Cultural Imperatives as Indices for Successful Adaptation: An Examination of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*

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Abstract

Adaptation is true to life. This study focuses dramatic adaptation. The latter is one of those significant aspects or presentation of the general idea of adaptation. Dramatic adaptation implicates the way in which similar or related texts influence, reflect the recurrence of plot, dramatic characterization, thematic situations and setting from source to adapted texts with a view to achieving innovations in the adapted texts. The basic problem of this study concerns the fact that, the selected adapted play is yet to be subjected to academic investigation in order to justify it as an example of Nigerian dramatic adaptation based on cultural imperatives. The dramatic work selected for examination here is *The Gods Are not to blame* by Ola Rotimi as an adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex.* This research work explores the cultural imperatives as indices for successful adaptation. The theoretical framework is anchored on Julia Kristeva's Intertextuality theory. The research adopts the qualitative research design,

while the methodology used is textual analysis. The findings of this study reveal the invaluable role of cultural imperatives in adaptation. Furthermore, this study has unveiled issues of recurrent dramatic plots, characterizations, settings and situations between the source and the adapted texts. This study recommends the re- enforcement of cultural values propagated in the adapted text for universal purposes as contribution to knowledge among other details. It also highlights the innovative strategies of adaptation deployed in the adapted dramatic text.

Keywords: Cultural imperative, indices, successful and adaptation.

Introduction

Dramatic adaptation implicates the way in which similar or related texts influence, reflect the recurrence of plot, dramatic characterization, situations and setting from source to adopted texts with a view to achieving innovations in the adapted texts. Adaptation is true to life. This study focuses dramatic adaptation with recourse to cultural imperatives. The latter is one of those significant aspects of presentations of the general idea of adaptation. One motivation for dramatic adaptation as a focus of study is committed to reviewing the issues around adaptation with particular reference to "Cultural Imperatives" as an area of study relevant to dramatic literature. It is instructive to note that, Literature in its broadcast manifestation is a product of culture. What this means is that literature is a cultural package that is open to the influences of reading and cultural exchange. To start with, oral literature like its cultural source is not static. It is dynamic and open to influences from other intervening cultures. This foregoing reality most certainly foregrounds issues of trans-textuality (meaning cognitive transfer/cultural exchanges of interacting cultural texts), thus, precipitating the reality of intertextuality. So, what then is intertextuality? Intertextuality involves the practice which allows for the borrowing and assimilation of cultural ideas and expressions at the level of oral literature, in order to re-invent, innovate and enrich the language(s) of the benefitting interacting cultures. Based on the foregone definition, it is only proper to understand that, the context of intertextuality is not static. It is dynamic. In a related sense, dramatic adaptation is that subset/form of intertextuality which allows for trans-textual transfers of recurrent plots, characterization, thematic situations and archetypal motifs; all of which foregoing re-occur in the cultural practices and realities across several geographical locations

and generations apart. What the foregoing implies is that, a dramatic can adapt recurrent dramatic plots, characterization and cultural situation/expression beyond cultural boundaries to meet current realities in the society/environment, in order to re-invent his own cultural presentations to meet the contemporary environmental demands. Adaptation therefore is an organic practice for relevance and survival, because, it entails the conscious transformational mutation of one experience to another. It is now logical and convenient to affirm that dramatic adaptation is a form of cultural exchange, using the theory of intertextuality. This is the practice which makes it possible for Ola Rotimi to adapt Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (A Greek classical drama in the 5th century into a Yoruba cultural setting in the 20th century.

Theoretical framework

Adaptation studies is a wide area that encompasses almost every field of human life. It involves the narration of one event to bring about another for suitability. The adaptation itself is a narrative; because it uses interpretation, which is the core of adaptation in its process. Adaptation, generally, is the adjustment of things to available favourable conditions or situations for survival, and to move ahead in the world. Against this backdrop, the theoretical framework adopted for this study is the adaptation theory of 'intertextuality.' Intertextuality is the borrowing of words, phrases, and concepts from others' works into your own. It is a term most fully and originally explicated by Kristeva (1980) in the school of post-structuralism in the 1960s.

