

Research Article

Sutherland's Creativity at Work: The New Family of Mr. Ananse the Spider in *The Marriage of Anansewa*

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Abstract: This study explores characterization in Efua T. Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and demonstrates the playwright's imagination and creativity at work. Unlike the traditional members of Ananse's family in Akan folktales comprising a wife (Asɔ), four sons (Ntekuma, Afurudohwedohwe, Tikenenkene and Nyankorɔnhweaa) and sometimes unnamed in-laws, Sutherland creates a daughter (Anansewa), a mother (Aya), an aunt (Ekuwa) and a lover (Christie) for Ananse. Thus there are now four new females in Ananse's new family to balance the four males in the original Ananse family, counting out man and wife. Unfortunately, Sutherland kills off Asɔ. Anansewa and Christie are main characters but Aya and Ekuwa are made minor characters. Besides this introduction of four women into Ananse's extended family is Sutherland's creation of a new identity for Ananse. He is a modernized Ghanaian with an English name, George. Sutherland artistically introduces a new dimension to Ananse by redefining his identity as a modern citizen of the globalized world. Whereas in the traditional folktales Ananse often cheats the members of his family forcing them to find ways and means to survive by foiling Ananse's tricky plans, Sutherland's new family members play an entirely different role: they are conscious or unconscious collaborators of Ananse's scheme to cheat others. It is concluded that, by this new dimension of characters and the roles they play which bring freshness and popularization to the Akan folktales, Sutherland has elevated the Akan folktales to become an African Classic.

Keywords: Akan folktales, characterization, female, new family, traditional

INTRODUCTION

Before 1965 when the First President of the Republic of Ghana, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the famous Pan-African leader called for the documentation of "our folktales" as a way of creating "African Classics" for posterity (Nketia's Preface to Owusu-Sarpong (1998)), Efua T. Sutherland emerged as one of the literary figures who identified the worth of "our folktales" and indeed modified one into a play about seven years earlier. She came up with her play entitled *The Marriage of Anansewa (TMA)*, which was first published in 1958. This drama, which is based on the Akan folktales, was published after productions in Akan and in English by three different notable Ghanaian performing groups, namely the Workers' Brigade Drama Group, *Kusum Agoromba* (Kusum Players) and the Drama Studio Players and *Kusum Agoromba* combined (Sutherland, 1997). Sutherland's work has enjoyed patronage for decades.

In her dedication of the 1986 edition of *TMA*, Sutherland (1997) observes that a Ceremony of Remembrance was held to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Ghana Drama Studio, her brainchild. She notes that the ceremony, which took the "form of a dramatic

recall of the works of deceased creative personalities who contributed to the development of Ghana's heritage of dramatic arts", was also used to remember "such creative thinkers of the past who left a heritage of perceptions about society in scholarly and other works from which inspiration can be drawn for artistic creation today".

Today, in the year 2013, Sutherland herself can be counted as one of the "deceased" luminaries of the past which she referred to in the 1986 dedication. Sutherland's book, *TMA*, has continued to enjoy success among both young and old in both academic and non-academic circles and this has been the result of a number of things, including the playwright's ability to handle the story-telling tradition of the Akan in some interesting ways. For example, in the play, she remains true to the conventions of the folktale tradition, touching on its themes of love and communality among others, projecting the Akan traditional marriage and raising topical issues such as the hypocrisy of some Christians and their church, not forgetting her profuse use of *mboguo* (song interludes).

Apart from all these, Sutherland vividly evokes the main character: arch-hero, trickster *par excellence* and owner of the Akan folktales, Ananse the Spider,

personified as Kweku Ananse. She also shows literary prowess in her characterization, that is, her “creation of imaginary persons so that they exist for the reader as life-like” (Holman and Harman, 1986; qtd in Teiko, 2011). In fact, Sutherland portrays great artistic talent in the creation of new characters for the Akan folktales, especially her extension of the traditional Ananse family. These new characters are mostly complex and believable and help explain the play’s major themes of deception, gullibility, love and marriage.

