

The reception of Oedipus Tyrannus in The Gods Are Not To Blame, with a focus on
canonical counter-discourse, fate and identity

‘*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes intulit agresti Latio.*’ (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 156)

Horace’s assertion that captive Greece transformed Rome through the transmission of artistic forms exposes a recurring paradox of cultural history: the conquered reshape the cultural forms of their conqueror. This tension continues to shape postcolonial engagements with classical literature, with playwrights reclaiming agency through adapting Eurocentric literary works. Rotimi’s adaptation of *Oedipus Tyrannus* reframes and critiques the European colonisation of indigenous populations through the perspective of postcolonial experience. Yet the play remains shaped by the very colonial cultural structures it interrogates, leaving it inextricably bound to Sophocles’ original. As Fanon theorises, this relationship between coloniser and colonised constitutes an Oedipal relationship, with both parties bound in a perpetual cycle of dependence and resistance. Fanon contends that the colonial subject in this relationship can be cured only through the catharsis of revolutionary violence, allegorised by Odewale’s patricide. Rotimi’s play demonstrates this through its fusion of African and Greek elements.

While tribalistic elements of the play are read predominantly as a reflection of colonial relations, it is noteworthy that Rotimi published *The Gods Are Not To Blame* in 1967, seven years after Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Living in a newly independent Nigeria likely shaped the themes and context of the play. This essay explores how Rotimi’s adaptation of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* reconfigures aspects of the original to reflect the Nigerian context, while providing a sustained commentary on postcolonial identity and cultural legacy.

In *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, the kingdom of Kutuje mirrors the city of Thebes in *Oedipus Tyrannus* by functioning as a society engulfed in turmoil, particularly before both protagonists arrive. Kutuje is destabilised by conflicts among rival tribes, threatening the unity and survival of the kingdom, like Thebes which is a land terrorised by the monstrous Sphinx. In both texts, the protagonist, Odewale in Rotimi’s play and Oedipus in Sophocles’ emerges as a heroic leader who initially restores order. Odewale unites the warring tribal

factions and is celebrated as a saviour, much like Oedipus, who freed Thebes from the Sphinx and was crowned king. Both plays refer to the fathers, King Adetusa and King Laius who were killed by their sons, with father nor son aware of their true relationship at the time of their fatal encounter. However, the former is an antagonising figure in Rotimi's play, who imposes on Odewale's land, mocks him, and then commands Odewale to 'drop dead, drop dead ...'¹ Whereas the latter's role is described in sparser detail, with Oedipus describing how he nearly 'thrust [me] off the road.'² Therefore, while Rotimi's characters parallel those of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, they are reimagined within a Yoruba context, notably through the reworking of the father-son conflict as a tribal dispute between Odewale and King Adetusa.

Canonical counter-discourse

*'Canonical counter-discourse involves authors rewriting works or giving voice to peripheral/silenced characters from the literary canon to challenge inequalities upheld by power structures such as imperialism and patriarchy.'*³

Aptly put by Zapkin, this concept highlights how writers actively engage with canonical texts to subvert their authority. In the case of Rotimi, he adopts this approach as a means of reclaiming and reinterpreting Western narratives through an African lens. By doing so, he not only contests the dominance of Eurocentric literary traditions but also affirms the value and complexity of African perspectives and histories. *The Gods Are Not To Blame* transposes the Sophoclean tragedy through its adherence to cultural transmission shown through frequent use of Yoruba vocabulary and proverbs, thus asserting Nigeria's independence from the European canon. The structural differences between the two plays are evident in Rotimi's use of flashbacks and metatheatrical dialogue to dramatise events in contrast to Sophocles' more linear, chronological narrative. While Sophocles confines the revelation of past events to reported speech, Rotimi stages these moments through flashbacks, offering a more immediate and visual form of storytelling. He includes a prologue performed in mime, with the contemporary staging (like the shrine of Ogun) and narrator intensifying the impression of Kutuje left with the audience. Notably, Rotimi also dramatises Odewale's killing of the Old Man

¹ Ola Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 48.

² Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone; Oedipus the King; Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles, intro, and notes by Bernard Knox (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 206

³ Phillip Zapkin, "Petrifyin': Canonical Counter-Discourse in Two Caribbean Women's Medusa Poems," *Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2022): 24, <https://doi.org/10.3390/h11010024>.

and his encounter with the oracle through direct dialogue. By staging these moments, Rotimi reclaims narrative authority, refusing to gloss over pivotal scenes and instead including Nigerian cultural inflections within them. This choice affirms both his control over the narrative and the play's broader postcolonial project of cultural reclamation.

Rotimi's subversion of the canonical Greek tragedy is further demonstrated through his inclusion of proverbs, incantations, and deities drawn from distinctly Nigerian cultural traditions. Among the Yoruba people, proverbs known as *òwè* are central to cultural expression and communication, illustrated by Delano concluding that 'no one can be considered educated or qualified to take part in communal discussions unless he is able to quote the proverbs relevant to each situation.'⁴ Proverbial expression is integral to Yoruba culture, often drawing upon the faunal landscape as a recurring metaphorical device. Rotimi illustrates the cultural ubiquity of proverbial language by attributing these expressions even to nameless, ordinary citizens within the play. For instance, the nameless second citizen asks Odewale, 'when rain falls on the leopard does it wash off its spots?'⁵ This underscores the didactic role of proverbs in Yoruba culture, as well as their function in upholding collective accountability.

The notion of a ruler's responsibility to their people is central and is highlighted by a marked difference between the two plays. While *Oedipus Tyrannus* features the conventional Greek chorus, a defining feature of classical tragedy, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* replaces this with the collective voice of the townspeople. A chorus' role in a tragedy is essential as it provides a moral and political commentary on the text, having particular importance in Sophocles' play. The chorus declares that 'Thebes is dying'⁶ even prior to hearing Tiresias' revelation, highlighting the community's anxiety over the devastating plague afflicting the city. The townspeople in Rotimi's adaptation are sent away by Odewale when Aderopo is asked to deliver the pronouncement of the oracle, unlike in *Oedipus Tyrannus* when Oedipus implores them to stay. The absence of the townspeople at the revelation of Odewale's identity is significant as it is a

⁴ Isaac O. Delano, *Òwè l'èṣin ọ̀rọ̀: Yoruba Proverbs, Their Meaning and Usage* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966), 23.

⁵ Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, 10

⁶ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 169

conscious break with the Greek tragic traditions of a chorus who are generally always present on stage.

Therefore, Rotimi's choice to not include a chorus may reflect the lack of scrutiny that governing bodies in Nigeria were under after being granted independence. This aligns with political beliefs expressed in his other works, satirising the absurdity of Nigerian politicians. Nwadike argues that Rotimi's plays, particularly *Holding Talks* and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, were 'exposing and dissecting the absurdities inherent in Nigerian governance.'⁷ Therefore, the presence of didactic proverbs in Rotimi's play is significant, as it stands in stark contrast to Odewale's limited sense of accountability to his people. The notion that factions of the Nigerian population after decolonisation should be to blame for the civil war stems from Rotimi himself, who fashioned the gods in the play as the colonial powers. He argues that the message of his play, as per its title, is that the colonisers 'shouldn't be blamed or held responsible for [our] own national failings.'⁸ Therefore, the tribal conflict between Odewale and the Old Man, rendered ironic by their shared yet unrecognised origins, mirrors the internal divisions within Yoruba society.