According to Kristeva (1980, p.36), intertextuality is the shaping of text meaning by another text. Thus, the term is used to signify the multiple ways in which anyone's literary text is made up of other texts, using its implicit or explicit allusions, citations, repetitions, and transformation of the formal and substantive features of earner texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are "always ready" in place. In the formulation of Kristeva (1980), any text is an "intertext," the site of an intersection of numberless texts and existing only through its relation with other texts. Her statement here implies that texts are not the creations of a single author, but a compilation from pre-existence or diverse texts in which several portions are borrowed to interlace and neutralise one another for a final

copy. Furthermore, Kristeva (1980), while arguing in defence of the post-structuralist concept of evaluation, states that, "any text is an amalgam of others, a part of a larger fabric of cultural discourse" (1977, pp. 64-91). For her, a text is a multidimensional space in which, a variety of writings, none of the original, "blend and clash" (1977, pp. 146).

By this argument, Kristeva (1980) means that there are no particular texts claimed to be original or the 'source' text, and that, every text is a by-product from the 'pool' of others that was lifted and recreated to forge the way forward. Intertextuality's basic focus can be summed up in the following:

(a) Interdependence and combination;
(b) Dismantling, borrowing, and re-interpretation/re-assembling; and
(c) Changing from one artistic design to another to meet current realities.

Methodology

This inquiry adopts the qualitative research methodology, thus, specifically deploying content analysis based on both the source text and its adapted version, case study, and descriptive approaches of the qualitative method to realise set objectives. The materials for this research are from twin sources, primary and secondary. The primary sources are the first-hand information from the play texts themselves, while, the secondary data are supporting information or the writings of others in the field, gotten from books, journal articles, magazines, the internet, and so on. These would be harmonised by the analysis of the researcher, arguing for or against, and taking a stand where necessary, all aimed at providing a balanced view on the discourse, to realise the set objectives of the study. First, we must give a plot/structure analysis of the selected plays in question.

Plot/Structure development in the selected plays

The plot is the structure of a play's action. The plot is the order of the incidents in a play, their arrangement and form as the author has constructed it. It is different from the story. We can distinguish between all the little actions or incidents that make up a play and the single action that unifies them. It is the unified structure of incidents we call plot. Traditional plot structure consists of an "exposition" – that is the presentation of background information necessary for the development

of the plot, rising action, and a set of conflicts and crises, the climax which is the play's most decisive crisis, then, falling action, a follow-up that moves towards the play's resolution or denouement. However, modern playwrights do not always follow traditional plot structures. They vary the formula, but whatever they do, they control our expectations about what is happening throughout the plot. Thus, in this analysis, Freytag's concept of dramatic structure is used.

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

Exposition:

The play begins with a plague-stricken Thebes and the citizens gather outside the palace of their king, Oedipus, asking him to take action. Oedipus replies that he already sent his brotherin-law, Creon, to the oracle at Delphi to learn how to help the city. Creon returns with a message from the oracle; the plague will end when the murderer of Laius, former king of Thebes, is caught and expelled; the murder is within the city. Oedipus questions Creon about the murderer of Laius, who was killed by thieves on his way to consult an oracle. Only one of his fellow travellers escaped alive, Oedipus promises to solve the mystery of Laius's death, vowing to curse and drive out the murderer.

Dramatic conflict and rising action

Oedipus sends for Tiresias, the blind prophet, and asks him what he knows about the murder. Tiresias responds cryptically, lamenting his ability to see the truth when the truth brings nothing but pain. At first, he refuses to tell Oedipus what he knows, Oedipus curses and insults the old man, going so far as to accuse him of murder. These taunts provoke Tiresias into revealing that Oedipus himself is the murderer. Oedipus naturally refuses to believe Tiresias' accusation. He accuses Creon and Tiresias of conspiring against his life and charges Tiresias with insanity. He asks why Tiresias did nothing when Thebes suffered under a plague once before.

