

**DRAMATIC IRONY IN ROTIMI'S *THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME* AND  
GOLDSMITH'S *SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER***

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**Abstract**

*The article explores how dramatic irony which is a style in literature, used by playwrights to give the audience or readers more insight about the characters and situations in a play, was used by Rotimi in his play *The Gods Are not Blame* and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, to create suspense and a high level of climax. This work focuses on the importance, usefulness and ways in which dramatic irony occurs in a piece of drama, and various techniques and devices used by these authors in their works. Hence, this article presents a detailed analysis of the above mentioned as regards dramatic irony. Drama as a genre of literature has been part of the earliest Greek performance. In analyzing plays only but limited works have been done in the area of dramatic irony in relation to the out listed plays. Therefore, this research work aims at demonstrating the effectiveness of dramatic irony as a style in creating works of art. It also seeks to point out that aside all efforts gearing towards a tragic end as can be seen with , Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* it can bring some comic relief in which all ends well as seen in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* .*

**Keywords;** Literature, Dramatic Irony, Playwrights and Audience

**Introduction**

Dramatic irony is a stylistic device that is used by story tellers/authors in plays, in the theatre and in movies. It is a kind of irony used as a plot device to create situations where the reader knows much more about the episodes and resolutions before the chief character(s).

According to McArthur, Tom and Feri McArthur dramatic irony is:

A double vision of what is happening in a play or real-life situation. In Greek tragedy, the characters were blind to fateful circumstances of which the audience was all too well aware, producing a privileged and often poignant appreciation of the plot (10).

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a narrative in which the reader knows something about the present or future circumstances that the character does not know. In that situation, the character acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or the character expects the opposite of what the reader knows that fate holds for him, or he could anticipate a particular outcome that unfolds itself in an unintentional way. For example, the reader may be already aware that a character is relying on a deceitful character(s) in making suicidal decisions, or is going to be killed, but that particular character and some other characters in the work may not know these facts. Here, the action and words of these characters will therefore mean different things to the reader/ audience from what they mean to the plays characters.

As a style, dramatic irony is employed by the author in order to embellish, emphasize and to convey moods and emotions more effectively. With this, it is pertinent to note that dramatic irony comes in two flavors: suspense—which can be used to inspire fear and tension in the audience, and comic—in

which a misunderstanding is milked to produce laughter. Similarly, dramatic irony has three stages which are; installation, exploitation and resolution (also called preparation, suspension and resolution).

- The installation or preparation stage is the stage which the audience is informed of something the character(s) do not know about.
- At the exploitation or suspension stage, the information given to the audience is used to develop curiosity among them (the audience).
- Finally, the resolution stage is realized when the characters fully find out what is going on.

These stages gradually produce dramatic conflict in what the characters appear to rely upon, the contrary of which is known by observer (the audience/readers or other characters within the drama) to be true. Using these stages the artist gives his audience/ readers foreknowledge of the fate awaiting his characters. His characters on the other hand expect their actions to lead to their triumph, but since readers know what lies ahead, the character's confidence is ironic in being complete. Therefore, dramatic irony saddles characters with an inescapable fate, replacing suspense with constant tension as the readers see the everyday action the character takes as leading to inevitable disaster.

In drama, this kind of irony exists due to some kind of dilemma the character may find himself in. In such a situation, the words and actions of characters contradict the real situation, and result ensued from those words and actions about which the spectators are aware of before the characters. The character speaking may realize the irony of his word while the rest of the actors may not, or he or she may be unconscious while the other actors share the knowledge with the spectator/ audience or the audience alone may realize the irony.

Dramatic irony can operate in a text through the following medium;

- i) A character may say something that the readers recognize is a mistake. Here, the ironic gap is between words and meaning.
- i i) A character may say something of which the real meaning or implication is quite different from what the character supposes to be the case. Here, the ironic gap is between words and meaning.
- i i i) A character can expect certain events to happen or can set out to achieve something but the reader or audience has no knowledge of what the character does not have, and so knows that things would not work out as expected. Here, the ironic gap is between intention and outcome.
- i v) A character can interpret the world in one way, but the reader will see that his interpretation is wrong. The ironic gap created in such situation is between appearance and reality.