Moreover, although it is frequently viewed through the Freudian lens of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Rotimi's adaptation prompts a reconsideration of *Oedipus Tyrannus* beyond its psychosexual frame. This is due to Rotimi linking the civil war to tribal hostility, using the *The Gods Are Not To Blame* to critique Nigeria's political unrest in the late twentieth-century. There is a parallel between Sophocles' play and contemporary events in classical Athens, notably the citizenship law that Pericles introduced circa 451 BC. This placed unprecedented emphasis on biological identity, insisting that both parents had to be Athenian for you to be an Athenian citizen. Plutarch draws attention to Pericles' hypocrisy at not applying the same law to his son, allowing him to become a citizen.⁹ Therefore, the play's preoccupation with biological identity might reflect how such legislation was received in classical Athens. Sophocles' visceral and unflattering portrayal of Thebes, evident in the disturbing imagery of a

⁷ Chizoba Nwadike, "ABSURDITY IN POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: EXAMINING THE DRAMATIC CRITICISM OF OLA ROTIMI," *International Journal of Law And Criminology* 4, no. 07 (2024): 1–4, accessed July 9, 2025, <https://theusajournals.com/index.php/ijlc/article/view/3237>.

⁸ Bernth Lindfors, *Folklore in Nigerian Literature* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1974), 62.

⁹ Plutarch, & Bernadotte Perrin. (1916). *Plutarch's lives vol. III: Pericles and Fabius, Nicias and Crassus*. William Heinemann.

‘black hail of blood pulsing, gushing down’¹⁰ and ‘children dead in the womb’¹¹ distinguishes Athens from a denigrated Thebes. Therefore, despite glaring parallels between Athens and the Thebes presented by Sophocles (particularly the plagues), they are presented as the antithesis of one another, distinguishing the former from the latter. Conversely, the critique of the political and cultural climate in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* differs from that of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, as it engages directly with the playwright’s own country, one he inhabited and understood from within its contemporary sociopolitical realities. Despite their differing cultural and historical contexts, both *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *The Gods Are Not to Blame* are deeply introspective works that compel the audience to reflect on the nature of fate, personal responsibility, and the limits of human understanding. This invites reflection not only on the protagonists’ journeys but also on the audience’s own position within society.

Although Rotimi’s play advances a canonical counter-discourse, the persistence of the Oedipal dynamic between coloniser and colonised is reinforced through Odewale’s characterisation, as he remains bound to the Greek model of deterministic fate inherited from the play’s antecedent. *Oedipus Tyrannus* follows the Hellenistic model of humans being bound by absolute fate, with Oedipus’ destiny being foretold by the Delphic oracle. Contrasting the vast amount of freedom afforded to freeborn men under Athenian democracy, the idea of determinism has a strong thread running through beliefs in classical Athens. For instance, the Moirai, ancient personifications of fate, were thought to spin, measure, and cut the threads that determined each mortal’s path from birth to death. This notion of determinism is affirmed by Oedipus’ declaration attributing his sufferings to one individual: ‘Apollo, friends, Apollo - he ordained my agonies.’¹² Therefore, Oedipus fulfilling albeit unwillingly the destiny prescribed to him upon his birth is unsurprising. However, Odewale’s actions rouse questions when considered in conjunction with the Yoruba notion of flexible destiny. In Yoruba thought, a person is composed of three essential elements: *ara* (body), *emi* (breath giving life) and *ori* (spiritual head). Adeboye argues that *ori* aligns with a soft-deterministic framework¹³, as it is shaped not only by destiny but also by the conscious

¹⁰ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 237

¹¹ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 169

¹² Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 241

¹³ Godwin Adeboye, “Situating the Yoruba Concept of ‘Ori’ within the Soft-Deterministic Framework,” *International Journal on Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 6, no. 7 (2016): 9–16

choices an individual makes. This view coalesces with that of Eesuola's arguing that in African cosmology destiny will 'almost always manifest but there are always rooms provided to reduce the ultimate tragedy.'¹⁴ According to this philosophy, Odewale had the opportunity to act differently for example, by not killing the Old Man, thereby avoiding his fate. Therefore, Rotimi's decision to have Odewale follow the Oedipal paradigm of an inescapable fate is particularly interesting, as it diverges from the typical Yoruba philosophy, which allows for greater human agency in shaping destiny. However, greater latitude is given to Odewale when he is told his prophecy by the voice of the oracle at Ifa. After his bleak future is described to him, imperatives are used to instruct Odewale: 'stay where you are.'¹⁵ This contrasts the matter-of-fact tone in the Delphic oracle's statement to Oedipus, relating how he is 'fated to couple with [his] mother ... and will kill [his] father.'¹⁶ While one might expect Odewale to comply with the forceful advice he receives, he consciously chooses to defy it. Perhaps if he had not gone to Kutuje this fate would have been avoided, as his inaction means that he might have never encountered the Old Man. Therefore, Odewale follows the Greek tragic precedent through his hamartia: his impulsiveness in acting upon what he was explicitly warned against, thereby fulfilling the prophecy.

