An Adaptation is its Own Original: A Comparative Assessment of *Alcestis* and *Edufa*

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Abstract.
In the past 20 years, adaptations and reproduction of Greek plays have taken center stage in the literary output of the new globalised world. Acclaimed reproductions of Greek plays have been mounted in Europe, Japan, India and Africa. In Africa, names like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Femi Osofisan cannot be side-stepped. In Ghana, Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* is acclaimed as a prominent Ghanaian adaptation of the Greek play *Alcestis*. Since the study of history and, most importantly, Classics is not just to imitate but to adapt and sync the classical studies to modern trends to "contemplate instructive instances of every kind as though displayed upon conspicuous memorial" (Livy, *From the foundation of the city*). These questions arise: What makes *Edufa* an adapted work? To what extent is the plot and other dramaturgical elements in *Edufa* Ghanaian in outlook? Does Sutherland's *Edufa* provide a contextual originality for her readers? Using Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory, this paper conducts a contextual analysis of *Edufa* (with reference to Alcestis) to investigate the originality or otherwise of the so-called Ghanaian adaptation. The paper reveals that the divergences in the narrative of *Edufa* require the play to be read in its own right as an original piece rather than merely its association with Euripides' *Alcestis*.

Keywords: *Edufa, Alcestis,* adaptation, comparative, Classical Reception Studies.

Introduction

This study is not an attempt to discredit the place and influence of the classical tradition in global scholarship. Instead, the study questions the use of the term 'classical tradition'[1] as a force which claims the transmission, influence and legacy of the classical culture on other civilisations. According to Hardwick and Stray (2008, p. 470), the Classics can "boast to be a marker and a maker of historical change, of ideologies built around some of the most persistent ideals ever known". Oftentimes, claims such as Hardwick and Stray's have led to the Classics being accused of exclusivity, elitism and white superiority. This work falls under Classical Reception Studies, which concentrates on a two-way style of reading because the present and past are in dialogue with each other, and the 'original' text and its context are not privileged over the other (Kallendorf, 2007, p. 298; Weyenberg, 2013, p. xix). Classical Reception Studies investigate the performance and reception of ancient literature across different cultural contexts and genres. Such pursuit cannot be taken without its key term, 'adaptation'. Weyenberg (2013, p.14) considers an adaptation as 'a constellation in which different texts, contexts and traditions relate to one another non-hierarchically and simultaneously'.

Brokenshire (2017) provides a biological meaning of adaptation related to modern concepts and contexts. He defines an adaptation as a 'process of change or modification by

[1] Refer to Bolgar, 1954; Highet, 1976; Kallendorf, 2007; Hardwick and Stray, 2008).

which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment or ecological niche, or a part of an organism to its biological function, either through phenotypic change in an individual or (esp.) through an evolutionary process effecting change through successive generations' (In Nutsukpo, 2019, p. 101). Bruhn et al. (2013, p. 18) also define adaptation as the 'transport of form and/or content from a source to a result, such as from novel to film or any other adaptive constellation".

While scholars like Mckinnon (2011), Linda Hutcheon (2013), and Nutsukpo (2019) believe that an adaptation presents a new way in which a work can be perceived in different cultural contexts, which is worthy of study in its own right, other scholars like Irving Babbitt Béla Balázs, René Wellek and Austin Warren perceive adaptations as derivative (Littlejohn, 2018; Nutsukpo, 2019; Mckinnon, 2011; Bruhn, J. et al., 2013). Hutcheon, for instance, objects that this position by some scholars is a misunderstood assumption and that an adaptation involves 'recreations, remakes, remediations, revisions, parodies, reinventions, reinterpretations, expansions, and extensions' (Hutcheon 2006, p .170 – 171). Bruhn, J. et al. (2013) also postulate that if an adaptation must be viewed within a cultural and textual understanding of phenomena, then any adapted work must be viewed as an original product. However, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and the Bolekaja critics take the matter further by frowning at African scholars who adopt Western philosophical and epistemological concepts, models and methods to study and explain African realities. To them, African literature must be written in the African language, and Africa must develop criteria based on African values and heritage. (Maduka, 1985; Anyaegbunam, 1993; Gaines, 2017). The problem is that Africa does not have a lingua franca or universal language agreed upon by Africans.