Dramatic irony is not, of course, a secret kept from the protagonist of a play and other character in the play, it is simply a kind of irony used by writer in providing a very interesting method of storytelling, in order to make the readers or audience interested and fully engaged in the play. Dramatic irony as a whole involves disguise and deception.

### **Importance of Dramatic Irony**

The importance of dramatic irony as a style in literature cannot be over-emphasized. It plays a major role in making a drama piece unique, interesting and engaging. Below are some of the importance of dramatic irony;

- i This type of irony is considered by writers as a potent tool/ style for exciting and sustaining the interest of readers and audience. The irony creates a big contrast between the immediate situation of the character and the episodes that will follow, thereby generating curiosity.
- ii By allowing the readers and audience to know more things ahead of the characters in the play, the irony put the reader and the audience superior above the character and encourages them to hope and anticipate the moment when the character will find out the truth behind the situation and event of the story.
- iii. Dramatic irony is also used more often in tragedies. In such stories, the reader and audience are pushed to sympathize with the character all the way to the tragic end. Hence, dramatic irony is used to emphasis the fatality of limited understanding even on innocent and honest people, and demonstrates the painful repercussion of misunderstanding.
- iv. Most importantly dramatic irony is used as a style by an author to involve the reader, raise expectations, intensify episodes and propel the story forward.

- vi. Another importance of dramatic irony is that it lies in the back story and scene that the character(s) is not involved in.

### **Review of Related Literature**

This chapter would review some related articles and opinions from different scholars, authors and make necessary contributions.

"To say one thing but to mean something else...." that may be the simplest definition of irony. But in truth, there is nothing at all simple about the theoretical concept of irony. Cuddon says that in theory, irony eludes definition and this elusiveness is one of the main reasons why it is a source of much fascinated inquiry and speculation.

According to Muecke, "the principle obstacle in the way of a simple definition of irony is the fact that irony is not a simple phenomenon"(21). The basic features of all irony include;

- i . A contrast of appearance and reality.
- ii . A confident unawareness (pretended in the ironist, real in the victim of the irony).
- iii . The comic (tragic effect of this unawareness of a contrasting appearance and reality).

Three kinds of irony have been recognized since antiquity:

- i . Socratic Irony  
A mask of innocence and ignorance adopted to win an argument.
- ii . Dramatic or tragic irony  
A double vision of what is happening in a play or real-life.
- iii . Linguistic Irony  
A duality of meaning, now the classic form of irony. The Romans concluded that language often carries a double message, the second often mocking or sardonic meaning contrary to be the first. In modern times, the two further conceptions have been added.

They are;

- iv. Structural Irony  
A duality that is built into texts in which the observation of a naive narrator points up deeper implications of situation.
- v. Romantic Irony  
A situation in which the writer conspire with the reader to share double vision of what is happening in the plot of a novel or film.

According to Fowler, as cited by Davidson any definition of irony, though hundreds might be given and very few of them is accepted, must include this; that the surface meaning and the underlying meaning of what is said are not the same. To him, "irony is a form of utterance that postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that shall hear and shall not understand and another party that, shall hear and understand as well" (20). According to Nwokpo et al, "an irony refers to a comment or a situation of the character in a literary work which is different from what the character understands it to be. This reader or audience knows the real meaning of the statement or situation while the character is living in illusion" (18).

An irony, in fact, presents the opposite of what a character knows...He opines that in situational and dramatic irony, the character finds himself in a situation which is the exact opposite of reality, this implies the difference from what the audience is aware of. For example, in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Duncan comes to visit Macbeth, when he comes, he praises the charming appearance of Macbeth's Castle without knowing that he will be murdered in that same castle. Hence, such characters who are victims of dramatic irony are usually presented as being self confidently unaware, too self deceived and self satisfied to recognize that they are living in a world of illusion.

In Anton Chekhov's story *Lady with the Dog*, an accomplished Don Juan engages in a routine flirtation only to find himself seduced into a passionate lifelong commitment with a woman who is no different from all the other of women with whom he had flirted. Dramatic irony depends on the structure of a work rather than its use of words. In plays, it is often created by the audience awareness of a fate in store for the characters that they themselves are unaware of, as when Agamemnon accepts the flattering irritation to walk upon the purple carpet that is to become his shroud.

