

Edited by: Oludolapo Ojediran

Dialectics of Texts, Performances

Dialectics of Texts, Performances and Theatrical Dynamics

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Tayo Simeon Arinde & Phillip Arthur Gborsong

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



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© Oludolapo Ojediran, Tayo Simeon Arinde
and Philip Arthur Gborsong (2022)

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TWO

SELF-EXPRESSION, SELF-DEFINITION AND SELF-CHOICE IN EFUA T. SUTHERLAND'S EDUFA AND THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA

Oludolapo OJEDIRAN

Abstract

In 21st Century Africa's feminist discourse, self-expression, self-definition and self-choice are inevitable. This is because the female gendered, self has drastically reduced within the African patriarchal societies which subjugates and trivialises the issues of women. With the use of textual analysis to explore the selected works of Efua. T. Sutherland, Edufa (1967) and The Marriage of Anansewa (1975), through Alice Walker's womanist view of 'womanish gall', Sutherland's female characters are able to navigate their gendered situations. While both texts share the same view of Walker's womanish gall, the study concludes that the female gender's narratives especially in the African continent need to be re-written, re-echoed and reviewed in this current social, religious and economic period in order to self-express themselves through self-determination and self-choice in most avenues available.

Key Words: *Self-expression, womanish, self-determination, Sutherland, female characters.*

Introduction

In situations where gender, culture and language are sculpted through interactions and on-going social activities, the dichotomy of the private and public sphere is being created in many ways.

This is due to the fact that gender, as a socio-cultural construction allows the females to be at the mercy of their language in relation to hierarchy which denies them self-expression. As a way of re-evaluating females true self-expression, Tuzyline Jita Allan (1995, p. 6) observes that Alice Walker's (1983) major themes of womanist epistemology- audacity, woman-centeredness and whole(some)ness of vision is understood as critical imperatives in the effort to fashion a framework of feminist resistance to patriarchy. Walker's theory reflects the neglected cultural values through which language exposes the devaluation of femininity and femaleness in a patriarchal system that objectifies the female gender. This shows that a woman's language is often trivialised in a patriarchal society that frequently demean and degrade the use of the same language which is always elevated for the male gender.

Walker identifies that language allows a sense of self-reflection which helps the female gender to think of her gendered identity. While Walker does not only see language from the womanist view, she also places womanism and feminism in a binary form which allows womanist theory to analyse how language encompass all categories of the female gender's feelings irrespective of their social status, class or race to allow a sense of belonging and will of action.

Walker's womanism celebrates womanish gall, that is, the courage to be in the face of conspiracy and conformity and be able to make decision that build ones pride as a woman. Although most women with womanish gall end up being victims of patriarchal culture as they try to make certain changes, this is evidenced in the works of Sutherland whereby her female characters such as Eulalie and Anansewa take the position that render them inexpressive and psychically battered within the oppressive society due to lack of self-understanding. Walker's womanist theory recognises self-understanding and self-definition as being crucial components of self-expression that involves public expression, aspiration to liberty, life satisfaction and the drive to expend energy.

Synopses of Selected Plays

Edufa

Edufa, a play written in 1967 revolves around a man of high social status, reputation and prestige who in his quest to maintain and improve this, consults a diviner who see death hanging over him instead. As the only means of averting this disastrous situation, he must sacrifice something with the power of speech who can swear an oath to die on his behalf. In this play, Sutherland questions the vulnerability of a man in his quest to maintain his societal position and his loss of a dear one in order to maintain this status. *Edufa* makes his wife, Ampoma, to take this oath before revealing what it means to her.

The Marriage of Anansewa

Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975) as a storytelling drama exposes the character of a hypocrite father, Ananse, who denies his daughter, Anansewa, the freedom to choose her own husband. Based on the Akan spider tales (Anansesem), Sutherland translates the story into a new dramatic structure that she calls Anansegoro. Traditionally, in the Ghanaian setting, Ananse means trickster, the spider that often appears as a man. Through his cunning actions and greed, he sends Anansewa's pictures to four different chiefs to take her as a wife who immediately show their interests in taking his daughter as a wife. This becomes a puzzle he has to solve and with the help of Christie and Anansewa, he is able to get a solution and find Anansewa a husband whom he believes will take care of her.