Many scholars affirm that *Edufa* is an adaptation of *Alcestis*. However, while they note a close semblance of works like *Odale 's Choice*, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, *The Bacchae of Euripides: a Communion Rite*, and *Tègònni: An African Antigone* to Greek adaptations, they reveal that *Edufa* loosely follows or imitate *Alcestis* (Budelmann, 2004; Smit, 2016; Gaines, 2017). Thus, there are significant variations in the play. In the following few pages, the paper will question the claim of *Edufa* as an adaptation of Euripides' *Alcestis*. It will argue that *Edufa* is an original literary piece in the Ghanaian cultural context and should be seen as its own original distinct in plot, character and characterisation, traditional orientations, and rituals.

Theory

Hutcheon's theory of adaptation has been used in this work to explore Sutherland's *Edufa* as an original piece of Euripides' *Alcestis*. Hutcheon states that an adaptation involves a product and process which resonates through repetition with variations. She describes an adaptation as 'an acknowledged transposition of a recognisable other work or works[,] a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging [and] an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work' (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 8). With these criteria for adaptation, Hutcheon views an adaptation as 'a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary' (Hutcheon, 2013, p. 9). Thus, an adaptation could be an original product of an adapted work. From this viewpoint, I analyse *Edufa* as an original piece despite it being an adaptation of *Alcestis*.

Synopsis

In *Alcestis* (438 B.C.), the eponymous character enjoys a successful marriage where she and her husband Admetus, noble and virtuous, are confronted with sickness which threatens the life of Admetus. In return for Admetus' kindness during his year of servitude, Apollo persuades the Fates to allow someone else to die in his (Admetus') stead. Admetus accepts the offer and asks his aged parents and relatives to die for him. When they refuse, his wife, Alcestis, offers herself. She dies and is buried. Soon afterwards, Heracles, having enjoyed the hospitality of Admetus at the time of Alcestis' death, rescues Alcestis from death and restores her to life.

In *Edufa* (1979), the eponymous character is a materialistic and wealthy man who desires to enjoy wealth, long life and power as long as possible. One unsettling day, he consults a diviner who reveals that death hovers over him. To avoid this, someone has to die in his stead by swearing over a charm provided by the diviner. As he tactfully executes his plan, his wife, Ampoma, unknowingly confesses her love and swears to die for him. As guilt consumes Edufa, he attempts to save his wife but refuses to confess his crimes to the people; the only thing that could save her. Ampoma dies, leaving Edufa with guilt. He becomes mentally deranged and rushes to Ampoma's grave to rescue her.

Points of syntheses

Scholars of Classical Reception Studies (Wetmore (2002), Budelmann (2004), Hardwick & Gillespie (2007), Goff & Simpson (2007), Hardwick (2003), Weyenberg (2013), Goff (2016), Smit (2016) among others) argue that Greek tragedy has served as a model for thinking about theatre in West Africa. To them, through adaptation, African dramatists have benefited from the plots, form, language, character, and themes of Greek tragedy as readily available material for their dramas, their audience and their issues. This is true because African playwrights like Wole Soyinka (*The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite*), Ola Rotimi (*The Gods are not to Blame*), Femi Osofisan (*Women of Owu*; *Tegonni: An African Antigone*), and Efua Sutherland (*Edufa*) used the materials of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in their works. However, while some African playwrights use a close adaptation[2] to serve as resistance and protest against European imperialism[3], these scholars agree that Sutherland's *Edufa* loosely follows Euripides' Alcestis.

This section looks at the level of fidelity Sutherland's *Edufa* owes to Euripides' *Alcestis*. One major point of synthesis is the position and role of the wives, Alcestis and Ampoma. The notion of the virtuous wife invokes the deep loyalty, obedience, and priority she gives to her husband and children. A virtuous Athenian wife must unquestionably support and obey her husband. In the same way, an Akan wife is also expected to support and respect her husband. In both plays, Alcestis and Ampoma demonstrate their love by exchanging their lives for their husbands. However, blind followership is not a reality in Akan marriages. For instance, in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*, the protagonist, Anowa, refuses to play into her husband's patriarchal ideologies of female subordination and housewifery. Though her sacrifice depicts selfless love,

[2] Goff and Simpson (2007:48) state that Soyinka's work is a 'straightforward translation' of Euripides' *Bacchae*.

[3] Since colonisation brought Greek drama to the African continent with the aim of upholding the notion of European superiority over the colonized, perhaps the main reason for the adaptation is to use the same tool for subordination as a tool for protest in order to send a direct message of protest to the Europeans.

