

Ola Rotimi's Selected Plays and the Challenges of Post-Independence Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper traces the emergence of Olawale Gladstone Rotimi popularly known as Ola Rotimi, one of the notable Nigerian theatre and drama scholars and practitioners who for many years contributed to the evolution of theatre and drama through his literary works which cover many thematic frames. Ola Rotimi belongs to a group known as "The Nigerian English literary dramatists." The paper argues that the emergence of this group to some extent coincided with the country's independence in 1960. The period was a significant one, due to the unfolding political, economic and cultural transition. The period also marked the beginning of the decisive contributions of dramatic scholars and practitioners in the positive growth of Nigeria as a nation. One primary concern of this group of well-trained practitioners and scholars is how to identify means of tackling the various post-independence challenges facing the country.

Historical Background

The emergence of the Nigerian English literary dramatists, to some extent, coincided with the country's independence in 1960. The period was significant because it was a period of political, economic and cultural transition. The period also marked the beginning of notable contributions of theatre artists and literary dramatists through writings and performances to the positive growth of Nigeria as a nation. One primary concern of this group of trained practitioners and scholars was how to identify means of tackling various post-independence challenges that confronted the country. Their effort consolidated the success of Hubert Ogunde's participation in the nationalist struggle. In fact, one may even assert that the work of Ogunde and his theatre company triggered the appearance of the new crop of theatre and drama practitioners in the country, beginning from the 1960s. It can be

concluded that the baton of theatre and drama as a potent expressive channel against the tyrannies of the Nigerian rulers was passed on to those Nigerian English literary dramatists who emerged after the time of Ogunde. This assertion is substantiated by Umukoro:

Since then, [after independence was achieved] Nigerian dramatists have been pre-occupied with the crisis of neo-colonialism, seeking for ways to reverse the condition so that Nigeria can become a truly independent country where power is used for the good of the common people. It is, in other words, a search for democracy: government of the people by the people for the people. (1994:12)

During this epoch in the history of Nigerian theatre and drama, we see a kind of symbolic bridge between Ogunde's protest and political theatre and literary dramatists who had garnered adequate trainings in theatrical and dramatic creations and performances both at home and abroad. The emergence of Nigerian English literary dramatists, specifically in the 1960s, at the University of Ibadan (Nigeria's premier university) opened up the academic channels and contributions towards genuine developments, both artistically and politically. The channels have since then become proliferated and continue to be a notable intellectual arena or melting pot for series of positive socio-political and economic debates among many scholars across the country. Some of these scholars specialised in theatre or dramatic literature and deemed it fit to discuss and analyse the usual problems of nations emerging from colonialism.

Wake (1969: 44) states that: "It is obvious, however, that the literary awakening of Africa is directly associated with the political awakening, which can probably be taken to precede it." Wake's view further associates the literary awakening in Africa to the political atmosphere of the continent, as was the case of Nigeria in 1960. The dawn of the new political era immediately opened the doors, setting the

stage for both literary and artistic expressions in the country. The Nigerian playwrights, poets and novelists saw opportunities and avenues to express themselves and to voice various concerns associated with the complications and effects of the long years of British domination of Nigeria.

Historically, the stance of theatre and drama on socio-political and economic issues in post-independence Nigeria could be said to be confrontational; a deliberately directed, concerted attack against the tyranny and corruption that besieged the country's political atmosphere after independence. The Nigerian theatre artists, dramatists, and scholars at this period began to use theatre and drama to create consciousness and to disseminate vital messages to the entire nation in a way it had never been done or experienced before. Adedéji (1980: 17) states that "the use of the theatre as an instrument for socio-political change in Nigeria has received the critical attention of Nigerian politicians, especially those with power. They tend to keep a watchful eye on the theatre artist."

Umukoro (1994: 11) provides some explanations on the circumstances that led to the colossal disenchantment which immediately followed the country's independence:

But once political independence was achieved, the focus changed primarily because the pre-independence mood of anticipation and excitement gave way to that of disillusionment and despair. It was discovered that the nationalist elite, who took over power from the British after independence were out to preserve their privileges; to dominate and exploit the mass of the Nigerian people; and to perpetuate the culture of dependency in the country.