According to Campbell, "dramatic irony emphasized the limited nature of human understanding and causes the reader to pause or reflect for a certain moment" (). For Joseph Brodsky, "dramatic irony makes an audience feel privileged and engaged in a play; this is because an environment where they know more than the central character is created" (24). According to Stanton,

dramatic irony has three stages installation, exploitation, and resolution (often called preparation, suspension and resolution)- producing dramatic conflict in what one character

relies is known by observers (especially the audience; sometimes to other characters within the drama) to be true (78).

In summary, it means that the reader, watcher or listener knows something that one or more of the characters in the piece are not aware of. For example, in *Othello*, the audiences know that Desdemona has been faithful to Othello, but Othello does not. The audience also knows that Iago is scheming to bring about Othello's downfall, a fact hidden from Othello, Desdemona, Cassio and Roderigo.

Another definition of dramatic irony says that it is a sort of rule that lets us sense the truth of a situation in a play rather than telling us directly. When you are establishing the conditions for dramatic irony, you can stake very close to the edge of spoken subtext. So Sophocles has a minor character to tell us Oedipus is the murderer he seeks. But it is done in a way that allows us to believe this may not be the truth, he tells us, but at the same time, he doesn't tell us. And that's the key to clever use of irony.

*Collins World English Dictionary* says that dramatic irony occurs when the implications of a situations or speeches, are understood by the audience but not by characters in the play. Some tropes, such as the unreliable narrator, ensures that the audience is never quite as well informed of the truth as the characters or at least one particular character, however, turns that on his head, letting the audience see the whole picture when the protagonist, or even the entire cast is kept largely in the dark.

According to Nordquist, an occasion in a play or other works in which character(s) words or actions convey a meaning unperceived by the character, but understood by the audience is called dramatic irony. Nordquist opines that:

Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows more than one or several of the characters in the play, a condition which pushes audience attention into the future because it creates anticipation about what is going to happen when the truth comes(77).

For him, this anticipation is known as ironic tension and is bracketed by a scene of revelation, (the moment the audience is given information of which the character is unaware) recognition, (the moment when the character discovers what the audience has already known) and suspense, which is used to inspire fear into the audience and comic in which a misunderstanding is milked to produce laughter. Lombardi says that "irony involves the reader (or audience) knowing something about what's happening in the plot about which the character(s) have no knowledge" (38).

Dramatic irony can be used in comedies and tragedies and it works to engage the reader as one is drawn into what is happening. The audience may sympathize with the character, who does not know the true situation, or the reader may see the character as blind or ignorant (as with Oedipus) the clue may be rather obvious but the character may be unwillingly to recognize the truth.

Spark notes that, dramatic irony is a disparity of awareness between actors and observers; when listener or audience understands, but the speaker or character does not. An instance is, when a character says to another, "I will see you tomorrow," when the character will die before morning. Situational irony and dramatic irony according to some scholars are synonymous. Situational irony is the disparity of intention and results when the result of an action is contrary to the desired or expected effect. This is same with dramatic irony as it serves a device of giving the spectator an item of information that at least one of the characters in the narrative is unaware of (at least unconsciously) thus placing the spectator or step ahead of at least one of the characters. For instance in *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare, the other characters think Juliet to be dead, but the audience knows she only took a sleeping potion. Abrams defined dramatic irony as,

a situation where in; ...the audience or reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstance, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or say something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends (28).

Often dramatic irony is made obvious in a piece of drama verbally. This is as a result of the dramatist putting into the mouth of a character remarks which the audience with fuller knowledge of the facts, can interpret in two ways, while the speaker himself (or his fellow characters) is quite unconscious of any secondary point in his words. In a tragedy this verbal irony, which is typically associated with the Sophoclean drama, frequently takes the form of "innocent phrases covering sinister depths of meaning" (29). In comedy, it is effectively provocative of mirth. Thus in *Twelfth Night*, the humor and interest of the scenes in which Viola is with Olivia and Orsino turn largely upon the fact that they do not know her to be a girl, while the audience

do. Shakespeare purposely makes Oliver and Orsino say things which have for the audience a point whereof the speaker is quite unconscious. In the same way many of Viola's remarks (169) contain veiled allusion of her sex which the audience perceives at once, whereas Olivia or Orsino have no allusion at all. This dramatic convention helps us sympathize with the character.

