of monologue in verse which introduces or ends events and dialogues which are mostly prosaic and acted out by the characters.

Oral narrative also influences the use of chorus in the play. The old man seems to fulfil the role of narrator. He begins and ends the play which gives cyclical movement. The old man opens the play with a long monologue which follows tradition oral conventions in styles and content, in that it introduces the characters of Anowa and Kofi Ako while elucidating some of the major themes of the play; for instance, referring to the notion of slavery in his allusion to "those forts standing at the door of the great ocean and explaining the contact of Ghanaians with westerners.

Another way in which the use of oral narrative influences the play is in Aidoo's use of language. Throughout the play she uses the oral art form of the proverb. For example, this includes "the man who hates you doesn't care if you wait in the sun for your cloth to dry before you can go and join the dance," "A good man does not have a brain or a mouth." Aidoo uses song, dance and music, particularly daram music. For instance, the songs of praise at the end of phase 2 and at the beginning of phase 3, abuse and languages of abuse reminiscent of songs of abuse such as Badua description of Kofi Ako as. She also pays careful attention to oral tradition.

Self Assessment

Exercise 25

Unit 4.3

4.3 Feminist Movement in Nigeria: The Zulu Sofola Example

4.3.1

Zulu Sofola's Biographical Note

The life and times of Zulu Sofola is as intriguing as her dramatic output. Born 22nd June, 1935 in Delta State, Sofola is the first female published author in Nigeria. Therefore her contributions to Nigerian drama and theatre are thought of to be legendary. Zulu Sofola was also the first African female professor of Theatre Arts.

She was, in her life time, a renowned scholar, critic, dramatist, director and actress. Some of her published plays include; *King Emene* (1974), *Memories in the Moonlight* (1986), *Old Wines are Tasty* (1979), *Song of a Maiden* (1991), *The Sweet Trap* (1977), *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972), and *The Wizard of Law* (1975).

Though she studied in the United States of America, Sofola represented the essence of African womanhood. Her opinions and creation of women is seen in the traditional roles played by women in her writings. Sofola's dominant critical voice is on the issue of abuse of the rights of women in the older more patriarchal societies.

4.3.2

Critical Opinions

Several critical opinions have defined Sololá's identity as a writer and feminist critic. She has been described as reactionary, Efakponana (2010:155). Ewrierhoma (2005) describes her as a writer that identifies the need for women liberation from all forms of political and socio-economic marginalization. Sofola also made a distinctive mark by refining and redefining the gender roles and particularly that of a woman. She is also in the forefront of promoting the need for African women to articulate this reality in their literary writings (Efakponana, 2010).

4.3.3

A Comparative Reading of Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and *Song of a Maiden*

Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* is set in the Igbo society of Nigeria. Sofola in this work engages the dynamics of the patriarchal as well as intra gender hegemony which plays out in the cultural practices enforced by the males, families, and other groups in the society. Sofola's *Song of a Maiden* is also named *Shao Village*. It portrays the idea that there are several contradictions in the belief system of peoples particularly the academics represented by the professor and the people of Shao.

According to Sofola in the production notes (1972), the playwright situates the play *Wedlock of the Gods* within a tragic ambit which plays out in the rupture of the sequence of a ritual of death and mourning. An underlying theme therefore is the distortion of the traditional solemnity expected in the performance and observance of such ritual. Ogwoma, rather than observes the normal funeral rites and rituals expected to purify as well as ensure that the spirit of the deceased arrives in the world of the gods, chooses to be liberated from an unwanted marriage particularly because she could envisage that

widowhood inheritance is going to be the next line of action to be enforced by her in laws if she completes the process. The bereaved mother vents her anger on her daughter-in-law by performing rite intended to destroy her son's widow for supposedly being unfaithful to her son and eventually being responsible for the death of her son

Ogwoma the young unwilling bride is given out in marriage to Adigwu. Her resistance is largely because is not prepared for marriage, has no feelings for him and is in love with Uloko who unfortunately is poor and unable to pay her bride wealth which is desperately needed to pay for treatment for her younger brother, Edozie, who is sick unto death. Adigwu suddenly dies three years into the marriage, a union that evidently lacked the love and affection expected. The mother Odebei who has watched the entire process with displeasure had justification for suspecting her son is killed by the woman who has vehemently opposed the marriage.