Ampoma lacks a thorough understanding of love in the African context and her role and responsibilities in marriage. Such a lacuna in understanding her obligations towards her children and husband puts the entire family in jeopardy (*Bonku et al*., 2018). In *Alcestis*, Alcestis willingly decides to give up her life to save her husband is just like Ampoma in *Edufa*. However, Alcestis knew the fate of Admetus, yet she voluntarily chose to die for him. In the case of Ampoma, she was not privy to Edufa's charm and the danger it posed. In Act 1, Scene 4, Kankam describes the tactical ambush on Ampoma's naïve psyche (Bonku *et al*., 2018). If not for Edufa's deception, his wife may, after all, not have sacrificed herself. Thus, while such a sacrifice of a wife may be necessary and understandable in Athenian society, it is not expected of an Akan wife. In her adaptation, Sutherland perhaps aimed to reveal the confusion that Western patriarchy has created in the minds of wives to believe that, like the Athenian wives, an Akan wife's complete loyalty and dedication to her husband, till death parts them, is ideal. This divergence places *Edufa* in a contextual phenomenon – a deception and trickery leading to death – which is relatable to the Ghanaian reader rather than a willing sacrificial wife. Therefore, the backlash on Ampoma having neglected her children for a man is not grounded in reason. Her continuous show of affection could be interpreted as a woman who sticks to her word or wishes to attain glory from her regrettable, non-retrievable words, 'I'll die for you Edufa' (*Edufa*, p.17). However, Ampoma's willingness to continue the façade of her blissful marriage tells of feminists' assumption that society has presented marriage in such a light that women always prefer marriages with little regard to the circumstances surrounding it.

Though Ampoma's sacrifice contradicts the African concept of motherhood, she and Alcestis express concern and love for their children. When Alcestis embraces her tearful children as they cling to her robes, her role as a mother in fostering affiliations within the *oikos* is well underscored (Kyriakou & Rengakos, 2016). In both plays, the duties of the mother mainly centre on marriage rituals. Both women express their inability to carry out the ritual duties incumbent upon mothers and their inability to witness their children's marriages (*Alc*., p. 52; *Edufa*, p. 8&9).

Following the belief that women are by nature more nurturing and more naturally attached to children, Alcestis and Ampoma express their fear of an intruder – the stepmother. Stepmothers have been represented in Greek tragedies for mistreating their stepchildren[4] (Stuttard, 2014). This could be a result of inheritance,[5] royal births, childlessness or when the stepmother has only daughters. Alcestis sums up her fear of the intrusion by stepmothers:

> [G]ive them no stepmother to envy my royal birth and vent her jealousy in harsh oppression of these children, yours and mine … a stepmother comes in like an enemy to children – yes, an adder is not more cruel… what will your father's wife be to you? Might she not put evil slanders on you in your flower of youth and blight your marriage? (*Alc*., p. 52).

[4] There are additional examples of the attitudes of stepmothers in *Ion* and *Hippolytus, Andromache*.
[5] The first son is entitled to his father's estate and has sole responsibility of protecting the family cult.

In *Edufa*, Ampoma raises her concern about stepmothers: 'if you should marry another woman, will she not envy my children, because you loved them with your own love and mine combined?' (p. 10). These speeches are similar. Rivalries among stepchildren and stepmothers occur in both societies. Since *Edufa* was produced in a postcolonial era when polygamy was being replaced by monogamy and when matrilineal inheritance paved the way for patrilineal inheritance, the Akan societies faced similar situations to Athens. The new system resulted in the introduction of 'illegitimate' and 'step' children, 'bastards' and rivalries among siblings and relatives. Kallinen (2004) states that many people who grew up in polygynous households had close relationships with all of their father's wives and deny that the relations between co-wives and stepchildren were strained. The concept of stepmother destroys solidarity among women in both the Athenian and Akan systems. Sutherland may have maintained such a narrative in her adaptation because such situations are relatable in Africa.