Notably, the grievances of the populace were largely against nepotism, corruption, tribalism and ethnicity, all of which were a sharp contrast to the promised and much anticipated 'good governance' and fair ruling of the country.

Like Hubert Ogunde (who is popularly referred to as "the father of professional theatre and drama in Nigeria"), the apprehension of post-colonial Nigerian English literary dramatists such as Wole

Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, Kole Omotoso, Wale Ogunyemi, Bode Sowande, and others was towards the conspicuous decadence, vices and ills of the Nigerian society, championed by the nation's political class handling the affairs of the country at the time. Their actions and ruling styles were perceived as an offshoot of the British legacy left behind to create disunity among the many tribes and ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The Nigerian English literary dramatists were not alone at the time in this line of thought. Writers of poems and novels such as Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo and Gabriel Okara, to mention but a few, also contributed in no mean way. They wrote on themes and subject-matters of the negative effects of the colonisation of Nigeria and the incessant military take overs of the mantle of leadership in the country, warning of the consequences and aftermath of this mode of rulership and likening it to a volcanic reaction by the people against the colonial masters. In relation to the foregoing, Umukoro (1994: 11) asserts that:

[I]n the particular case of Nigeria, the utilitarian value of literature is undeniable as it more often than not, yields a greater insight into socio-political events. To this end, Nigerian literature presents a poignant engagement with historical realities in a manner that is rewarding, not only to literary scholarship, but also to the study of politics in the postcolonial state.

In addition, this set of people who quickly seized and idealised the momentum during this period of post-colonial despair and disenchantment were those Nigerians who had returned from studying abroad and those who had acquired education at the University of Ibadan; particularly those who received training in theatre and drama at the first School of Drama in Nigeria, at the University of Ibadan. To this end, Adedeji (1978:10) posits that "The School of Drama was formally opened in October, 1963. This was a feat which coincided

with the inauguration of the University of Ibadan as an independent and autonomous institution of higher learning.”

Older theatrical traditions in the country started largely with no definite consideration for stage directions and operatic styles of actors singing their lines and progressed to the point of improvisational acting styles by the actors, scripting of dialogue and culminating into the cinemas. However, the Nigerian English literary dramatists such as Soyinka, Rotimi and many others who came later had always adopted and started creating their plays in the western styles of playwriting.

Their plays followed well-developed plots, well-built characters (minor and major), and went ahead to create conflict resolution as the plays climaxed. The costumes and lightings are adapted to support the themes of the plays, while the stage designs were often considered in the writing of the plays, thereby serving as instructions for the directors when staging the play.

The thematic preoccupation and specific subject matters in many of the plays are creatively crafted. One phenomenon about their published play-texts is their ingenuity in combining well-known popular traditions of western playwriting techniques such as dramatic theatre and epic theatre as has been seen in some of their works, even though many among them have occasionally denied any deliberate attempt at conforming to any western tradition, techniques and styles of playwriting. Soyinka-Ajayi (2004:626), in relation to the foregoing, asserts that:

There is a preponderance of straight dramas in literary theatre, but there are also many great tragedies and comedies. Themes and subject matters are varied and complex. While thematic construct, dramatic structure and performances style are clearly Yoruba, there is still a lot of indebtedness to Western traditions in stylistic and technical means of production.

Various works of the Nigerian literary dramatists adapt the western forms of creating theatre and drama. The reason for this cannot be dissociated from the western influence which has over the years turned into artistic experience that later shaped the works of many of the

Nigerian theatre and drama scholars and practitioners such as Soyinka, Clark, Rotimi, Osofisan and others, after their exposure to overseas education.

The Emergence of Ola Rotimi

After his return from America in the late 1960s, having studied theatre at Yale University and then later at the University of Boston in the United States of America, Ola Rotimi returned to Nigeria to join the likes of Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark, Dapo Adelugba and Wale Ogunyemi, in the struggle for the emancipation of the Nigerian masses from military dictatorship. Rotimi gained prominence on the Nigerian stage first, with a number of historical and classical adaptations. Olu Obafemi (2001:270) asserts that:

[S]ince the initial historical and classical tragedies discussed in this work (*The Gods are Not to Blame* and *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*), Ola Rotimi's theatre has grown more politically committed, addressing realistic contemporary issues more overtly than ever before.