Ogwoma commences the mandatory three month mourning. The expectation is that there will be no male association of any kind after which her husband's brother is expected to inherit her as the custom dictates. It is this tradition of leviration that Ogwoma rebels against. She encourages Uloko, her embattled lover in waiting, to visit her and becomes pregnant for him during the period she is expected to be in mourning. The premature association with the opposite sex and the sexual relations triggered by it is regarded as the height of defilement of the customs and rituals associated with death and the rites of passage and the repercussions of which are as grievous. Ogwoma and Uloko remain defiant in their posture claiming that their love justifies their actions and that they hope to win the battle against the tradition they had broken.

Solanke (2013:120) believes Sofola's posture in the work *Wedlock of the Gods* depicts her candid opinion about the oppressive traditional practices particularly as it relates to marriage and widowhood practices. Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* portray several other themes which border on and emphasize the disadvantage of forced marriages irrespective of the

temperaments of the persons involved, the problems that often arise as a result of charging utilitarian bride price, widowhood dispossession and wife inheritance also known as leviration.

The crisis that prompts the tragedy in the play arose when Ogwoma is forced into marriage. Adigwu apparently has his reasons for going along with the arrangement despite the fact that he knows that his bride to be had reacted vehemently against the arrangement, this his mother confirms after his death. He could have also given the money to the family as a loan since he had the wherewithal without tying it to the acquisition of an unwilling bride who is deliberately resisting because she is in love with another man. Ogwoma's position therefore never changes all through the play, she remains adamant in her posture even in her conversation with her friend,

Ogwoma: You do not understand how my heart beats. Because
you were not tied like a goat and whipped along the
road to a man you hated, you are not able to
understand what my heart tells me (Sofola, 1972:9).

In Sofola's *Song of a Maiden* some academics are on research to a village and are advised to live on the hill because of their presumed eccentricity. The impression given to them is that there is need to placate the Gods and have one of them Professor Oduyinka marry a maiden in the land in accordance with the dictates or whims of the deities of Shao land. Unlike the characters in the *Wedlock of the Gods*, both Prof Professor Oduyinka and the maiden cannot see the logic in the forced marriage proposed and refuse to go along with the plan.

While the conflicts and the manner in which they are resolved in the *Wedlock of the Gods* portray a patriarchal society that is insensitive to the feelings and sensibilities of women, the characters in the *Song of a Maiden* resist the societal structures that are restrictive and harmful to their existence. The members of the family as a unit that ought to protect the interests of its members in the *Wedlock of the Gods* do not show compassion as expected.

They proceed to silence Ogwoma and blackmail her so that she can comply with their expectations. There are other questions of preference of the male child raised, would her brother have been so sacrificed for her even if it was a similar life threatening situation.

Edozie's illness and the costly ritual prescribed by native doctors are good reasons to treat his sister as a commodity. Ogwoma's parents feel that the bride price offered for their daughter's hand in marriage is the only way out. Her parents therefore make her personal need of no consequence and rate their economic challenges to be of more consequence. Anwasia's comment confirms this in many ways "Our people" She says, "say that a man's daughter is a source of wealth to him" (Sofola, 1972:9).

In spite of all of these, Sofola does not run contrary to the belief of the society in her portrayal of the outcome of the conflicts and their manner of resolution. She makes it clear that Ogwoma apparently fights a lost battle and predicts her death when she says "I will be buried alive before I become Okezie's wife" (Sofola, 1972:22). Her prayers and wishes does not come to fruition even after her husband's death, she discovered she will never be free from the marriage her family and Adigwu's family contracted. Her plan to escape with the pregnancy unnoticed is also thwarted as she is discovered and turned into public ridicule. She is condemned and attacked by her mother-in-law, her immediate family member as well as the entire community. Her rebellion as well as Uloko's fails as Odibei successfully avenges her son by poisoning her.