According to the Aristotelian model of tragedy, there is a pivotal moment of anagnorisis, in which the protagonist undergoes a profound recognition or revelation. A rereading of *Oedipus Tyrannus* in light of *The Gods Are Not to Blame* reveals the limited nature of Oedipus' recognition. His anagnorisis amounts to little more than the realisation that his unwitting actions have fulfilled the oracle's prophecy. While Odewale still follows the Greek tragedy convention of recognition, his is more multi-faceted than that of Oedipus, 'No, no! Do not blame the Gods...The powers would have failed if I did not let them use me.'¹⁷ As discussed earlier, this is likely Rotimi criticising the internal tribal strife after Nigeria had been granted independence. Nevertheless, Odewale exhibits a deeper self-awareness regarding his own culpability for the unfolding of events, while Oedipus' assertion, 'I did it all myself'¹⁸, 'pertains

¹⁴ Dr. Kayode Eesuola, interview by Olalekan Balogun, "Oral History Interview with Dr. Kayode Eesuola", Ibalì (UCT Digital Collections), November 11, 2019, <https://ibali.uct.ac.za/s/RETAGS/item/7371> (accessed July 1st, 2025)

¹⁵ Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, 60

¹⁶ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 205

¹⁷ Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, 71

¹⁸ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 241

more specifically to the act of blinding himself than to an acknowledgment of responsibility for his prior actions. While Aristotle advocates for the unity of time arguing that a tragedy's action should unfold within a single day to preserve narrative cohesion, Rotimi deliberately departs from this classical convention in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*. Though he maintains the unity of action, the play spans years, encompassing Odewale's birth, exile, kingship, and ultimate downfall. This expanded temporal scope allows Rotimi to embed Yoruba cultural rhythms and oral storytelling traditions within his play. This rejection of conventional tragic structure underscores Rotimi's engagement with postcolonial expression, as he reclaims and reshapes classical forms to reflect indigenous cultural values and disrupt Eurocentric literary norms.

Furthermore, as deities largely govern the workings of fate in both plays, notable parallels emerge between Yoruba and Greek conceptions of divine agency. For instance, Zeus and Shango are both gods of thunder and lightning; Apollo and Orunmila are gods of prophecy, with famous oracles at Delphi and Ifa; finally, they both have gods that are messengers such as Hermes and Esu. Esu's role in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is particularly significant, as he is the intermediary through whom the will of the gods is communicated to humankind. Esu is a fully Yoruban entity, with Rotimi's exploration of its role in fate also being a form of canonical counter-discourse. This figure is referenced by Odewale as he declares to bring the murderer of Adetusa to justice through his oath to Ogun and when Baba Fakunle asks for payment. The positioning of Esu at crossroads (between the gods and ordinary people) is particularly significant, as it reflects the broader thematic concern with identity in the play. The liminal space Esu occupies is linked to the sense of belonging or lack thereof in both plays and the very nature of Rotimi's play: a mixed product of African and Greek components.

Identity - 'who am I?'¹⁹

While identity in *Oedipus Tyrannus* centers on the fate of Oedipus and his displacement from Corinth and Thebes, Rotimi frames Odewale's identity as fractured. It is shaped by colonial

¹⁹ Alister Cameron, *The Identity of Oedipus the King* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 32–33.

legacies, cultural conflict, and linguistic hybridity, reflecting the struggles of a post-independence African identity.