From the above, the expectations of women in the two societies of which the playwrights wrote are similar. Both Alcestis and Ampoma live as wives and mothers. Marriage in Athens and Greece is patrilocal; the woman is seen as an 'intruder' and a stranger in her husband's house. This limits her rights in the home and with the children. In his dialogue with Heracles, Admetus confirms her wife's status as a stranger. The connection is first highlighted in the negative when Heracles asks Admetus whether the person who died was "a blood-relation? Or of another family?", and Admetus answers, "a dear friend of our household, but no relative" (*Alc*., p. 59). This question is reinforced in the *agon* when Admetus accuses his father of letting Alcestis die (*Alc*., p. 63). In a way, because a woman moves into her husband's house when she marries, she is always a stranger in his home and subject to suspicion (Luschnig & Roisman 2003). A Greek woman, therefore, does not belong wholly to her father's house, nor is she a full member of her husband's house; she remains an outsider (Nugent, 1993). She is a kind of liminal person with no clear identity. Therefore, women face double jeopardy, institutionalised through law and custom. Such interpretation explains and justifies the sacrifice of Alcestis.

Similarly, women in African patrilocal societies face the same double jeopardy that Greek women encounter; the girl-child never really belongs anywhere. Ngcobo (2007) explains that in African patriarchal societies, though a woman is loved, her rights within the family are limited, and she is seen as an outsider who is being prepared for her husband's family to which she will belong. Here, the woman faces disillusionment because, just like the Athenian woman, she neither belongs there. However, this contrasts the Akan culture in which Sutherland's work situates, a woman wholly belongs to her maternal family even after marriage – the core of the matrilineal system. But just like the Athenians, she does not belong to her husband's family though she associates herself with them. Ampoma lives with her husband, yet there is constant reference to her maternal family – Seguwa repeatedly laments the wrongs committed against Ampoma's mother (*Edufa*, p. 6&11). We witness that an Akan woman has a stronger bond or sense of belonging to her maternal family than to her husband's, and this is proof that the sacrifice Ampoma made is needless. The existence of similarities and contrast in the expectation of women in the plays affirm the ambiguities and ambivalences that existed at the time of the production of *Edufa*. Based on the analysis of the syntheses of the texts, it could be argued, therefore, that the fidelity that Sutherland owed to Euripides' work doesn't span from

gratefulness, western trainings or superiority of the Greek text but from contextual underpinnings of the Ghanaian society. The analysis also affirms that gender issues, stereotypes and women's roles are cross-cultural. As such, the adaptation of *Alcestis* is a critique of these gender issues and insight into the dilemma that western patriarchal ideologies have created in Akan societies.

Points of divergence

While I acknowledge the commonalities between *Alcestis* and *Edufa,* it is important to highlight the many significant points of divergence in *Edufa*. Efua Sutherland's theme and focus in *Edufa* are different from the themes of *Alcestis*. According to Vellacott (1974), the theme of *Alcestis* is the power of necessity, which is presented in two aspects; the impact of death and the dilemma of marriage, but Sutherland's *Edufa* deals with selfishness and greed, the power of charm and colonial influence all of which have destabilised the traditional African culture. However, Talbert (1983) argues that the plight of women is a central theme in both plays. Thus, while certain commonalities exist in the themes in the plays, the departure of the theme in *Edufa* is prominent. As such, the theme which affects the title and plot provides originality to *Edufa* and shifts it from a mere imitation of *Alcestis*.

Generally, the titles of the plays and the roles of the characters/protagonists significantly impact the playwrights' perspectives. Unlike *Alcestis,* instead of Ampoma, the central character in *Edufa* is Edufa. Unlike Alcestis, Ampoma does not make a strong impression in the play. But Ampoma lingers on till the final scene of the Ghanaian play, while Euripides' protagonist, Alcestis, exists in the early part of the play. Despite these, Euripides titles his play *Alcestis,* but Sutherland prefers *Edufa*. This may be because Sutherland's concentration is not on the role and sacrifice of Ampoma but on the greed and avarice of Edufa. The title could also be associated with feministic or misogynistic tendencies where Euripides concentrates on praising Admetus' 'good character', which attracts long life, sacrifice and death of his wife than frowning on the unjustified death of Alcestis. But Sutherland reveals the true patriarchal man and his callousness by religiously demonising Edufa for his deception and trickery, which causes the audience and readers to sympathise with Ampoma and judge Edufa harshly.