Expressing and Defining Self in a Gendered Society

Sutherland's works expose her as a writer who believes that thoughts, feelings and emotions are inner attributes that female characters possess and the need to be expressed. Ironically, these expressions are devalued by the male characters within the patriarchal system that denies their language the necessary

participation of esteemed speakers in their own speech communities. While Sutherland presents language as forms of expression whereby feelings, thoughts and emotions are interlinked, she elaborates some of the reasons the female characters are objectified by the male characters who are also at the mercy of their own language and the patriarchal system in operation. Linguistically, the writer does not only use the plays to expose how the male dominated societies influence female decision and their sexual attributes via language as a way of enslaving them, they also reveal how the male gender become victims of language.

Correspondingly, Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* as a storytelling drama exposes the character of a hypocrite father, Ananse, who denies his daughter the freedom to choose her own husband. Based on the Akan spider tales (Anansesem), Sutherland translates the story into a new dramatic structure that she calls Anansegoro. Traditionally, in the Ghanaian setting, Ananse means trickster, the spider that often appears as a man. Sutherland's portrayal of Kweku Ananse in relation to her beautiful daughter, Anansewa, who is a Western-educated urban woman, is presented as the most valuable asset which the trickster has and if he succeeds in persuading one of the country's chiefs to marry her, he believes he is going to be wealthy.

The playwright exposes Ananse as a cunning and dishonest father who sees the female gender as a source of wealth similar to other plays analysed earlier. As a trickster who can take different forms, Sutherland makes him an old man; Ananse tests the faithfulness of these four suitors before he can allow any of them to marry his daughter. Ananse plays on the intelligence and hopes of these four suitors from different clans when he tries to gain money by demanding an outrageous bride price. Following the oral technique, Sutherland uses a storyteller who stands outside the action and mediates between the actors and the audiences while the actors, the audiences also participate in singing or recounting *mboguo*, musical performances that comment on the story. This traditional story-telling form helps to create an expansive mood with the full involvement of the audience in the action of the play

which engages the women in redressing their own issues from a new perspective through a language they can actively relate with.

Also, in *Edufa* such lack of feelings and sympathy makes Edufa sacrifice love and lives in order to align with the society's expectations. Edufa is a man of high social status, reputation and prestige who in his quest to maintain and improve this, consults a diviner who saw death hanging over him instead. As the only means of averting this disastrous situation, he must sacrifice something with the power of speech who can swear an oath to die on his behalf. In this work, Sutherland questions the vulnerability of a man in his quest to maintain his societal position and his loss of a dear one in order to maintain this status. Edufa's father, Kankam, reveals the hidden mystery behind his wife, Ampoma's ill-health:

KANKAM: You had willed that some old wheezer like me should be the victim. And I was the first to speak. 'Not me, my son', said I joking. 'Die your own death. I have mine to die.' And we all laughed. Do you remember? My age was protecting me. [Pause] Then Ampoma spoke. [Pause] Yes, I see you wince the fatal words that day and condemned her life. 'I will die for you Edufa', she said; and meant it too, poor, doting woman (17).

While expressing a sense of true self-expression, Ampoma's doting nature makes her the victim of her husband's weakness. She possesses the attributes of the feminine woman, the love and affection a woman is expected to have for her husband and children both in actions and words which is rejected by Rona in the previous chapter. In her discussion with Edufa, she identifies how the love towards him makes her a victim of premature death that will prevent her from nurturing her children whom she feels she has greater love for:

AMPOMA: I could not live where you are not. I could not live without you, my husband

...

Over me, the sun is getting dark. [With great agitation] My husband! Watch the death that you should have died. [She frets from place to place as if escaping from him.] Stay over there in the sun. Children! My children! If I could cross this water I would pluck you back from the mountain side. Children! Hold my hand! (10-11)

Ampoma's character reveals how a woman's feelings is often taken for granted, regarded as useless, expressionless and trivial which describes Lakoff's (1975) assertion identifies woman's language as tentative, powerless and trivial. Sutherland presents Ampoma's language as a representation of women's vulnerability, powerlessness, and self-expressionlessness in a male-dominated society that silences woman's emotional communication. This corresponds with Messner (2001) opinion that the qualities men are expected to have such as aggressiveness, dominance, sexuality and strength are identical to those linked with women's subjugation and abuse. Eckert and McConnell- Ginet (1998, p.) observe that Women's language has been said to reflect their (our) conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressibility, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affection, competitiveness, independence, hierarchy control. This assertion mirrors what constitutes Ampoma's feelings and language where femininity is used as a measurement of her subordination which lies in women's negative relation to language. As a woman, her language tends towards an emotional and sensitive side than that of the men present at that time in the play which allows gender difference to become visible in Sutherland's work.