Finally, according to Oesterreiah, "irony's general characteristic is to make something understood by expressing its opposite"(52). We can, therefore, isolate three separate ways of applying this rhetorical form. Irony can refer to:

- i. Individual figures of speech (ironic verbia)
- ii. Particular ways of interpreting life (ironic vitae)
- iii. Existence in its entirety (ironicentis).

Ola Rotimi, took many of his works directly to the people with the University of Ife theatre, a reparatory company that performs work in Yoruba, Nigerian Pidgin and English. He died on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2000, few months after his wife predeceased him.

### **Synopsis of *The Gods Are not to Blame***

*The Gods Are not to Blame* is an adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* given a Nigerian treatment. The play begins with a prologue. In the land of Kutuje, king Adetusa and Queen Ojuola bore their first child, and as it was the custom of the land, they, accompanied with the villagers singing and dancing, took the child to the Ifa Priest to divine his future. After communicating with the gods, he says that the child "will kill his father and marry his mother"(42). In order to stop this from happening, the priest handed the child over to Gbonka (the king's messenger) to be taken to the evil grove in the bush as a sacrifice to the gods that sent him one earth.

The story now moves to thirty years later. King Adetusa was dead and the neighbouring village of Ikolu seized the opportunity to attack Kuteje, leaving them hopeless. One day, Odewale a wander from the tribe of Ijekun Yemoja arrived Kutuje, seeing the suffering of the people. He motivated them to attack back. Under his leadership, they defeated Ikolu. With this, the people of Kutuje gave him the honour of being their king, not minding his background. According to their custom, Odewale married queen Ojuola and had four children with her.

After some years of his peaceful reign, a mysterious sickness came upon the land. Aderope (king Adetusa's son) was sent to Orunmila to seek solution. There the Ifa Priest at the shrine told him that the cause of the plague and death on Kutuje is due to the fact that the murderer of king Adetusa resides peacefully in the land. Odewale hearing the report, vowed to find the murder, pluck out his eyes and banish him. Aderope brought Baba Fakunle to the palace to help in the search for the murder, but on his arrival, he said nothing, but in the course of exchanging words with Odewale, Baba Fakunle called him a bed sharer. This made Odewale suspect and accuse Aderope of plotting with Baba Fakunle so that he could ascend the throne.

Soon, Alaka, Odewale's old friend visited him, and while they were trying to catch up with old times in their discussion, Odewale told him that he ran away from his farm because he killed a man who was stealing from his farm and yet insulted his tribe, calling them "bush tribe" (44). Ojuola interrupted their discussion to tell Alaka that his bathing water was ready. When he left them, she told Odewale that when the king died, Baba Fakunle told them that the king was murdered by his blood. She also told him the story of her first son whom Baba said will kill his father and marry his mother. She also mentioned Gonka as the servant who witnessed the king's death, and Odewale quickly sent for him. When Alaka returned, he told Odewale that his father (foster) was dead. On hearing this, Odewale told everyone present that he was not grieving after his father's death because his uncle once told him that he was not his father's son, and disturbed by this, he consulted an Ifa Priest who told him that he was cursed to kill his father and marry his mother. After his narration, Alaka told him that the people he thought were his parents were not. He told him the story of how they got him to be their child.

The story comes to conclusion when Gonka arrived the palace, and Alaka recognized him and reminded him of their encounter in the past. Odewale was discovered to be the son of the late king and Gonka recognized him as the murderer of the king. Realizing the truth before others the Ogun Priest made futile attempts to hide the truth from Odewale while Ojuola went into her room and stabbed herself to death. Entering the room, Odewale pulled the knife from her stomach and gouged out his own eyes. He apologizes to Aderope, then took his four children and left the village.