Though the plot of *Edufa* follows that of *Alcestis,* certain scenes produce a point of divergence from Euripides' play. One central point of departure is the Edufa-Kankam scene and Admetus-Pheres scenes. Unlike the dispute in *Alcestis* between father and son, Kankam did not appear with praises for Ampoma's sacrifice, nor was Ampoma dead. Kankam aims to talk his son out of his cruelty and demands the life of Ampoma from him. His dialogue is an exposition of the true nature and wickedness of Edufa, and his narration creates an imagery of the very day Ampoma promised her life to Edufa. Unlike the Pheres-Admetus scene, where the debate rested on the nobility of Alcestis and the duties of parents, the Kankam-Edufa scene consists of the wrongs of Edufa and the innocence of Ampoma. The episode also reveals Sutherland's stance on the lack of morals and greed in modern society, covered by western interpretations of success and emancipation. However, these scenes are similar: Admetus and Edufa disrespect their fathers, and like Heracles, Senchi enjoys a hospitable home. The second central point of departure is the rescue of Alcestis from Death. Unlike *Alcestis,* there is no saviour in *Edufa*. After the tragic demise of Ampoma, Edufa becomes mentally unstable and

then rushes to rescue her from Death. Here, the Akan concept of 'nea wo be dua na wo be twa' (you reap what you sow) is at play (Sekyere, 2016, p. 112-3). Euripides produces a fairy-tale where Admetus and Alcestis escape repercussions, but Sutherland emphasises that egotistical actions and greed attract severe consequences. Sutherland removes the fairy-tale hope Euripides presents to his audience and averts the pride in sacrificing oneself for a man. These modifications prove that Sutherland did not just reproduce the *Alcestis* but also engaged in a creative and contextual appropriation of *Alcestis*. Thus, like Euripides, who adopts and adapts the myth of Alcestis in his play, Sutherland is selective in adapting *Alcestis*. She alters the story and restructures it to suit a particular moral lesson relevant to her readers.

In characterisation, one notes that the portrait of Alcestis and Ampoma are similar, but that of Admetus and Edufa contain notable modifications where Edufa's character is a stark contrast to Admetus'. Like Alcestis, Ampoma is the 'tender heart who nurses [Edufa] to his fortune' (*Edufa*, p. 23). Both women are dedicated to their husbands, they perform their roles as wives and sacrifice their lives for their husbands. Alcestis is the archetypal Athenian virtuous woman. She doesn't question existing norms, and Euripides elevates her status:

> Loved while she was with us, and dead, to be loved forever, the noblest of all women was she who shared your marriage-bed, Admetus. Let not Alcestis' monument be in men's eyes as the graves of mortals. Let her tomb be honoured like a god's, where the passer-by stops to worship; ... Such are the prayers that will be said to her (*Alc.*, p. 74).

The simile 'like a god's' juxtaposes Alcestis' nature, sacrifice and death to a deity. Such comparison places a higher value on Alcestis than her being an object of exchange for a king's life. At first hand, the praises showered on Alcestis give the impression of a positive representation of her. However, Alcestis' sacrifice affirms Athenian men's expectation that a wife achieves female excellence when she dies to save her husband: 'How could any wife give clearer testimony that she honours her husband, than by freely dying for him?' (*Alc*., p. 47). Her sacrifice is exemplary for wives and motivates one to achieve a good reputation and fame by dying for her husband. Though her glorification and reverence have a feministic tendency, it is also embedded with a misogynistic one. Alcestis is portrayed as a heroine like Achilles and Hector, who died for their state, but her heroism lies in her decision to place her marriage above her life. Thus, her heroism remains trapped in the domestic sphere, not the public or state interest (Antwiwaa, 2022).

While Alcestis is constantly praised, Sutherland mentions the dedication of Ampoma on a few occasions (*Edufa*, p. 23&56). Kankam describes Ampoma as "poor, doting woman" (*Edufa*, p.17). Bonku *et al*. (2018) interpret the statement as a woman with a mad heart; a woman who displays some level of stupidity and carelessness when in love, a naïve woman who would deprive her children of their mother for the sake of a man. To them, her death is senseless and will only pave the way for other women to enjoy their husband's love. Ampoma's character is ridiculous because it is not expected from any Akan wife. Her acceptance to die and her continuous display of affection can be interpreted as a wife's submissive role to her husband in a patriarchal society. This confirms African feminists' view that African culture and

customs are embedded with patriarchal notions (Davies, 2007). Since Ampoma's character does not betray the wickedness of her husband but rather strengthens it, she reinforces the authority of men and their patriarchal ideas that a wife should be submissive.