Metaphorically, through the cultural feminine qualities (beauty, sexiness, powerlessness and passivity) and characterisation of Ampoma, the playwright's use of language serves as a form of empowerment which enables her to confront certain feminine cultural limitations and to question the masculine authority, thereby challenging the socio-cultural values. This is encouraged by Sutherland's use of sexist language to question and to expose the values that dictate the relationships among gender, culture and

communication liable in the feelings, experiences, and complexities of the females within the society. For example, Ampoma uses language reveals her humiliation and sacrifice as a result of the love she has for her husband which systematically shows women are moving away from the marginal position and disregarding the pillars of patriarchy.

In this view of unvalued emotional capability, these female characters' situation is observed by Benjamin (1980) as lack of women independence that limits their desire. Her opinion sees that women desires are often dictated by the desire of 'phallus' in the society. As far as Ananse, Siobhan's father, Stefano, Cesera and Edufa are concerned their female victims are treated with lack of personal autonomy that is objectified to suit their greedy needs. In other words, the phallus has a central and crucial importance it plays in language that embodies the patriarchal socio-cultural laws, the sexual differences and subjectivity of the female gender within the society. Carla Kaplan identifies the symbolic interpretation involved in the Oedipal phase of the phallus according to Lacan (1990, p.61-62) that:

In Lacan, the phallus (not to be confused with the actual penis) is the 'missing' signifier to which both sexes must reconcile their relationship. Full entry into the symbolic does not depend on having or not having a penis, but on the symbolic interpretation a child places on its absence or presence in him/herself and in the two powerful figures of the mother and father. In order for women to identify finally with their mothers and take their place as female in culture they must accept the missing phallus as a permanent loss in themselves.

Lacan's opinion shows that language exists through individual speech in which self and culture speak simultaneously. In *The Marriage of Anansewa*, this is the situation Anansewa encounters in the relationship with her father that disallows her from expressing personal desire but rather expresses herself through the desire of her father. Ananse as the phallus entity becomes the privileged in the relationship he has with Anansewa at the expense of his daughter whose access to language becomes unconventional

due to the cultural laws that identifies her gender identity as the less privileged. Despite Ananse and Anansewa having a good rapport, there is the socio-cultural perception about womanhood as an object and a source of family wealth that Ananse explores in her daughter's femininity. This is evidenced at the beginning of Ananse's cunning act, Anansewa questions the masculine language that objectifies her in the letter she writes to the four different chiefs, but becomes subdued by the money received from one of the chiefs involved in Ananse's plot so her daughter can get the higher education she desires.

ANANSEWA: [Searching for the copy] Is it I? Here is the letter. [She reads . . .] 'the object of your interest'. Is that me, father? Am I the object? Oh, I wish, I wish . . . (21).

Sutherland explores how poverty makes women vulnerable to subjugation in the character of Anansewa whom despite her wishes becomes expressionless due to the incapability of paying for the affluent life she desires. Anansewa lacks Walker's womanish view which illustrates the incompetence of its application to all women as there are differences from one culture to another. Despite the universal appeal of Walker's womanist theory, Sutherland's view of her female characters show that not all black women are the same as they are diverse historically, culturally, politically, sexually and socially. Ladner (1985, p.271) confirms that in discussing the black woman from a historical perspective, it is important to know that there is no monolithic concept of the black woman, but there are many models of black womanhood. As explored by Sutherland, the views of black women are many as it remains distinct that the fragmentation of Anansewa's identity is in relation to her sexist stance in the society as perpetuated by her father. For example, while Ananse calls his daughter 'the object of your interest' (Sutherland, p.21), showing women as mere object to be owned and discarded any time the society feels like, he esteems the men involved in his plan to make them honoured and respected. For example, instead of calling one of the chiefs by the name 'Chief of Sapa', he sees it as too ordinary for a man of high calibre due to his trick in order to find the highest bidder for his daughter, he asks

Anansewa to type his letter starting with lots of respects and social recognition that:

ANANSE: . . . [He assumes the stance of an official praise-singer.]

'O Mighty- Tree-Of--Ancient-Origin!

Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin,

Rooted in the shrine of deity!

Countless branches in which

Benighted wandering birds

Are welcome to shelter.' (14).