At that time, a sphinx held the city captive and refused to leave until he alone was able to solve the puzzle. Tiresias defends his skills as a prophet, noting that, Oedipus' parents found him trustworthy. At the mention of his parents, Oedipus, who grew up in the distant city of Corinth, asks how Tiresias knew his parents. But Tiresias answers enigmatically. Then before leaving the stage, Tiresias puts

forth one last riddle, saying that the murderer of Laius will turn out to be both father and brother to his children and the son of his wife. After Tiresias leaves, Oedipus threatens Creon with death or exile for conspiring with the priest/ prophet.

Climax

Oedipus' wife, Jocasta (also the widow of King Laius), enters and asks why the men shout at one another, Oedipus explains to Jocasta that the prophet has charged him with Laius's murder, and Jocasta replies that all prophecies are false. As proof, she notes that the Delphi oracle once told Laius he would be murdered by his son, when in fact his son was killed at a three-way crossroad, just before Oedipus arrived in Thebes. Oedipus, stunned, tell his wife that he may be the one who murdered Laius. He tells Jocasta that, a long time ago, when he was the Prince of Corinth, he overheard someone mention at a banquet that he was not the son of the king and queen. He, therefore, travelled to the oracle of Delphi, who did not answer him but did tell him he would murder his father and sleep with his mother. Hearing this, Oedipus fled his home, never to return. It was then, on the journey that would take him to Thebes that Oedipus was confronted and harassed by a group of travellers, whom he killed in self-defence. This skirmish occurred at the very cross-road where Laius was killed.

Falling action

Oedipus sends for the man who survived the attack, a shepherd, in the hope that he will not be identified as the murderer, outside the palace, a messenger approaches Jocasta and tells her that he has come from Corinth to inform Oedipus that his father, Polybus, is dead and that Corinth has asked Oedipus to come and rule there in his place. Jocasta rejoices, convinced that Polybus' death from natural causes has disproved the prophecy that Oedipus would murder his father.

At Jocasta's summons, Oedipus comes outside, hears the news, and rejoices with her. He now feels much more in dined to agree with the queen in deeming prophecies worthless and viewing chance as the principle governing the world. But while Oedipus finds great comfort in the fact that one-half of the prophecy has been disproved, he still fears the half- the half that claimed he would sleep with his mother.

The messenger remarks that Oedipus needs not worry because Polybus and his wife, Merope, are not Oedipus's biological parents. The messenger, a shepherd by profession, knows firsthand that Oedipus came to Corinth as an orphan. One day long ago, he was tending his sheep when another shepherd approached him carrying a baby, its ankles pinned together. The messenger took the baby to the royal family of Corinth, and they raised him as their own. That baby was Oedipus. Oedipus asks who the other shepherd was, and the messenger answers that he was a servant of Laius.

Oedipus asks that this shepherd be brought forth to testify, but Jocasta, beginning to suspect the truth, begs her husband not to seek more information. She runs back into the palace. The shepherd then enters. Oedipus interrogates him, asking who gave him the baby. The shepherd refuses to disclose anything, and Oedipus threatens him with torture. Finally, he answers that the child came from the house of Laius. Questioned further, he answers that the baby was the child of Laius himself and that it was Jocasta who gave him the infant, ordering him to kill it, as it had been prophesied that, the child kill his parents. But the shepherd pitied the child and decided that the prophecy could be avoided just as well if the child were to grow up in a foreign city, far from his true parents. The shepherd, therefore, passed the boy on to the shepherd in Corinth.

Resolution

Realising who he is and who his parents are, Oedipus screams that, he sees the truth and flees back into the palace. The shepherd and the messenger slowly exit the stage. A second messenger enters and describes scenes of suffering. Jocasta has hanged herself, and Oedipus, finding her dead, has pulled the pins from her robe and stabbed out his own eyes, Oedipus now emerges from the palace, bleeding and begging to be exiled. He asks Creon to send him away from Thebes and to look after his daughters, Antigone and Ismene. Creon, covetous of royal power, is all too happy to oblige.