Talbert discusses that Sutherland uses Euripides' "feminist-oriented portrait of Alcestis" (Talbert, 1983, p.183) to examine African women's role, the patriarchal nature of their society and women's vulnerability with men. Talbert also asserts that Euripides challenges his misogynistic society by portraying women as intelligent and forceful. Although the cultural background of Alcestis and Edufa differs, Talbert argues that the plight of women is the central theme of both plays. The similarities in the character of Alcestis and Ampoma show that limitations on women transcend time and culture, however, unlike Euripides, Sutherland does not deify Ampoma. In the Akan context, there is nothing heroic when a wife dies for her husband. The characters of both women are not feminist-oriented.

The depiction of Admetus and Edufa gives a picture of both societies. It is important to note that Alcestis and Admetus are equally praised for their virtuousness, generosity and nobility. Apollo's exposition in the prologue presents Admetus as a virtuous, generous man who has won Apollo's love and protection. He practices *xenia* (guest-friendship)[6] to the core, even at the death of his wife. Talbert (1983, p.187) argues that Euripides 'manipulates Admetus' ethical dilemma to clarify the accepted hierarchy of social mores'. Apart from his father, the rest of the characters pity and sympathise with him. This may be because Euripides relieves Admetus of the guilt and responsibility of Alcestis's death and shifts it onto a god, Apollo. Thus, Euripides does not put any blame on the king, nor does he describe him as a selfish and egoistic man. However, his acceptance of his wife's death and blame on his father for refusing to die in his stead reveals Admetus' self-centeredness[7]. Even though Admetus exhibits some level of self-centeredness and disrespect towards his father, the major point of divergence in the character portrayal of Admetus and Edufa lies in the praise of Admetus and the greed, wickedness and confusion of Edufa.

Edufa's character contrasts his wife's good and loving nature. Ironically, Edufa is generous but materialistic, crafty and selfish. He is a person who is fully aware of the dangers she puts his wife in. He is a deceptive and egoistic man, and the sacrifice of his wife seems deliberate. During the argument between him and his father, Kankam, Kankam reveals Edufa's callousness and departure from traditional values. In Act I Scene 4, Kankam captures Edufa's deception: 'How could we have known it was not a joke when you suddenly leaned back and asked which of us loved you well enough to die for you, throwing the question into the air with studied carelessness? Emancipated one, how could we have known of your treachery?' (*Edufa*, p.17). These rhetorical questions, the use of the oxymoron, 'studied carelessness', and the sarcastic use of 'emancipated one' reveals the extent of Kankam's disgust and subsequent

[6] Greek concept of hospitality; a relationship based on generosity, reciprocity and gift exchange between guest and host.

[7] Luschnig & Roisman (2003) argues that Alcestis agreed to die for Admetus not so much out of love but because she had little choice. She saw that when his parents refused to accede to his request that they die in his stead, he hated them, she knew that he would hate her too and make her life a misery if she refused. She might also have been afraid he would substitute one of their children.

condemnation of Edufa's act (Bonku *et al*., 2018). Edufa's decision to consult a diviner is a direct result of his insecurity; fear of losing his wealth and power. He declares:

> Ask the town. They know who Edufa is and what he's worth. They can count you out my value in the homes that eat because I live. Yes, my enterprises feed them. They rise in deference from their chairs when they say my name. If that isn't something, what is? And can a man allow himself to lose grip on that? Let it go? A position like that? You want to maintain it with substance, protect it from ever present envy with vigilance. And there's the strain that rips you apart! The pain of holding on to what you have. It gives birth to fears which pinch at the heart and dement the mind, until you need must clutch at some other faith … oh it has driven me close to horror … and I tell you, I don't know what to think now (*Edufa*, p. 41).

From the above, Edufa is known for his hospitality: 'the house of the open gate' is a metaphor for a hospitable and generous house. However, his generosity is based on his desire for recognition and power and, as such, conceals Ampoma's sickness by closing his gates. This irony reveals the extent of his deception to his family and community. It makes it impossible to appreciate his gestures of reopening his gates, hosting Senkyi and throwing a party. His act contrasts with Admetus', whose primary purpose is to fulfil the act of *xenia*. Edufa rejects communal ethics to pursue wealth, status and power (Talbert 1983).