Uloko also avenges Ogwoma's death by killing Odibei. His rebellion also fails utterly as he loses the love of his life and his expected child. He takes of the poison Odibei administers on Ogwoma and also dies in like manner. Another theme that is subtly portrayed in the work is the theme of harmful widowhood practices that are known to be rampant amongst the Igbos in particular. Ogwoma in this case is made to sit in the ashes as a sign of mourning and is expected to look ragged all through three month period. Odibei emphasizes this as she scathingly says to Uloko: 'What a man of respect would find the

house of a woman in mourning inviting? Is it to see her shaven head or her body in ashes that you have come? Or is it to see what dwells within her?' (Sofola;1972:15).

Yetunde in *Song of a Maiden* is portrayed as a character that does not conform to the expectation of a society that is contrary to hers. She is symbolic of a change agent in the society. Her audacity and reaction is in sharp contrast to the expectation of the patriarchal society that groomed her forbears to be a voiceless group easily taken advantage of. The Yetunde Sofola creates is a non-conformist and she uses her resistance to infer that women can always resist oppression of all kinds. Unlike Ogwoma, she refuses to take the step that would most likely lead to destruction. She refuses to be used as a “bridge” to connect the gap between literacy and illiteracy.

Unlike Ogwoma’s predicament Sofola characterizes Yetunde to see nothing of importance in the money and education of Professor Oduyinka represents but to see her individuality and the damage that is being done to womanhood when such decisions are taken and executed. Aduke, her mother, stands by her and with her decisions and confronts her husband squarely on these matters and even matters that border on theopanic. And her daughter is as assertive as she is. Ogwoma in *Wedlock of the Gods* is portrayed as being rebellious but utterly helpless as she eventually dies rebelling against a hopeless cause.

4.3.4

Posture and Position

Sofola’s posture and position is clear in both plays. She portrays the reality and experience of women in patriarchal societies. She is critical of social structures that promote intra gender hegemony and highlights the fact that most of the practices that are harmful to women may be societal but are inflicted and are executed by other women. Sofola’s plays also do not encourage complete disrespect of culture or traditional practices in that she does not allow Ogwoma and Uloko to live happily ever after in the world even

though she creates an impression that there is a world after, a place where discontented lovers find solace or fulfillment. This a dramatic technique which leads to the purgation of the emotions of the intended audience in *Wedlock of the Gods*.

Self Assessment

Exercise 26

How relevant are Zulu Sofola's contributions to contemporary creative writing and feminist theories in Nigeria?

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NOTES

The selected texts and authors that have been discussed in this course material are significantly representative of the forms, trends, genres and authors within the African dramatic milieu, the ideas that have been tinkered with so far are to generate further readings and research in forms of Modern African Drama and its criticism.

ASSIGNMENT

- 1, Attempt A bio critical analysis of Sarif Easman and his plays.
- 2, Examine three plays Femi Osofisan that characterize his Marxist temper, compare these with three of his plays that engage the Yoruba God as political symbols.
- 3, Comparatively examine the significance and relevance of the themes portrayed in the writings of Zulu Sofola and Ama Ata Aidoo.
- 4, Discuss the thematic relevance of Slave Trade in Bode *Sowande's Tonadoes Full of Dreams*.

PRESENTATION

Preferably presentation before peer or seminar groups.

Drama Texts

1. *Alapata Apata* Wole Soyinka
2. *A Dance in the Forest* Wole Soyinka
3. *The Fate of a Cockroach* Tawfik Al-Hakim
4. *Song of Death* Tawfik Al-Hakim
5. *The Marriage of Anansewa* Efua T. Sutherland
6. *Edufa* Efua T. Sutherland
7. *Anowa* Ama Ata Aidoo
8. *Song of a Goat* J.P Clark
9. *The Wives* Ahmed Yerima
10. *I will Marry when I want* Ngugi Wa Thiogo & Ngugi Wa Miri

Sizwe Banzi is Dead Athol Fugard