A common reading of *The Gods Are Not to Blame* popularised by Goff and Simpson, is that Odewale's patricide is synonymous to the 'slaying of the colonial father at the moment of independence.'²⁰ Therefore, Odewale functions as a symbolic representation of the colonised subject, while the Old Man embodies the figure of the coloniser. This is best presented by their altercation in Act 3, where the Old Man ridicules Odewale's accent: 'Gbonka ... Olojo - come, come come quickly - come and listen to this man's tongue'²¹ Adetusa's mockery of Odewale's accent is rich in dramatic irony, as the audience are aware that they not only share the same tribal origin but are, in fact, father and son. This moment exposes the superficial nature of tribal hostilities, suggesting that such divisions are constructed through arbitrary markers like speech rather than any inherent difference. The Old Man being allegorised by Rotimi as a coloniser is a compelling argument, especially when considering how he expropriates Odewale's land with the added security of collective power in the number of people he brings along.

Moreover, Rotimi draws on African folkloric tradition through the play's use of incantations. This lends Odewale's killing of the Old Man a heightened sense of ceremony and supernatural significance. For instance, the charm the Old Man uses to transfix and incapacitate Odewale consisting of 'eagle's skull, vulture's claws, bright red tail-feathers'²² is an equivalent moment to the encounter in *Oedipus Tyrannus* with the Old Man maiming Oedipus with 'two prongs.'²³ Therefore, while the former employs the use of charms as weapons, the latter uses more blunt instruments with a limited description of these weapons. This illustrates Rotimi's more thorough descriptions of earlier scenes, as he is able to include supernatural incantations, thereby imparting his Yoruban identity onto a significant moment where Odewale conforms to his destiny. Moreover, Rotimi's use of tangible faunal objects as weapons carries a dual significance. With the Old Man functioning allegorically as a coloniser it is

²⁰ Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007),

78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199217182.003.0003>

²¹ Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, 48

²² Ibid

²³ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 206

significant that the weapon he uses against Odewale is fashioned from animals, drawn from the natural Yoruba landscape. This implies that the coloniser weaponises the colonised's own environment against him, reinforcing the play's critique of exploitation. Therefore, by Odewale killing the Old Man he is able to rid himself of the figure who stole his land, crops and mocked his accent, an intrinsic part of tribal identity. This act of violence could represent the subjects of decolonisation reclaiming agency by ridding themselves of their oppressor.

The notion of land in *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is also noteworthy, especially when viewed through Locke's Labor Theory of Property, which reveals that rightful ownership of the land remains contested. Locke's theory suggests that nature transforms into property only through the labour and cultivation of the person who first encounters it. Although the land belongs to Odewale this is complicated through the Old Man duplicitously working on it, 'digging up [Odewale's] sweat.'²⁴ Therefore, Rotimi draws attention to the deception carried out by the Old Man wanting to claim Odewale's land as his own, which mirrors the actions of colonial powers who claim dominion over indigenous land without engaging in the labour required to justify such ownership.

Furthermore, the issue surrounding the attribution of language is explored within the text itself, particularly due to Rotimi's choice to write his play, a commentary on colonialism, in the language of the coloniser. Appiah argues that 'we have used Europe's languages because in the task of nation-building we could not afford politically to use each other's.'²⁵ Therefore, Rotimi choosing English as the predominant language of the text likely reflects the dependency newly independent states have upon their previous colonisers to quell dissent. This follows Fanon's theory of such members of this relationship being stuck in an Oedipal bond. However, the dominant use of English throughout the play functions to accentuate the Yoruba songs and statements. Moreover, by employing two languages, the play establishes a hybridised linguistic relationship that may reflect the relatively harmonious dynamic between coloniser and colonised in the aftermath of decolonisation. The braiding of Greek and African elements in post-colonial theatre is praised by Harris who declares

²⁴ Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, 45

²⁵ Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Alexander Crummell and the Invention of Africa," *The Massachusetts Review* 31, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 386

that “braids” is a term which seems to me to be crying out for cross-culturality 0not multi-culturality but cross-culturality.’²⁶ Therefore, as African adaptations of Greek tragedies are fundamentally interconnected, it is valuable to examine the ways in which two languages and cultures intersect and interact.