Edufa lacks identity; he is neither a true African nor a western man, a man of two worlds, at home in none, as Utudjian (1992)[8] characterises. He pretends to be an emancipated man who rejects traditional beliefs, yet he believes in diviners and witchcraft and is superstitious. In his dialogue with Senchi, Senchi asks, 'have you changed your religion again? What are you practising now? Catholicism, spiritualism, neo-theosophy, or what? Last time I passed through here, you were an intellectual atheist or something in that category. I wouldn't be surprised to see you turned Buddhist monk next time' (*Edufa*, p. 31). From the above, it can be deduced that the infusion of western ideologies into the African culture has led to confusion of the identity of the African male. Instead of joining its female population who are equally bound by western ideologies, the men use it against their women who are faced with double jeopardy; culturally bound stereotypes and western domination. The representation of Edufa makes it easy to see the play as a feminist play, unlike that of *Alcestis*, and this contradicts Talbert's statement that Sutherland adopts Euripides' "feminist-oriented portrait of Alcestis" (Talbert, 1983, p.183). Edufa's tragic flaw leads him to a bad end.

The character portrayal, the fairy-tale and tragic end of Admetus and Edufa, respectively, reveal that Sutherland aims to expose the true nature of the patriarchal man against the hidden intents of Greek males who present themselves as protectors of women's interests. Akan ethics preach communalism and abhors individualism or egoism and Sutherland tries to endorse such traditional ethical concepts in *Edufa*. The severe consequences of Edufa's choices and actions are emphasised to ward off many from egotistical behaviours. In contrast,

[8] See also Conradie, 1997:79.

Euripides creates a patriarchal system where a woman is a pawn among the gods and men, yet the man continues to enjoy a full and happy life.

In comparing Edufa and Admetus, Talbert explains that the portrait of Edufa is worse than that of Admetus, and their nature reveals the extent of victimisation of women in both cultures. By this, the writer means that Ampoma's sacrifice for Edufa only shows that the victimisation of women in Africa must have been worse than that in ancient Athens. This could not have been possible even in colonial or postcolonial Ghana[9]. The worse portrayal of Edufa does not simultaneously show the victimisation of women in postcolonial times. Unlike Admetus whose praise created the impression that the sacrifice of Alcestis is proper, Edufa is condemned for buying into the Western and patriarchal notion of wealth acquired through greed, selfishness, control and subordination. Sutherland's adaptation in a postcolonial era aims to reveal the effects of the infusion of patriarchal ideologies into traditional culture on the Akan man. The confusion of Edufa and the condemnation of his actions on all fronts show the influence of patriarchy and the ridiculous expectation the postcolonial husband expects of a wife. The unresurrected sacrifice of Ampoma also shows the reality and effect of greed.

Though rituals play a significant part in Greek tragedies, the use of rituals and certain traditional Akan practices are more prominent in *Edufa* than in its Greek adaptation *Alcestis*. Sutherland uses a lot of symbolism to present the cultural interpretation of issues. For example, an owl represents a bad omen or evil; the sun with many rays represents life; the dew is used for cleansing; the waist bead represents love and marital bonds. These symbolic representations provide insights into the belief systems of the Akan people, and this, in many ways, distinguishes *Edufa* from *Alcestis*. For instance, Ampoma's personification of her waist beads as bearing the 'breadth of her tenderness' (*Edufa*, p. 58) reveals her views on marriage. She perceives marriage as just a private union of love and romance between two people, but in the Akan matrilineal system, a marriage does not comprise two people but two families. However, Ampoma's public expression of love through her waist beads confirms her naivety and stupidity (Bonku *et al*., 2018). The public display of sexual affection by Ampoma towards her husband is not interpreted as bad but a private act. In bringing out her waist beads and bequeathing them to her husband, Ampoma is not only embarrassing herself but the chorus also; a woman's waist beads are not to be displayed in public, they are for the exclusive use and erotic pleasure of the husband. However, Kallendorf (2007) interpret Ampoma's revenge on Edufa as depriving him of his fertility.

Although Sutherland adopts the chorus in Greek drama, however, the application and influence of the chorus in *Edufa* are different from Euripides' *Alcestis*. In *Alcestis*, the chorus made up of the citizens[10] of Pherae, is more sympathetic to Admetus than they are to Alcestis. They lament the grief and tragedy that befalls Admetus but categorise Alcestis' death as courageous and noble throughout the play. Though both Pheres and Admetus exhibit cowardice, the chorus stands with Admetus and criticises his parents for lack of courage (*Alc*., p. 57), showing their partiality for Admetus. Paradoxically, they are full of admiration for the

[9] See Antwiwaa, 2022.