Rotimi started off his exploits in Nigeria theatre by writing plays such as *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (1968), an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*; then *Kurunmi* (1971), a Yoruba historical play; *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* (1972), a Benin historical play, followed by numerous others. And, although he was criticised for allotting too much power, influence and manipulations to the gods and goddesses over the characters and his environment in these three plays, which made many scholars and critics of theatre tag his ideology as being cultural, Rotimi did not relent on his artistic expression. He wrote many more plays which are of immense relevance and importance to the Nigerian society. He proceeded to write and stage plays that sensitised and educated many Nigerians about serious issues which needed urgent attention. The plays include *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*

(1966), a political satire; *If...* (1983), a communal tragedy of the ruled that exposes the continuous failure of the authority to provide adequate social amenities for the Nigerian masses; *Hopes of The Living Dead* (1985), based on the "lepers' rebellion" of 1928 – 1932; *Holding Talks* (1979), a drama piece that identifies with theatre of the absurd tradition; and *Man Talk, Woman Talk*, a play about gender conflict and struggles.

It is noteworthy to mention at this juncture that, Ola Rotimi was the brain behind the creation of the popular Ori-Olokun Theatre Company in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria; the theatre company later metamorphosed in the 1970s to the present day Department of Dramatic Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun-State, Nigeria. In relation to this, Coker (1992:69-70) opines that "no article or discussion on Rotimi would be complete without an examination of the Ori Olokun Theatre, the theatre group Rotimi founded while he was a research fellow at University of Ife." However, the following statement by Ogunleye (2007:65) explains Ola Rotimi's role in the creation of Dramatic Arts Department at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile- Ife:

In 1975, Professor Ojetunji Aboyade took over as Vice-Chancellor of the University and he spearheaded the dissolution of Institutes, including the Institute of African Studies, replacing them with teaching departments. For example, the Department of Dramatic Arts was formed and was confronted by the need to absorb the theatre company. Rotimi, who was appointed the head of the Department, was called upon to design a syllabus and opted to start with Certificate courses for professional theatre practitioners.

Nigerian theatre scholars who belong to the radical school of thought (the Marxist scholars, such as Femi Osofisan, Kole Omotoso, and Bode Sowande) believe that the influence of the gods, goddesses, deities and other supernatural powers on man and his environment should be downplayed, because such an influence is always negative, and has little or no contribution to the development of man and his immediate environment. Playwrights should rather discuss and portray general problems of society in their works. Two Nigerian foremost playwrights with plays in which the belief in the influence of the gods is evident are

Ola Rotimi in *The Gods are Not to Blame* and Wole Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horseman*. Both of these playwrights started with plays relating to the negative influence of the gods and goddesses on man and his environment, and later changed the thematic pre-occupation and subject matter in their latter plays to socio-political and economic matters.

Ola Rotimi's Socio-Political Plays

The thematic pre-occupation in Ola Rotimi's *Man Talk*, *Woman Talk*, a play about gender struggle, as well as *Hopes of The Living Dead* and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* can be compared to Ibsen's socio-political plays such as *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People* and *A Doll's House*. These three plays and other socio-political dramas by Ola Rotimi represent a transition from the phase of writing plays that have to do with the supernatural gods and traditional aesthetics to writing of plays questioning the status quo and portraying Nigeria's socio-political problems. *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* "takes a comic swipe at ideological misfits and opportunists who strut over the political landscape of contemporary Africa" (online source). It is essential to add that Ibsen also changed from romanticism to writing realistic plays. He understood the social and dynamic significance of modern dramatic arts, the functions of art for arts' sake and art as the mirror of life. The attitude of modern art must have prompted Rotimi to later change his themes, subject matters and ultimately go into more radical writing in the latter part of his literary career. Theatre and drama are aspects of an art which possesses natural ability to dig deep into issues relating to society and to this end, Umenyilorah (2014: 34) states as follows:

The theatre is known to be alive to the socio-political realities of its time; a kind of court where the economic, social, religious, and political issues of society are outlined, evaluated and judged. To bring about a better society, the theatre, its practitioners, and in fact, all artists are

vanguards of social change in their respective capacities – keeping a watchful eye and an attentive ear on the happenings in the society.