### **Use of Dramatic Irony in Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame***

Dramatic irony has been briefly and helpfully defined at dictionary.com as the irony that is inherent in the speeches or situation of a drama and is understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters in the play. Rotimi's tragic play *The Gods are not to Blame* displays numerous examples of dramatic irony. In the play, there is no suspense because the story on which the strategy is built is known to the audience. For this reason the playwright had to recourse to some other means to heighten the tragic effect. The most effective method for the intensification of the tragic atmosphere is the use of dramatic irony, which makes the words and action of the characters seem wholly contradictory to the actual situation known to some other character or to the audience.

In Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame*, except Baba Fakunle, the soothsayer, all the characters in the play such as king Odewale, queen Ojuola, Aderope, Alaka and others know nothing about the proceeding of the story, so their speeches contain the dramatic irony. But most of the dramatic irony in the play are found in the speeches and actions of Odewale. Almost every word uttered by him, from the exposition of the play till the discovery is attributed with dramatic irony.

In the beginning of the play, dramatic irony occurred when the distressed people of Kutuje gathered in the palace to seek and appeal to Odewale, their king, to save them from the dreadful pestilence, as he once saved them. One of the citizens says thus:

Woman: You overwhelmed the bushmen of Ikolu when they attacked and enslaved our land. Now, we cry out in pain for help, and there is silence (Act one, scene one).

The words of the people as well as Odewale's response to them are charged with dramatic irony, as the very situation is charged with it. The people of Kutuje were unaware that the person they seek his aid is the person who in reality is the cause of their woe, but the people and Odewale himself failed to understand it.

Dramatic irony is also found in Odewale's proclamation for finding out the killer of king Adetusa, when Aderope brings the news from the Ifa priest in Orumila, that the cause of the plague and death is because of a man. He says thus:

Aderope: Yes, your highness. He slain in violence and it is fearful to know that that same murderer still lives in peace in this same land... (21).

Aderope spoke, unaware that he was standing before, and speaking to the murderer of his father. When Odewale heard Aderope's report from Orunmila, he unaware that he is the murderer he seeks, he-proclaims thus:

Odewale: Before Ogun the god of Iron, I stand on oath. Witness now all you present that before the feast of Ogun, which starts at sunrise, I, Odewale, the son of Ogundele shall search and fully lay open before your eyes the murderer of king Adetusa. . . . First he shall be exposed to the eyes of the world and put to shame... Next, he shall be put into lasting darkness, his eyes tortured in their living sockets until the blood and rheum swell forth to fill the hollow of crushed eye-balls. And then, the final agony: We shall cut him from his roots, expelled from this land of his birth (24).

The dramatic irony lies in the fact that the killer is searching for nobody but himself unknowingly. Thus his announcement greatly heightens the tragic effect of the discovery which comes towards the end of the play.

Another pitiable example of dramatic irony is found in the quarrel scene between king Odewale and Baba Fakunle. Baba Fakunle knowing the truth, knows that Odewale is the killer of his father, the husband of his mother and father of his brothers and sisters. In the cause of their quarrel, Baba tells Odewale "you are the caused murderer that you seek (28), but the latter did not understand. Out of rage, he called Baba "old and blind" (29). The irony lies in our knowledge that though Baba Fakunle is physically a blind man, he knows the truth and Odewale in spite of having eyes, is sightless.

Another example of dramatic irony in the play is in queen Ojuola's unbelief in the judgment of Baba Fakunle, the servant of the gods. She says this to her husband:

Ojuola: ...The man's mind is not sound. My Lord should not take his word seriously. Why, was it not this same man-Baba Fakunle who... (52)

She also told him how Baba Fakunle made her kill her first son by her first husband because he said the son was to kill his father and marry his mother. Her narration is filled with dramatic irony because she did not know that she was talking to the son she thought was dead. She also disbelieved Baba Fakunle, not knowing that his prophecies were true. Still in her narration, she told Odewale that Baba Fakunle said that her husband was killed by his own blood, not knowing that she was speaking to her blood, that killed her husband.