[10] The citizens of Pherae could be made up of both men and women. however, since the Greeks mostly categorise citizens as men and it is an expectation for women not to mingle with the opposite sex, it is prudent to refer to the Chorus in Alcestis as male citizens of Pherae. Therefore, their sympathy towards Admetus is reasonable.

sacrifice of Alcestis. The Chorus declare that Alcestis will be honoured with songs by the poets (*Alc*., p. 56;74), and her death will make her famous (*Alc*., p. 47). Here, the Chorus represents Athenian men and what they respect, admire and hope in women. Instead, they support women's submissiveness rather than challenge it, and Euripides conforms to their expectations in the play (Antwiwaa, 2022).

In *Edufa*, the chorus of townswomen reveals the aspects of African communalism in traditional Akan societies. The chorus is concerned with the community, and they cleanse and ward off evil through their ritual songs and dirges. Traditional African cultures have always supported sisterhood, and women have always formed groups to support individual members in diverse ways; for socio-economic and political reasons. The chorus' solidarity shows the sick Ampoma that sisterhood among African women exists. Like the chorus of women, Seguwa and Abena equally sympathise with Ampoma and criticise Edufa's actions. Secondly, the chorus in *Edufa* constantly references Ampoma's mother in their laments, dirges and ritual songs, revealing the importance of mothers in the Akan matrilineal system. The laments (by Seguwa) also reference the womb of Ampoma's mother and the wrongs Edufa has committed against her by causing and hiding her daughter, Ampoma's illness. These references show solidarity and reflect on the matrilineal culture of the Akans against the patrilineality of the Greeks revealed by Pheres when he refers to Acastus, Alcestis' brother (*Alc*., p. 66).

Even though the power of divination in *Edufa* parallels Greek oracular traditions, the infusion of traditional African belief systems and rituals in *Edufa* is a major point of divergence. For instance, Edufa acquires a charm to prolong his short life and attempts to counter this charm with other rites to save his wife. The play opens with the collection of dew, stream water, herbs and incense for cleansing and healing. The use of herbs for healing, together with African belief systems, are perfectly captured by Sutherland. In most African cultures, the owl symbolises evil, and Edufa is, therefore, superstitious about Sam's owl and is terrified when Ampoma stumbles. While the owl symbolises evil, the painting of the sun and its rays presents hope and life, and Edufa reassures himself that he can undo the damage he has created. However, his attempts to ritually save Ampoma fail; he cannot stop the powers he invokes. Here Sutherland not only presents the power of charms and the devastating effects they could have on man, but she also admonishes African readers of the consequences of rejecting traditional culture and living a life with no clear religious beliefs and philosophy. In the end, the playwright reveals the reality of the confusion in the identity of the postcolonial man – 'there is no *deus ex machina* that saves Ampoma, nor will Africa be rescued from the intrusion of masculine selfishness' Gaines (2017, p. 70).

Conclusion

The paper has pointed out that the points of divergence drawn from the different interpretations based on the distinct cultural backgrounds in Sutherland's *Edufa* and Euripides' *Alcestis* are far greater than those of syntheses. The greatest point of divergence in *Edufa* is its infusion of Akan's cultural elements that project an African worldview. This infusion reveals contradictions in Akan's traditional systems and colonial culture. The interpretations of the differences and similarities in *Alcestis* and *Edufa* mirror that, though Sutherland's play is an

adaptation, *Edufa* is embedded in African practices and traditions. This makes Edufa a creative and original piece of an adapted work.

Except in classical scholarship, *Edufa* is not so much known as an adaptation of a Greek text. *Edufa* provides a creative literary platform for appreciating African tradition and culture. From the African perspective, Sutherland provides a realistic viewpoint on cultural identity and gender relations, considering colonial influences on the Ghanaian man and woman[11]. Thus, *Edufa* brings to the fore both traditional and modern challenges in cultural identity and gender stereotypes and biases in Ghana. Like Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* and Osofisan's *Tegonni: An African Antigone,* which serve as protests against European imperialism, it is important to consider *Edufa* as a literary text that reconstructs colonial ideology of the superiority of Western culture which devalued African practices and traditions. It projects the African culture in an adapted piece. Therefore, I assert that *Edufa* deserves to be read and understood in its own right as an original piece.

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[11] This supports the agenda of the National Theatre Movement created by Kwame Nkrumah and led by Efua Sutherland which aimed to recreate an African identity through new artistic forms which projects African traditions and combat the effects of colonisation and colonial legacy of cultural misrepresentation and distortion (Gaines, 2017).

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