Rotimi's *The Gods are not to blame*

It is an adaptation of Sophocles' play titled, *Oedipus Rex* which begins in media res, reveals how the tragic character, Oedipus finds out that, he killed his father, Laius, and married his mother, Jocasta. However, before the staged time of the play,

Oedipus had saved the city of Thebes by solving the riddle of the Sphinx and received as a reward the throne of Laius and marriage to Jocasta. It is this play by Sophocles in the Greek society that Rotimi adapted as *The Gods are not to blame;* thus, giving it a Nigerian treatment to comment on the prevailing Nigerian nation-state at the time.

Exposition

The Gods are not to blame, Rotimi's adaptation of the Greek classic, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, is set in the Yoruba Kingdom of Kutuje, Ede, and Oshogbo in the 1960s. It is divided into three Acts. Each act is sub-divided in the Shakespearean pattern into scenes, ten in all. It parades a linear plot, which weaves around King Odewale's life. The play initially opens with someone narrating the events surrounding the birth of King Adetusa's first son. Queen Ojuola, King Adetusa's wife has just delivered her first son and the soothsayer has been summoned to foretell the future of this newly born son. The soothsayer, Baba Fakunle announced: "This boy, he will kill his father then marry his own mother" (p. 3). To avert this taboo from materialising, the baby was sent to the evil grove and offered as a sacrifice to the gods. However, the real play begins with the lamentations of the townspeople who are afflicted by the plague and complain that Odewale had done nothing to help them. This is intoned in the words of townspeople:

1st Woman: Yesterday, my twins died – both of them. My third child… (*Unstrapping the baby on her back*.) Here, feel her, how hot she is … come feel (p.9).

3rd Woman: Now we cry in pain for help, and there is silence" (p.10).

The King himself has not been spared the sickness because "sickness," like rain, falls on every roof. But Odewale answers them confidently and informs them of the measures he has already taken. He has sacrificed to the gods and also sent Aderopo to the oracle of Ifa at the shrine of Orunmila in Ile-Ife- to seek the cause of their tribulations.

Dramatic conflict and rising action

The message Aderopo brings from the Oracle of Ifa is that the cause of the plague in the land is a man who had murdered King Adetusa but still lives comfortably in their midst to pollute the land. The subsequent invitation and the arrival of Baba Fakunle to deconstruct the message he gave to Aderopo, which he, like Aderopo, is forced; and his declaration of king Odewale as the murderer sparked off confusion and crisis in the play. This could be seen from both Aderopo and Baba Fakunle's words when the duo on separate occasions responded to King's desire.

Aderopo: Very well. Ifa oracle says the curse,

Your Highness, is on a man…
A full-grown man…
The man has killed another man
King Adetusa – my father, the
king who ruled this land before you… (p.21)

And then, Baba Fakunle's words:

Baba Fakunle: The truth is that you are thecursed murderer that you seek (p. 28) Not only that, he even hurls one reproach at Odewale, namely, "bed sharer".

Climax:

The play attains its climax when Queen Ojuola realised through the revelation of Alaka, Odewale's youthful friend, and Gbonka, King Adetusa's messenger, the true identity of her husband, King Odewale and commits Falling Action:

The rest of the pay deals with King Odewale's confused state and his accusation of Aderopo of plotting his downfall and the ensuing quarrels coupled with the arrival of Gbonka, late King Adetusa's messenger to reveal the parents of King Odewale, and the discovery that, (he) Odewale is the culprit he has been looking for and that, the predictions of the gods have come full circle as he has.

Resolution:

The play comes to a close with King Odewale plucking out his own eyes and going into exile, when he finds out that, through his incestuous act, Queen Ojuola (his mother) and now his wife, has committed suicide.