Ananse believes that men need their appellation in order to assume the social status that they should have. The above six lines appellation is used in place of the single line of 'Dear Chief of Sapa' which is a means of placing the masculine gender in a superior position as depicted by Sutherland. Although Sutherland uses Anansewa to question most of these masculine social attributes given, but her poverty and language limits her actions. Anansewa ignorantly believes her father, but becomes sad and afraid that her father will not be able to unite the knot he is tying around them to secure a good husband for her and end his own poverty. Sutherland places Ananse in the position of a protective father who engages in the act of selfish negotiation, but the writers portray these in different ways.

The female protagonists are seen by their male counterparts as incapable of making their own choices, standing on their own and expressing their emotions in the society that is invisible but not absent. While the male characters make the female ones voiceless, they also make them the subject of these stories. Stefano adores his mother, but ironically does not respects her feelings for Davide which is the same way Ananse sees his daughter as a treasure and at the same time the object of a man's interest. This same object of interest makes the chiefs who are highly respected in their different communities ignore their ego in order to have Anansewa because she is considered as an additional asset for them. Sutherland gives

the four chiefs/suitors name that reveals their social status and how much they are respected at the expense of the female gender who see themselves as non-self. Charles (1997, p.14) identifies the issue of non-self that:

Being defined in terms of the non-self never remains a static position. For the condition of being untermmed triggers a response among those who are deemed to have no power, a demand to be recognised by those in power; a demand to foster positive self-recognition in (and outside) the sphere of black feminism.

Charles identifies most black women's predicament and their zeal to break away from their oppressed situations and become recognised identities not only within the feminist discourse but also in their different societies. Not only does a black woman see her sex as a form of oppression, she also sees that she belongs to a different socio-economic and historio-political group which hinders her from expressing her view. These women believe that a change of class, view and belief will create new identities for them as they endeavour to engage in the public sphere. As at the time *The Marriage of Anansewa* was written, some West African males especially those ones that worked with the colonial masters have started to believe that education is a means of liberating women from the boundaries set by socio-cultural injustice against them.

This corresponds with Wood's (1995, p. 206) observation that schools are powerful agents of socialization where one is taught about the culture's history, traditions, practices, beliefs, and values. Some other literates amongst the West Africans also believe that education limits the type and category of suitors that wants such a woman's hand in marriage because she is respected, knowledgeable and intelligent which makes men see her as being sophisticated, competent, valuable and smart. This shows that education is another form of socialization or agent that reconstructs people's identity either as an individual or in relation to the society. Whether true or not, education redresses Anansewa's identity that makes the four chiefs want her for a wife which mirrors the first messenger's speech in the play when Anansewa pretends to be

dead in order to untie his father's knot and to know the chief that truly loves her amongst the four:

FIRST MESSENGER: Respected lady, and you, elder of the family, whom we meet here. . . . Our royal one, the wealthy paramount Chief of the Mines whose praise name is ' You Are Coming Again, Aren't You', has had many discussions with his councillors about this (sic) marriage he was going to contract. He insisted-against their advice-that if a lady of this quality came into his hands she would give enlightened training to the many children to whom his wives have given birth to (78).

First messenger's lines reveal the nature and nurture attributes associated with the female gender which allows the Chief of the Mines to see Anansewa from two different perspectives of both domestic (private) and academic (public) sphere. The chief does not only see Anansewa as a woman whose education will positively influence his kingdom, but also sees the marriage as a way of maintaining his social prestige amongst his people who will see his new wife as an additional advantage to his kingdom. It is this obsession in maintaining social status that makes him neglect his council's advice not to marry Anansewa.

Although Sutherland portrays women's value in a derogatory manner in relation with these chiefs, she also exposes how the female gender can be expressive through her biological and intellectual worth in the patriarchal society. Being educated and beautiful, Anansewa is the subject of discourse from the beginning of the play to the end; the male characters see her as the subject of their story which acknowledges the self-worth of the female gender to be appreciated the more. This allows the female protagonist not only to be seen in relation to the men but also in what she is able to achieve as an individual especially in West African societies that attributes more value to the educated women. As at the time of the writing of this play, the West Africans believe in education as a means of liberating women from socio-cultural injustice against them to a large extent because an educated woman is able to express herself. Education also limits the type and category of suitors who want an educated woman for a wife

because she is respected, knowledgeable and intelligent, thus she is regarded as being difficult to control and an overreacher.