Rotimi's socio-political plays with diverse thematic pre-occupations, aim to go beyond identifying societal problems. His plays such as, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, *If...* (The Tragedy of the Ruled), *Holding Talks*, *Hopes of the Living Dead* and *Man Talk*, *Woman Talk*, to mention but a few, were written to actually provoke specific actions in the readers and audience.

Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again

In *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Rotimi portrays a character, Lejoka-Brown, who shares some traits and characteristics with the legendary Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen's characters such as Consul Bernick in *Pillars of Society* and Torvald Helmer in *A Doll's House*. Lejoka's and Bernick's perception of women is derogatory; in addition, these two characters can do anything for economic realisation and self-aggrandizement.

Lejoka-Brown is a retired military major who takes to politics as a means to realise his material gains. He marries three different women for different purposes. First, Mama Rashida, whom he has inherited from his late brother; he marries her for the mere fact that she has lost her husband and because she "...is well-mannered, quiet, and full of concern: a well-bred, African pigeon..." (*Our Husband...* 1966: 9). She is more or less a dummy in Lejoka-Brown's house, and she raises no opposition to his authority. She is obedient to him, a typical African woman, who will dare not ask questions when ordered. Second is Sikira, whom he marries because he needs the votes of the women, if he is to win the elections, Sikira being the daughter of the President of the Nigerian Union of Market Women.

Lejoka-Brown: That woman's case is only for necessity, anyway – temporary measure. We need women's votes, man, if we must win the next elections. (*Our Husband...* 1966:10).

Liza is another one of his wives. She is a Kenyan girl working with the Red Cross. He has earlier met her at Stanleyville during a war in the Congo, when he was shot in the thigh. He marries Liza because, by her medical profession, she will be more presentable and befitting to his status in the nearest future of his political career, should he eventually win in the elections.

Lejoka-Brown represents a number of Nigerian politicians who see political offices and appointments as an avenue for self-aggrandizement and at the same time, have no regard for the womenfolk. Lejoka-Brown perceives women only as a means to justify an end, as instruments to his future political ambition.

Lejoka-Brown: [triumphantly]. See what I mean? Everything would have worked out according to plan once the elections were over. See? I give Sikira lump sum capital to go and trade and look for another man or something like that; Mama Rashida remains right in this house of my fathers; and I move into Minister's quarters on Victoria Island. Liza joins me there: everybody is happy... (*Our Husband...* 1966:10).

On the one hand, Ola Rotimi, in the play, depicts the perspective, cultural ideology, traditional orientation and popular mentality of certain people in Nigeria. Many among the readers, the audience and the society at large regard the womenfolk the same way as the character called Lejoka-Brown. Women like Liza, Mama Rashida and Sikira are perceived to be instruments in the hands of men to achieve various objectives and to attain certain goals. Being the weaker sex, women are relegated to the back seat in the society, in the economic, political and, importantly, in the social sector. On the other hand, Rotimi opens the eyes of the masses to the awareness of how politicians who are meant to regard the well-being and welfare of the people who have voted them into political offices as their primary assignment, engage in series of malpractices such as money laundering, misappropriation of public funds, misuse of power and corruption, to mention just a few.

Hopes of the Living Dead

The play *Hopes of The Living Dead*, based on the “leper’s rebellion” of 1928 – 1932, is another play by Ola Rotimi which depicts vital socio-political and economic issues. The play provides the historical background of what can be described as “drama of struggle”. Faced with the decision of the British colonial administration to flush out all lepers from the Port Harcourt General Hospital into a slow but certain death in the bush, the lepers decide to press their claims for humane treatments. They choose Harcourt Whyte (1905 – 1977) as their leader, who then assumes the responsibility of mobilising and leading them in a moral and physical protest against the decision of the British authority. Mekusi (2007:92), in the course of analysing the play, states as follows:

Rotimi advocates a sense of physical and psychological display of togetherness among the invalids in *Hopes*, in the face of abandonment by the government and discrimination from the elite class. The case of linguistic multiplicity is made evident since Whyte and Hanna speak Kalabari and English. Mallam speaks Hausa. Nweke uses Edo and English. Catechist converses in Ibibio and English. Dancer and Inmate relate by using only Ibibio and Edo respectively. Jimoh is fond of articulate good Yoruba while Mama Musi speaks Yoruba and what Ayo Banjo calls ‘ademotic form of English’ (9), just as Alibo solely expresses his feeling by using Okrika. Saint Gbilekaa posits that ‘*Hopes* makes use of at least eight diverse Nigerian languages’ (169).