Cultural imperatives in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to blame*

A major cultural concern that Rotimi, while adapting Sophocles' play, *Oedipus Rex*, explores is that of the concept of birth which is by divination. In Greek society, once a new child is born, his future has to be divined to know what that child has brought to the world. Thus, Oedipus's birth has to be divined by the oracle, Phobus, to know what is shrouded in him. It was this element of the Greek tradition that reveals the future of King Laius Son, Oedipus to his parents that, the child brought evil to the world, and that, he should be destroyed to avert the calamity that will come, because, the child will kill his father and marry his mother. This is intoned in a flashback between Oedipus and Shepherd, when the former was questioning the Shepherd to confirm his identity.

> **Oedipus**: She gave it to you **Shepherd**: Yes, master.
> **Oedipus**: To what purpose?
> **Shepherd**: To be destroyed.
> **Oedipus**: The child she bore!
> **Shepherd**: Yes, master. They said it was on account of some wicked spell.
> **Oedipus**: What spell?
> **Shepherd**: Saying the child should kill its father (p. 34).

So also does the Yoruba culture practices divination in the birth of a child. This, like the Greek tradition, is to know actually what that child has brought to his parents and the world. Hence, in Rotimi's version of the *Oedipus Rex*, which is titled, *The gods are not to blame*, Rotimi presents Ifa Priest as the Greek Phoebus counterpart who consults the boy's future and brings bad news that, like Oedipus, Odewale will kill his father and marry his mother. This led to the directive by Ifa priest, Baba Fakunle to sacrifice the child in the evil grove of the forest, but unfortunately, it failed. A critical look reveals that both Sophocles' Greek and Rotimi's Yoruba societies share similarities in culture. Thus, making Rotimi's adaptation of Sophocles' play; *Oedipus Rex* successful.

Another cultural concern Rotimi explores in the adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* to his African version is that of the concept of sacrifice. For instance, when Odewale is born like his Greek counterpart, Oedipus, whose birth was divined and the message not healthy to the parents, recommends for sacrifice by cruelly piercing him with an iron pin on his feet and be abandoned at the mountainside, which is in the "wooded hollow of Cithaeron" indicating a sacrifice in Greek society, Rotimi's Oedipus, Odewale is born and because of tradition like the Greek Society, was taken to divine his future to know what he brings to the world.

Unfortunately, the revelation was a bad one, and the priest ties the boy's feet with a string of cowries around and was sent out to be sacrificed for the gods. This alone is a portrayal of ritual sacrifice as an aspect of culture in the Yoruba cosmology. In addition, even the pronounced death for paying back who murdered King Adetusa of Kutuje is termed as a ritual sacrifice, because, only that can restore sanity in the city of Kutuje because of the defilement by the murderer. Thus, from a critical view of the two societies, Sophocles Greek and Rotimi's Yoruba, one finds that there is a cultural affinity between the two. That goes to make Rotimi's adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* successful.

Yet, another cultural imperative that, Rotimi explores in adapting Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is that of the concept of religious worship. It would be recalled from Soyinka's version of *The Bacchae*, that, the Yoruba, like their Greek counterparts, believe in a pantheon of gods. Such Orisas numbering or comprising about four hundred are; Olodumare, Ogun, Sango, Esu, Obatala, and so on. For them, like the Greeks who believe in the same pantheon, such as Zeus, Hera, Demeter, Dionysus, Apollo, etc., and whose generic conventions are aimed at constructing a meaning related to a pre-determined fate, often viewed as the cornerstone of the Greek religion. Rotimi's Yoruba society's lives depend on their gods, and whatever happens to them is linked to these gods with different functions. In other words, they are also superstitious in their dealings.

But, in as much as both Greek and Yoruba societies share similar cultural aspects of religious worship, here, while, Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex* is mainly concerned with increasing faith in the gods and with ensuring that people pay obeisance to the gods. Oedipus commits the sin of hubris by seeking human solutions to a

divine problem, and so his suffering is justified. But, Rotimi, in exploring this cultural similarity wants to draw his people away from their superstition and general lack of initiative and hard work. But, in all, there exists the concept of religious worship in the two societies and this accounts for the successful adaptation of the Greek Sophoclean play, *Oedipus Rex* by Rotimi to his version, known as, *The gods are not to blame*.