Sutherland also explores the idea of female passivity and denial in Edufa's obsession to maintain his position of privilege which makes him sacrifice his wife against loss of prestige. This is a situation Steele (1988) proposes as self-affirmation theory that views the overall goal of self-system as a means to protect the image of self-integrity, moral and adaptive adequacy. When this status of self-integrity is threatened like that of Edufa, people respond in a way to try all that is within their means to restore their self-worth which they believe improve their self-esteem.

As a way of maintaining male superiority, Edufa becomes engrossed in his self-esteem and tries to protect it in order to have a valued identity, but at the end of the play the playwright uses his love for societal status to make him vulnerable to situations that he is unable to cope with in a culture that respects masculine affirmation. Edufa's character not only reveals the story of greed, but that of men's vulnerability. In a situation where a man's wealth and status surpasses all other things to him, Sutherland sees that the male gender also becomes unprotected in their search for social recognition. *Edufa* however, is a play filled with so many ironies that attributes some of the assumed feminine qualities like indecision, irrationality, tenderness, to the male gender. Despite what Edufa does to his wife, he still confesses love and shyness which are part feminine attributes in order to cajole his wife and make people believe in his affection and love towards her. In his discussion with his friend, Senchi about the bouquet of flowers which he asks his sister to take to Ampoma, he confesses:

EDUFA: [To Abena] Little one, you who is about to marry, I'm giving you chance to look at love. Take these flowers in to Ampoma. [He speaks emotionally into the flowers.] Tell her that I, her husband, send them; that it is she who has so matured my love. I would have presented them myself, but I have learned the magic of shyness, and haven't the boldness to look into her eyes yet. (40).

Edufa's lines are romantic and captivating after his evil deeds to his wife which makes his friend, Senchi, think he is the lovable husband he used to think he is not. Senchi at the beginning of their conversation accuses him of not being romantic enough, but at the end of the lines, he agrees that it is Edufa's first graceful act he had ever seen. While the men drive the actions of the play, it also reveals Ampoma's expression of pain or angst. The song Senchi renders at this point is a praise of womanhood which Sutherland uses to celebrate the female gender's boldness at some point in their life.

SENCHI: Nne

NneNne

Nne

NneNne

O, Mother

Nne

NneNne

If I find you

Nne

NneNne

I'll have to worship you

Nne

NneNne

I must adore you

Nne

NneNne

O, Mother

NneNne

She's wonderful

She's wonderful

O, Mother

She's wonderful . . . (40-41)

Sutherland uses Senchi's emotional song to re-analyse the value of motherhood which makes Seguwa to sob quietly and Edufa to feel the pain of what he has done to an innocent domesticated and cultural woman who loves him wholeheartedly. When the Chorus finally arrives at the party organised by Edufa to appreciate his wife after his evil deed, Senchi's conversation with them reveals the societal view of women not saying 'No' even if they are not having pleasant experiences.

Anansewa is also denied this form of personal autonomy in Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*. The lack of self-sufficiency and capability is used by her father to manipulate her and makes her readjust to the core expectation of the females in the male-dominated society. Ananse does the same to another female character, Christie who is in love with him. He manipulates her to the extent of involving her in his puzzle to find a suitable husband for his daughter. Despite Christie's show of love and affection for Ananse, he fails to acknowledge it as it is considered an unaccepted display and unwomanly in Sutherland's context of the play. This mirrors Ananse's mother and sister seeing Christie as being too sophisticated and unfeminine in the manner she behaves, dresses and responds to issues. Sutherland employs Ananse's character to play on Christie's intelligence as an avenue to re-examine the plights of a woman seeking love and attention to fulfil part of the social expectations of the female role. At first, Ananse does not see Christie as someone intelligent enough to solve his problem, but as one who is at his beck and call while he passively engages her in disentangling his puzzle amongst the four chiefs.

Against Ananse's mother's view that sees Christie as a destroyer of culture and social norms in relation to womanhood, Christie becomes an active participant through which Ananse is able to resolve his puzzle. As the players and audience laugh at his sudden employment of Christie as part of the process to untie his knot, he recognises that both genders go through difficult times as they journey through life which does not matter what the society thinks of both genders:

ANANSE: . . . if you are merely human like me, you'd better make your laughter brief, because in this world, there is nobody who is by-passed by trouble (61).