In the process of attaining victory during their struggle, some lepers are beaten, humiliated, dehumanised and detained, as force is used in an attempt to flush them out. This crisis breeds mistrust among the different ethnic groups in the play. But it is also through the capable leadership of Harcourt Whyte that solidarity and a sense of unity is restored among them. At the end, the lepers win their freedom and are moved to the befitting new hospital at Uzuakoli.

Solidarity is one issue that is in focus in the play. A crisis situation within a multilingual social environment almost naturally

brings about antagonistic, ethnic clashes amongst the people. In the play, Ola Rotimi represents the voices of the oppressed. This he does by bringing the happenings of the past into writing, thereby enlightening the readers and the audience at large on the importance of collective responsibility in fighting for a just cause. The group of lepers can be seen as a microcosm of the whole Nigeria and the citizens of the country are equated to the lepers who suffer under the oppressive rule of the government. The call for equality is then extended not just to the lepers, but all citizens of the country. Rotimi extends his thematic treatment to include symbolic representation of society. Mekusi (2007:88) echoes this statement:

Hopes is a satire of a group of people whose 'insignia', leprosy, symbolizes poverty and deprivation in a society unknown to beautiful objects of experimentation. Both *Hopes* and *If* are full of characters who could pride themselves on the leadership qualities of Papa and Whyte, respectively. However, *Hopes* is set in Port-Harcourt and has people analogous to Fanon's Wretched of the Earth surviving the malice of their oppressors as a result of collective revolt.

If... a tragedy of the ruled

In *If... a tragedy of the ruled* (1979), Rotimi expresses the common traits of bad leadership in most African nations, especially in Nigeria. He depicts a community with lack of basic amenities and no government presence, a community suffering from socio-political and economic neglect, a community comprising people who possess the power as electorates, to vote for and against the politicians during elections. Anyoku (2012:81) provides a vivid abridgment of the play:

Ola Rotimi uses a decrepit and ghettoized 'mega-prison, which effectively is the tenement apartment block in which a human herd is housed. In a typically Sembene Ousmane novelistic style, Rotimi, in *If...a tragedy of the ruled*, assembles a fractiously discordant slew of

characters, polarized by ethnicity, moral and ideological differences, age and status, and gradually welds them into a formidable phalanx of resolute, ideologically-minded counter-insurgents against a rampaging capitalist landlord.

Rotimi satirises the self-indulgent property-owner, who happens to be dating Betty, an occupant in his house, is contesting in an election into the national assembly, and needs the votes of his tenants. In order to coerce and intimidate them into voting him into office, the landlord increases their rent. He excludes Papa, Betty and Hamidu, from this random rent hike, in what appears to be a divide-and-rule approach. But the tenants, at the end of the day, collectively cast their votes for an opponent, their landlord's political rival. Even though they rarely do so, their landlord and his incumbent party win the general elections.

Rotimi's *If...* is crafted "around the building-blocks of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, a vital piece of ideological treatise from which Marxists and socialists draw inspiration". In this connection, Ola Rotimi assembles a wide range of Nigerian ethnic groups including, natives of Kalabiri, in present Rivers State (represented by Mama Rosa and Fisherman), Bini (Benin, the present day capital city of Edo State) [represented by Betty, a prostitute with a vision and purpose], Ibibio (the present Akwa Ibom State) [represented by Akpan, Adiaoba and Ukot], Yoruba (in Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, and Lagos States) [represented by Banji Falegan alias 'Di Law'] Hausa (belonging to the entire Northern parts of Nigeria) [represented by Garuba Kazauire and Dr. Hamidu Gridado alias "Ernesto Che Guevara"] Igbo (in South-East States of Nigeria) [represented by Chinwe Ejindu, Onyema Ejindu, Obiageli and Chike], among others. Furthermore, these characters are selected or chosen from various vocations of life: characters such as Papa, "disciplinarian of the neighbourhood", is a retired headmaster. Dr. Hamidu is a fresh graduate with a degree in medicine and is on National Youth Service Corps in a hospital in Port Harcourt. Chinwe is a graduate and her nephew, Onyema, a secondary-school prospect (who later dies in the play due to societal negligence). Banji is a lawyer. Akpan is a clerical officer. Garuba, a former boxer, is now a deaf-mute labourer; and Betty is a petty trader and part-time prostitute.