There is also the cultural concern of the concept of "crossroads" explored by Rotimi in his adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*, titled, *The gods are not to blame* to express a message in his society. Usually, "crossroads" are supposed to be chosen for either farmers or sojourners to choose which way, but, in Greek society, crossroads otherwise known as three roads meeting symbolise death-place. For example, King Laius, Oedipus' father was killed on this spot by his blood unknowingly. Also, in Rotimi's Yoruba society, crossroads presents similar usage. That is, crossroads generally compels one to choose where to follow. But, like the Greek Society, in the Yoruba cosmology, crossroads symbolise death. For example, King Adetusa of Kutuje was slain in that very spot by his unknown, unsuspecting son, Odewale. Crossroads further signifies the locations of rituals in Yoruba society and Nigeria as a whole. Therefore, there would be no gainsaying the fact that these cultural similarities shared between the Greek and Yoruba society make it possible, for Rotimi's adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

Furthermore, another cultural concern explored by Rotimi in his adaptation of Sophocles' Greek play, *Oedipus Rex,* is that of the concept of appreciation/honour. The Yoruba are known for their appreciation of one who has done something for them. This singular belief system endeared them to appreciate and honour Odewale, a supposed stranger like the Greek Oedipus who broke the sphinx's riddle that has been destroying the citizens of Thebes. And because it is characteristic of them, they become so joyous that, out of appreciation, honour Oedipus as their King after their late King Laius. It is so with Rotimi's Odewale who revel attacks from the Ikoli people and defeated them. Thus, to show their lifestyle of appreciation, the people of Kutuje honour Odewale as their King after the late King Adetusa. Reading the two plays, if one is not careful, one cannot discern which one is that, all because there exists a cultural similarity between the

two societies. This accounts for the effective adaptation of the Greek play, by Rotimi to his African environment.

In addition, the concept of procreation and continuation inherent in both the Greek and Yoruba society also gives impetus to Rotimi to explore while adapting the Greek play; *Oedipus Rex* to his version. It is a common belief system that, many societies believe in procreation and continuation, or else, the family goes extinct. For instance, in Greek society, child-bearing is very important, perhaps that even accounts for their visiting the oracles to divine their children's future when they are newly born. Little wonder then that, in *Oedipus Rex*, King Polybus of Corinth adopted Oedipus as his child because he was childless; therefore, if he dies, his family name stops. At the same time, Queen Jocasta, Polybus' wife becomes childless after the first child's sacrifice to the gods and the subsequent death of her husband. So, when Oedipus by tradition marries her and bore children, she was very happy, for she has no children to continue bearing her family name.

Similarly, in Rotimi's *The Gods*… Ogundele, the king of Ijekun-Yemoza was childless like King Polybus; but because procreation and continuation are a must for the Yoruba society, happily accepted the sacrificial child from Kutuje whom his hunter, Alaka brought from the evil groove of Ede bush where three footpaths meet. In this process, like Polybus of Corinth, he became an owner of a child who will continue his lineage. But, in all of these, one striking feature is the two society's cultural affinity, which perhaps makes Rotimi's adaptation of the Greek play, *Oedipus Rex* possible.

Another cultural concern Rotimi explores in his adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* is the concept of inheritance. Inheritance as a long-time practiced belief system is a universal phenomenon in the world. Almost all societies in the world practice one form of "inheritance" or the other in the case of the death of a husband or wife. For instance, in the Greek Society and some other societies else, tradition demands that a deceased king's wife be married to the ascending or succeeding one. No wonder in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, when King Laius died and Oedipus perchance was enthroned, Laius' wife, Jocasta automatically becomes the wife of Oedipus through inheritance. However, unknown to him, she is also his biological mother.