He acknowledges the instability and variability of gender identities that are prone to changes. Sutherland recognises that gender identities are performed through language as she portrays Ananse's character to become what he makes of himself through his cunning ways and not what the society expected of his gender. Although, the playwright reminds the reader of Ananse's intention to secure a future for his daughter which is also at her expense as earlier said, he also wants to align with the social construct of masculinity.

From Sutherland's perspective, Edufa and Kamkam show binary view of masculinity through their treatment of the Ampoma's character. While Ampoma displays emotional connection between self and other by ignorantly surrendering her own life in place of her husband's, she becomes powerless and subjugated to androcentric desires. Having personally realised what she has done, she gives an open retaliation to her husband in order to expose his evil deeds in maintaining his masculine societal position. She presents her husband's with waist beads which symbolise one of African features of female beauty, by engaging in this action, she attributes Edufa with the assumed female timidity that makes him want to hold on to his position while he refuses to die:

AMPOMA: [Inscrutable] Women, you understand, don't you, that with this, I mean to claim him mine. And you are witnesses. My husband, wear this in my honour. [She surprises EDUFA by slipping the beads round his neck.

His first is of shock.] With it, I declare to earth and sky and water, and all things with which we shall soon be one, that I am slave to your flesh and happy so to be. Wear it proudly, this symbol of the union of our flesh (52-53).

Although Ampoma's action and language seems alien to the people seated at the party, but it reveals the degree at which a woman's emotional capability can help her to reject the restrictions around her in the presence of what constitute the society. Her language becomes audacious, she uses the public accepted and standard language in a male-dominated society, but destroys herself in the process of aligning with femininity. Since Ampoma is the subject of the male characters story, Sutherland describes the difference in language and knowledge through Kankam who is old and knowledgeable to decipher his son's trick from the beginning of the play when he asks the question which Ampoma falls victim of. Aligning with the social acceptability of both genders, Kankam's wisdom reaffirms that men are knowledgeable while women are gullible to fall victim of their own words as revealed in the play:

EDUFA: Father, are you mad?

KANKAM: [*Shocked*] Nyame above! To say father and call me mad! My *ntoro* within you shivers with the shock of it!

EDUFA: [*Aware that he has violated taboo*] You provoked me.

KANKAM: [*Moving away*] All right, stranger, I am mad! And madness is uncanny. Have you not noticed how many a time the mad seem to know things hidden from men in their right minds? [*Rounding up on EDUFA*] You know you killed your wife that day. I saw fear in your eyes when she spoke. I saw it, but I didn't understand. (17)

This signifies that Kankam is aware of Edufa's inhuman nature. Kankam reveals what happened in Edufa's bedroom the night he asks his wife to swear and take an oath innocently. He exposes how his son's fear makes him plead while Ampoma ignorantly wears away her life for love which affects Edufa's conscience

before he could explain the danger of what Ampoma has done to her. Out of fear, Edufa shows his wife the charm and confesses to her its power to kill whosoever swears to die for him. After Ampoma makes herself the victim of her own words, she weeps bitterly and lives with the danger of dying any time ever since then. It also reveals Edufa as a coward and a disgrace to the masculine gender who is not ready to face the challenges of life as a man. As opposed to Jespersen's (1998) observation that men are slower and hesitant in their selection of words in order to know the appropriate or fittest noun or adjective to be used, Edufa becomes linguistically dissociated with this societal view of masculinity when he calls his father a mad man. This resulted into a strained relationship between his self and other members of the communication hierarchy.

However, Sutherland renders the male characters to be powerless like the female characters that are the mercy of their words and actions in the society which agrees with Simone de Beauvoir's belief in *The Second Sex* (1952) that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. This view is buttressed by Butler's (2003) argument that sex construed as a biological category is as heavily socially constructed as gender, and that biological sex itself is a gendered category. Butler insists that while feminist analysis successfully identified the social practices that produce gender as a category of identification, they have failed to see that sex itself is produced as a category that precedes gender.

In line with Butler's view, the meanings attached to the female body as an object of scientific scrutiny are determined not just by the practices of science, but in conjunction with other cultural and economic formations, for example, global capitalism, the mass media, institutional racism, or homophobia. Gender however is seen as a means of investigating the variability and contingency of male and female understanding of sexual difference. However, becoming a woman or a man is not something one accomplishes ones and for all in a lifetime, but it is an accumulation of what the society constitutes a particular person to be. Cameron (1998, p. 271) that gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance

with the cultural norms (themselves historically and socially constructed, and consequently variable) which define 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.