This cultural and linguistic hybridity is mirrored on a deeper level in the play’s characters and relationships with the incestuous union between Ojuola and Odewale perhaps operating allegorically: the former embodies the vestigial cultural legacies of colonialism, while the latter represents the newly independent postcolonial subject. Yet, as the ‘liberating hero is already a partial product of colonial culture,’²⁷ their union is marked by incest thus symbolising the inescapable entanglement of the postcolonial present with its colonial inheritance. This interpretation departs from Freud’s purely psychosexual reading of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, offering an alternative approach that, while still informed by Freudian theory, reframes the adaptation within a broader postcolonial context. Fanon argues that those having undergone the process of decolonisation are structurally obliged to both love and hate the coloniser due to the Oedipal relationship they are in. This view is expressed in his work *The Wretched of the Earth* where he asserts that ‘the look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession.’²⁸ Therefore, Fanon acknowledges the complexity of this relationship and how it will endure until decolonisation is enacted.

Unlike identity in Rotimi’s play being predominantly linked to colonisation, Sophocles explores this concept through describing the migration of Oedipus. At the beginning of the play, he confidently announces ‘I am Oedipus.’²⁹ This initial assertion of selfhood is later revealed as tragically ironic, as Oedipus’s true origins contradict everything he believes about himself. However, throughout the play, Oedipus remains fundamentally displaced; though his move from Corinth to Thebes momentarily casts him as a consummate insider, he never truly attains a sense of belonging. Therefore, Sophocles

²⁶ Lorna Hardwick, “Shades of Multi-lingualism and Multi-vocalism in Modern Performances of Greek Tragedy in Post-Colonial Contexts,” in *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, ed. Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 319

²⁷ Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, *Crossroads in the Black Aegean: Oedipus, Antigone, and Dramas of the African Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78

²⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 39.

²⁹ Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, 159

frames identity as unstable and contingent, shaped by fate, exile, and social perception rather than any secure personal knowledge or belonging.

Conclusion

It would be a mistake to see *Oedipus Tyrannus* as a monolith of Western culture when the play was inspired by tales circulated during the classical Greek period. Sophocles' play itself could be classed as a work of reception. In the fifth century BC alone, there were 'at least six plays entitled Oedipus, including lost plays by Aeschylus and Euripides.'³⁰ An example of the story of Oedipus being widely known is evidenced by Homer alluding to the tale in Book 11 of *The Odyssey*, with his description bearing many parallels with that of Sophocles.' It is therefore fascinating to observe that while modern readers continue to engage with classical texts today, humanity has, in fact, been in dialogue with the classics throughout history, through various acts of reception and reinterpretation. Conversely, *The Gods Are Not To Blame* has gained traction and has become a revered text highlighted by the play's dissemination throughout the African continent and the Western world. For instance, Rotimi's play is taught and studied as a key text in West Africa and there have been many showings of the play, like at the Arcola theatre in 2005.

From the late twentieth century onward, a growing number of postcolonial writers and playwrights began adapting Greek tragedy to reflect their own histories and struggles. Figures such as Oasis Sougaijam (*Hojang Taret*), Femi Osofisan (*Tegonni*), and Derek Walcott (*Omeros*) used classical narratives to confront colonial legacies, explore national identity, and assert cultural independence. These adaptations reject the notion of Greek myth as exclusively Western, instead using it as a framework for resistance, reappropriation, and storytelling rooted in local experience. Therefore, such adaptations are empowering and an act of reclamation for artists.

To conclude, the most striking way in which Rotimi adapted *Oedipus Tyrannus* is through his narrative not conforming to a typical Aristotelian unity of time and place. This enabled him to use flashbacks in the play, thus giving the audience more insight into the story rather than the retrospective narrative used by Sophocles. This deviation from a classical structure modernises the narrative and reinforces the cultural

³⁰ Fiona Macintosh, *Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus (Plays in Production)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4

authenticity and depth of Rotimi's version, making it a powerful reinterpretation rooted in Yoruba tradition.

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