Similarly, the Yoruba like their Greek counterpart has a belief system that, when a king of a city dies, his extant wife must be married to the next king as "inheritance". Thus, in *The Gods are not to blame,* Queen Ojuola was given as wife to Odewale, the king who succeeds late King Adetusa. But, as it is obtained in Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*, she appears to be even his real mother. Looking critically at the two society's belief systems, one can conclude that, Rotimi's successful adaptation of the Greek Sophoclean play, *Oedipus Rex,* was made possible because of this cultural affinity.

Another cultural concern that Rotimi explores while adapting Sophocles' play; *Oedipus Rex* to suit his contemporary environment is that of the concept of oath-taking. It would be recalled that, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus as the new king of Thebes, and his kingdom faced with pestilence had no option but to save the citizens from their sudden deaths. So, in this process, Oedipus in the gathering of his subjects swore to an oath to bring the killers of King Laius to book and be given the necessary punishment. He furthered by saying that, even if it is himself too, that same punishment he has pronounced, shall he face. He faced the punishment when finally, he discovers himself to be the killer he was hunting. He pierced out his eyes time and time again, and blood ooze out his eyes. This is a result of oath-taking.

In the same way, in Rotimi's African version, *The Gods are not to blame*, Alaka, Ogundele's hunter, swore an oath not to reveal the whereabouts of Odewale till his parents die. So also, Odewale himself erroneously and quickly without listening to the voice of reason, swore to deal with whoever that is the culprit of King Adetusa's death. Unfortunately, he became the hunted. He eventually served the punishment he pronounced to the unidentified victim before, all because of the oath he swore to. Even Gbonka, the palace messenger, swore to an oath that, Sango should strike him dead if he is telling lies to Odewale about the death of Adetusa (p.66). Thus, viewing the available pieces of evidence, we find that both Greek and Yoruba societies practice similar cultural aspects of oath-taking. This, perhaps, must have made Rotimi's adaptation of the Greek play possible.

Another cultural concern Rotimi explores in his adaptation is that of the concept of befitting funeral rites. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, when Queen Jocasta died,

because of the fear of the stigma of incest, Oedipus requested Creon, his uncle, to bury his late sister, Jocasta, with honour. It would be recalled that Queen Jocasta committed suicide by strangling herself to death when finally discovered her past. Thus, the Greeks believe in giving dead ones befitting funeral rites.

Similarly, like the Greek Society, the Yoruba also practices similar trait. This is evident from Rotimi's adapted version of the *Oedipus Rex*, where Odewale, at his wife and mother's death, requested from his chiefs and Priest to give her a befitting burial. Remember Queen Ojuola, like Jocasta, killed herself because of the shame she will receive from the society for marrying her son and bore children. Looking critically at the two society's cultural belief systems, there seem to be similarities, thus, affording the chance for Rotimi to adapt the Greek play successfully to his African cultural background.

Furthermore, the concept of taunting is another cultural concern, Rotimi explores while adapting Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex.* In the play, *Oedipus Rex*, King Oedipus was taunted by the suppliants or citizens when the plague hit their city. Even the Priest and Chorus joined in the taunting, calling on the King to save them from the pestilence as he has demonstrated to them before in their time of grief, reminding him that, this period is not different from that moment. Even in Rotimi's adapted African version. *The Gods are not to blame*, like their Greek counterparts, when sickness hits their town and people were dying mysteriously, the people of Kutuje and chiefs all joined to taunt King Odewale, who himself seems helpless. Thus, they taunt him by reminding him of his feats that, this present situation cannot be too big for him to handle. This comes especially from the women.