Sutherland employs the confession of and search for love as the means through which an African woman is silenced. Hook's (1990, p.20) sees silence as the condition of one who has been dominated and made an object. Sutherland views Christie's dogmatic silence in *The Marriage of Anansewa* as a result of the unappreciated love she shows to the cunning Kweku Ananse who is only bothered about his well-being at the expense of the female characters. This reveals Christie as a dominated being like the other female characters discussed earlier. Christie's love for Ananse captures her reasoning to accept everything he says in order to have his attention and gain his interest even at the expense of Anansewa whom she ought to prevent from going into such an organised marriage which Walker (1983, p.284) reiterates as a 'form of being sold into slavery'. Although Walker appreciates the working together of both genders to achieve a non-sexist society, but not in terms of what Christie portrays to sell her dignity, knowledge, and freedom because of a man who is only after his own interest. Christie's love for Ananse beclouds her thought that she is unable to see beyond what she can actually do to save the situation in that family:

CHRISTIE: Yes, indeed, this is the house of Mr. G. k. Ananse. Oh, taxi drivers! What comes out of their mouths sometimes is most amusing. He is calling me Mrs. Ananse. [*Quite swollen-headed*] Mrs. Ananse, eh? It does sound good. [*She is not aware that ANANSE is watching her. She calls out to the driver*] My in-laws are coming right away, be patient (64).

In Christie's emotional expression towards Ananse, she feels ashamed about it because she is aware of the unvalued affection she is lavishing on him without any positive response. Rather than halt and taking caution, she does not see anything wrong in her action, but intensifies her effort to satisfy the man she loves wholeheartedly against Ananse's mother's feelings. While trying to get a taxi for the deceived Ananse's mother and aunt, Sutherland

displays the societal implication on women's submissiveness to the males. This submissiveness does not allow women to question or investigate the male authority which makes Ananse to fool these two old women in order to carry out his plans with the help of another submissive woman, Christie.

In Christie's submissiveness to Ananse, she is unable to demonstrate the act of true sisterhood to Anansewa whom she ought to mentor and enlighten about the marriage as an avenue to silence her because she is aware that her freedom is at stake. The lack of sisterhood is also explored in the character of Ananse's mother who from the beginning sees Christie as not good to be a woman. Immediately Ananse informs her there is trouble why he is trying to untie the knot, she believes that Christie is the trouble that can make a man cry uncontrollably the way Ananse does:

AYA: [*Wide-eyed with confusion*] Enemies? It's that woman Christie, isn't it? The minute I met that woman here I felt instinctively that trouble marches alongside people of her kind (62).

These women lack the love for women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength that is a defence against male hegemonic dominance in Walker's womanist theory. Aya displays her hatred from the first time she sees Christie to create a psychic and physical disjuncture between them as women.

Although Sutherland demonstrates in her female protagonists the conscious effort to recognise and to see what they are experiencing as a form of emotional exploitation of the female gender, they hardly find a way out of this problem as they succumb to the masculine rules. This is evidenced in Sutherland's Anansewa who finally marries Chief-Who-Is Chief that has been her father's choice since the beginning of his plot; he claims he is the one who will love his daughter more amongst the four suitors. Elena retires to the way she is seen at the beginning of the play as a widow in order to align with the societal expectation that Davide finds difficult to measure her courage. Christie gains Ananse's love at the end of the play whereby Ananse sees her as a 'Rare helper! Supporter' (91) whose praises Ananse sings at the end of the play

for being instrumental to solving his puzzle. However, readers notice a form of hypocrisy in the male gender as presented by Sutherland in her plays. Ananse and Edufa reveal most men's behaviour whose attitude is about the acquisition of power, aggressiveness and subjugation of women.

Conclusion

Although at the end of these plays, Ampoma dies and Anansewa is married to one of the chiefs, but in Walker's womanist view, these women's zeal for autonomy sketch pictures of hope for the other female characters that are unable to question their objectified being. These female characters loyalty to female gender and search for freedom become their forms of resistance to the patriarchal system; thus, help to see their voices as marks of freedom that make them subjects of their own story by being assertive. By being womanish or assertive, they resist the oppressive structure that limits the female gender's knowledge, power, self-expression, choice and self-realisation which creates an insatiable curiosity that borders rebelliousness in their quest for truth. This view of assertiveness allows feminine identity which women must possess to change their economic, social, cultural, political and linguistic circumstances in any gendered culture they might find themselves.

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