In this play, Rotimi's most powerful tool in depicting the common struggle of the masses is expressed through complex, ethnic and tribal imagery. He portrays a diversity of cultures and backgrounds, but yet emphasises on collective struggle against the oppressive authority. He often, in his plays, advocates for collective, social, political and economic consciousness as a way to stay aware to our civic responsibilities and also to hold our leaders accountable to their responsibilities to the people who elected them. Sadly, the climax of this play is the demise of Onyema (a very young, promising secondary-school prospect, representing continuity and a better future in the play) due to a manageable ailment of asthma, but who could not be saved because of the neglect by those in his society. The play depicts wanton deaths faced by many poor Africans both aged and youngsters that survive in a deplorable condition without any intervention or help from government or anybody in the society, and whose lives are often cut-short by preventable deaths.

Rotimi, being a literary artist and theatre director, believes that true social cohesion in a multi-lingual setting, such as Nigeria (a country of over 200 ethnic groups and languages), can foster the required peace and harmony. He clamours for peace and co-operation in most of his socio-political plays, not only amongst individuals or groups that share the same language, culture and tradition, but also across the linguistic and ethnic belts of the society. Examples of these ideas are seen in *Hopes of the Living Dead* and *If... the tragedy of the ruled*. Furthermore, the position or the belief of many scholars (such as Obafemi [2001] and Umukoro [1994]) that Ola Rotimi, through his socio-political dramas, shows the socialist's vision and aspiration is justifiable since many of the themes in his engaging plays often depict the despicable situation of the people in the country.

As a result of his multi-lingual background (born by a Yoruba man and an Ijaw mother), Ola Rotimi recognises the need for ease of communication among his characters (who often represent Nigerians

in their cultural diversity). To him, this process is a recipe for proper understanding; the type of understanding that can unite the masses against any external aggression. Mekusi's (2007:87-88) argument corroborates the above position:

He makes language the leading motif, as shown by his reliance on the use of polyglots in *If* and *Hopes*. Reuben Abati sees this as using varieties of English language as a thread that may unite a country in diversity (40). Aside the fact that the English language has enhanced the sharp divisions that exist within people in these plays, it, at least, offers Ola Rotimi what Balme captures as the "growing political commitment as a result of the ethnic disputes in Nigeria, which are closely tied to issues of language and language status" (113). Rotimi's major concern in *If* and *Hopes* revolves around some emasculated or, in his words, 'chosified' individuals in the contemporary society.

In a similar vein, the unfortunate people in *If* are not lucky enough as they face the brutalisation and dehumanisation of the landlord that culminates in the death of Onyema, the beacon and symbol of hope, who should have contributed to the struggle towards the desired egalitarian society. The demise of Onyema is reminiscent of Wole Soyinka's lamentation on "the wasted generation." The dramatic situation of *If*... depicts certain socio-politically and economically marginalised characters in a multi-tenanted building, whom the landlord rudely threatens with quit notices to secure their votes. The landlord becomes a representative of the ruler in the Nigerian nation trying to adopt the divide and rule tactics during political transition, with the intention of taking advantage of helpless people who are already deprived and abused by the society.

In summary, Ola Rotimi's contributions to the evolution of the socio-political theatre and drama performance in Nigeria are easily recognised and portrayed in many of his plays relevant for this purpose, such as *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, *Hopes of the Living Dead* and *If...The Tragedy of the ruled*. His other plays, which he had directed on stage himself at Dramatic Arts Department, Obafemi Awolowo University, and were later published posthumously, such as

Who is a Patriot?, *When Criminals Turn Judges*, *Man Talk*, *Woman Talk*, and *Tororo, Torororo-ro-ro* are also of social, political, and economic relevance in view of the various contemporary issues contained in them.

In conclusion, Rotimi's historical tragic plays such as *Kurunmi* and *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* as well as his adaptation of a Greek play, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, depict some level of socio-political relevance which has to do with some events in the history of the Yoruba and the Edo people as well as aspects of Classical Greek mythology. Although *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is an adaptation of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, it remains relevant, like his other original plays, to contemporary African socio-political consciousness.

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