Given the two societies, Greek and Yoruba belief systems, one finds that there is a similarity between the two. Therefore, it is this similarity that makes Rotimi's adaptation of *Oedipus Rex* to his African version possible. In addition, the concept of "riddles" is also another cultural aspect that Rotimi explores in the adaptation of Sophocles' Greek play; *Oedipus Rex*. It would be recalled that the people of Thebes could not crack the riddle of the Sphinx that was destroying Thebes until Oedipus came to destroy the Sphinx by cracking his riddle. From the above, we find that riddles play an important part in the lifestyles of the Greeks. However, the

Yoruba society is not also exempted from the use of riddles. Thus, in Rotimi's adapted version of the *Oedipus Rex*, *The Gods are not to blame*, we see Aderopo, while returned from Ile-Ife and giving his report, speaks in riddles which the character, First Chief also confirmed. Odewale himself at one time claims that he is good at riddles. Therefore, from the references above, there exist cultural similarities between Greek and Yoruba societies, which perhaps must have made Rotimi's adaptation possible.

Yet, another cultural concern Rotimi explores in his adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex is* the concept of "divination/superstition". In *Oedipus Rex*, we read about how King Laius consulted the Phobus Oracle to know what his new child brings forth to the world. Furthermore, Oedipus also in Corinth goes out secretly to Pytho shrine to divine about his person, simply because, a fellow told him boldly at the table that, he is not his father's son as he thinks. Then, again, Oedipus in the cause to unravel King Laius' murderer also sent Creon to blind Teiresias to divine to know who the actual killer is? This cultural aspect is not strange in the Yoruba tradition, where Odewale birth's like its Greek counterpart, Oedipus birth, king Adetusa sent Aderopo, his supposed in-law to Ile-Ife to consult the Oracle of Orunmila. And then, Baba Fakunle's consultation with Odewale through Aderopo to reveal what is wrong in the city and finally, his invitation of Baba Fakunle to reveal the real killer of King Adetusa. All these references above indicate that the two societies believe in divination in the face of trouble beyond their powers. Therefore, a critical view shows that there exist similarities between Greek and Yoruba societies. This possibly had made Rotimi adapt the Greek play successfully.

Finally, there is also the concept of fate that Rotimi explores in his transposition of the Greek play; *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. Generally, in Greek societies there exist the belief in fate, but it differs in different societies, simply because of the Olympian Pantheon (Zeus, Apollo, and the rest) whose divinities pursue a vendetta against each other and mortals. However, a critical look at the play studied here, *Oedipus Rex* reveals that there is no sign of such conflict as found in Greek tragedies, like the Oresteia and Hippolytus, where conflict between different gods is portrayed. In *Oedipus Rex*, Apollo is the god who gives the oracle and no other god opposes him. Thus, like the traditional Yoruba society, whose

fate is in your doing, you kneel and receive it as a gift from Olodumare before being born. This is exactly, the concept of fate in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, as there is no opposing force than one god – Apollo. Thus, Oedipus' Greek society, like Olodumare Yoruba tradition believes that a person's fate is irreversible, and it can be changed from evil to good by sacrifices which Loxias at Apollo shrine will in the last resort, always determine. Thus, it is this traditional concept of fate by the Yoruba that is only superficially the same as the Greek concept as expressed in *Oedipus Rex* that makes Rotimi's adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* possible to suit his African environment.

Conclusion

The selected plays under study address the issue of cultural similarities between Greek and Nigerian societies. That is to say, there is the universality of histories, traditions, and older texts which can form literary sources necessary to be explored by other society's playwrights for a subject matter. We have found in oral narratives and works of other writer's materials that, playwrights borrow and rework to address cultural concerns and histories. This adaptation is, therefore, motivated more by the urge to preserve the existing cultures and to meet the current realities or to comment on the present. Thus, the Nigerian playwright need not source entirely from outside their environment rather than tap the similarities that exist between different societies. Though, over the years, there has been efforts concentrated on the debate of which criterion is best suited for an adaptive process, as exemplified by both "fidelity" and "intertextuality" theorists, the study yet acknowledges "intertextuality" as the criterion for assessing adaptation studies, but also expand the focus beyond these two to the 'convergence' theory. So far, the focus has been on cultural imperatives as a paradigm for successful adaptation in Rotimi's, *The Gods are not to blame* within the tradition of literary drama. The video film genre, however, has also been open to this artistic practice because some popular titles are adapted from existing literary texts.

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