Again, Odewale does not even know who he truly was. All along, he thought himself not as a man from Kutuje, but as one from the tribe of IjekunYemoja. He ran away from his parent when he found out from an Ifa Priest that he was to kill his mother and marry his father, not knowing that the people he saw to be his parents, were not. In trying to run from fulfilling this bad fate, he unconsciously runs into fulfilling it. Because of his love for his assumed tribe, he killed a man (his father) who called his assumed tribe a bush tribe. Hence, dramatic irony manifest when Alaka brings news to him that his (foster) father was dead, instead of mourning, he celebrated his death, thinking that the fate upon him concerning killing his father was not fulfilled.

Finally, we can say that dramatic irony is the most important element of the play which constitutes suspense and this helps to bring the play to the climax, where the truth is revealed to everyone.

### **Oliver Goldsmith**

Goldsmith was a novelist, poet, dramatist and essayist. His poems include "The Traveler" (1764) and "The Deserted Village" (1770). *The Vicar of Wakefield* published in 1786 is his only novel. In 1768, his play *The Good Natur'd Man* was produced, followed by *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). As a compiler, author and translator, Goldsmith participated in a host of commercial publication of five-volume abridgment of *Plutarch's Lives* (1762) a two-volume *History of England* (1764), followed by a four-volume continuation (1771), two-volumes of *Beauties of English Poesy* (1769), two-volumes of *Roman History* (1769), two-volumes of *Gracian History* (1774), and eight volumes of *History of the Earth and Animated Nature*.

### **Synopsis of *She Stoops to Conquer***

The play *She Stoops to Conquer* also known as *Mistakes of a Night* tells about Kate, the daughter of a wealthy countryman Mr. Hardcastle, who arranges for her to meet Charles Marlow, the son of a rich Londoner, hoping the pair will marry. Unfortunately, Marlow is nervous around upper class ladies, yet complete opposite around working-class women. On his first acquaintance with Kate, she realizes that she will have to pretend to be "common" or Marlow will not woo her. Thus Kate "stoops to conquer" by posing as a maid, hoping to put Marlow at his ease so he falls for her.

The story begins as Marlow sets out for the Hardcastle's manor with a friend, George Hastings, an admirer of Miss Constance Neville, another young lady who lives with the Hardcastle. On their way, they became lost and stopped at an alehouse for directions. Tony Lumpkin, Kate's step-brother and cousin of Constance, comes across the two strangers at the alehouse and realizing their identity, plays a practical joke by telling them that they are a long way from their destination and will have to spend the night at an inn. The "inn" he directs them to be the home of the Hardcastle's which they seek. On arrival, the Hardcastles welcomed them warmly, but Marlow and Hastings, believing themselves in an inn, behave extremely disdainfully towards their host. But Hardcastle bears their unwitting insults with forbearance because of his friendship with Marlow's father.

Kate learns of her suitor's shyness from Constance and a servant informs her about Tony's trick. With these, she decides to disguise as a bar maid, changing her accent and garb to get to know him. Marlow falls in love with her and plans to elope with her.

The sub-plot concerns the secret romance between Constance and Hastings. Constance need her jewels-an inheritance guarded by Tony's mother- Mrs. Hardcastle, who wanted Constance to marry her son, to keep the jewels in the family. Tony despised the thought of marrying Constance, he prefers a barmaid at the alehouse, and so agrees to steal the jewels from his mother's safe keeping for Constance, so she can elope to France with Hastings.

The play concluded with Kate's plans succeeding, as she and Marlow became engaged. Tony discovered his mother had lied about his being "of age" and thus entitled to his inheritance. He refused to marry Constance who is then eligible to receive her jewels and became engaged to Hastings.

### **Dramatic Irony in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer***

*She Stoops to Conquer* is a masterpiece of dramatic irony, which is a device where the audience has information and knowledge that the characters do not. Usually, dramatic irony is more common in works of tragedy than that of comedy but Goldsmith uses this style and instead of the play ending in a sad way, the resulting action turned out to be comic rather than tragic. This comic device used by Goldsmith in *She Stoops to Conquer* has been fully exploited to increase the entertainment value of the comedy.

From the very moment Tony plays the practical joke on Marlow and Hastings, the audience learns secrets that will grow more complicated and hence create confusion that leads to hilarious situation. In the beginning of the play, when Marlow and Hastings got lost on their way to the house of the Hardcastle's they met Tony Lumpkin—Hardcastles step son who directed them to the house, but told them that it was an inn. He says thus;

Tony: You do, do you? -then let me see — what if you go on a mile further, to the Bucks Head; the old Bucks Head on the hill, one of the best inns in the whole country?(55)

Unaware of where they were going to and thinking themselves in an inn, they behave unruly towards Hardcastle, because they think him an inn keeper. Their behaviour towards the Hardcastle's was brought by dramatic irony. Goldsmith uses this irony, to reveal much of his view on humanity and class. Though other characters in the play know that the house Hasting and Marlow thought to be an inn, is Mr. Hardcastle's house, and the house they were actually going to. This made Marlow and Hasting command their host and felt unsatisfied with the services he rendered to them.

Marlow: Yes sir, punch, a glass of warm punch, after our journey, will be comfortable. This is liberty—hall you know(53)

When Hardcastle offers them cup, Marlow says

Marl: (Aside): so this fellow, in his liberty, hall will only let us have just what he please.

Hast: (Aside): I see this fellow wants to give us his company, and forgets that he's an innkeeper, before he has learned to be a gentle man.(41)

Goldsmith used aside- a dramatic device, to expose the thought of Hasting and Marlow. Who thought Mr. Hardcastle to be an innkeeper.

Another example of dramatic irony is seen when Miss Hardcastles disguised to be a barmaid in order to win the attention of her man. In fact, *She Stoops to Conquer* also known as mistake of a night, centers around Miss Hardcastles stooping to conquer her man. She reduced her status to that of a bar maid, this made Marlow who was shy and not free with ladies of upper class to become free with her because, he was more comfortable around ladies of the lower class. Miss Hardcastle introduces herself to Marlow as; “Miss Hard: Yes Sir. A poor relation appointed to keep the keys, and to see that the guests want nothing in my power to give them”. (act iv, scene) Again, dramatic irony is seen when young Marlow, not knowing that it was Miss Hardcastle who disguised as a maid, began to fall in love, due to her background.

He says thus:

Marlow (Aside): This simplicity bewitches me, so that if I stay I'm undone. I must make one bold effort, and leave her. (To her) Your partiality in my favour, my dear, touches me most sensibly, and were I to live for myself alone. I could easily fix my choice. But I owe too much to the opinion of the world, too much to the authority of a father, so that I can scarcely speak it- it affects me farewell.( Act IV....)

The dramatic irony here is Marlow's ignorance that the same person he knew as Miss Hardcastle, is still the same person that appeared as the barmaid. This ignorance of his, made him to act differently towards the same person.

The theme of disguise and mistaken, identity which ran through the whole play is masterly built up and this enables Goldsmith to achieve the elements of surprise and comic relief, leading to dramatic irony.

## Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the various findings as regards the use of dramatic irony, in relation to the selected plays; Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and Goldsmith's, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Both Rotimi and Goldsmith used the same style of writing (dramatic irony), but their manner of expression differs.

The first rendition of this article, shows the textual analysis of *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, highlighting the various dramatic techniques used by Rotimi, to bring about dramatic irony in his play. The play uses techniques such as flashback; foreshadowing as well as suspense, to enable the audience better understand the situation surrounding the characters which they are unaware of. This is what dramatic irony is all about.

Also, the second shows the textual analysis of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Here, Goldsmith used aside as a major device to reveal the thoughts of this characters to his audience/readers. Dramatic irony was created in the play, using tricks as played by Tony Lumpkin on other characters, and disguise as seen in the character of Kate/ Miss Hardcastle. .It was through her disguise that she was able to stoop to conquer.

Despite the fact that these playwrights used the same style of dramatic irony, the plot of their plays both had errors of mistaken identities which created tension, suspense and comic relief, leaving the reader to decipher the meaning inherited in the text by themselves, while the characters wallow in ignorance of their own action and fate. Their plays still ended up in different ways. While Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, turned to be tragic, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* ended up in a comic way.

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