This paper leans on *TMA* to demonstrate Efua T. Sutherland’s creativity at work in four major ways as far as the traditional Ananse family is concerned, particularly, by the introduction of four females into the male-dominated family; first, by her creation of a daughter into the family which hitherto has had all-male children; second, by her creation of a lover for Ananse; third, by her creation of a mother for Ananse; and, finally, by her creation of an aunt for Ananse. In addition, the paper studies Sutherland’s creation of a new identity for Ananse himself as a modern Ghanaian man and an anglicized one for that matter (with the first name George).

It is instructive to note that all these characters are new and different from the traditional members of Mr Ananse the Spider’s family in the Akan folktales. Traditionally, Ananse’s nuclear family members are five; they comprise Ananse’s wife, Aso and four sons. Of the four sons, only one, Ntekuma, is normal whereas three are physically challenged. Afurudohwedohwe, Tikenenkene and Nyankorɔnhweaa have aptronyms describing their physical deformities: Afurudohwedohwe literally means Very Very Big Stomach, Tikenenkene means Very Very Big Head and Nyankorɔnhweaa, means Very Very Tiny Legs. Aso, the wife and mother, is not part of the new family in *TMA*, for, unfortunately, Sutherland kills her off.

“THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA”: A BRIEF SUMMARY

Sutherland’s work, *TMA*, is an African play and sourced from an Akan folktale whose story has the poor, struggling father, Kweku Ananse, devising a plan to escape the hardships of life, especially the economic dire straits in which he finds himself and his inability to easily pay his daughter Anansewa’s school fees, among other needs.

Ananse advertises the photograph of his daughter to four prominent chiefs of the land and succeeds in conniving with his daughter to manipulate them to compete unknowingly as suitors seeking the hand of his daughter in marriage. Ananse profits from the gifts which each chief pours on him for the sake of the daughter so as to win her consent. She, of course, would consent to marry only one—the one who, according to the father’s secret plan, would turn out to

be most caring. Meanwhile, each one of the chiefs thinks he is the only lover or suitor (for so does Ananse make it to appear to them). Therefore, each chief goes on to choose a date for the customary marriage, which Sutherland calls the “head-drink ceremony”.

Unfortunately, all the four men choose the same date for this marriage ceremony. The clash of the dates presents a serious problem which Ananse must solve fast before the problem brings him trouble. Ananse gets the daughter to pretend to be dead on that special day, knowing that “nobody marries a corpse”. More importantly, he would be enabled to use the sad and unfortunate event to see the reactions of the suitors, judge and select the one who demonstrates true compassion, sympathy and love at such a time. The message of Anansewa’s untimely death is conveyed to each suitor. In this highly emotionally charged atmosphere, Ananse so desperately and seriously mourns his sad loss that he would not be consoled in any way, especially when the chiefs’ messengers begin to arrive to console him on his bereavement.

The messengers of the Chief of the Mines arrive first, then those of the Chief of Sapaase, followed by those of the Chief of Akate and, finally, those of Chief-Who-Is-Chief, the preferred suitor. The “wealthy paramount Chief of the Mines”... has this to say:

That because this lady had not yet become his wife, he cannot give her burial; but that which custom does permit, he is not reluctant to fulfil. He sends “this bolt of silk, this kente cloth from Bonwire... this dumas cotton cloth, this drink and this bag of money to help her father pay for the funeral in farewell to his lady” (p. 78).

Similarly, what the Chief of Sapaase has to say is that: He has no right to give burial to this child because the head-drink did not come in time to make it a conclusive marriage [but] ... he is not reluctant at all to perform whatever custom he has the right to perform ... (p. 81).

He sends “his silk, his velvet, his white kente cloth, his striped cloth ... and his cash donation of twenty guineas also; spend it on drinks for the funeral ...” (p. 81).

Even though Chief of the Mines and Chief of Sapaase offer some gifts to Ananse towards the funeral, they each make it also clear—as we have observed—and rightly so that, customarily, since the marriage was not really contracted before the “death” of Anansewa, it almost becomes a case of “no-sale-no-payment”, for which reason they are not bound to perform the funeral rites for the lady as they would do for a wife.

Indeed, as for the Chief of Akate, he presents no gift whatsoever. What is worse, this chief’s emissary, his “direct brother”, who has come to express condolences to “Togbe Ananse” makes it known that this one chief “was not even in favour of” their coming to sympathise with the bereaved family. “But we said, ‘No’. Even if we came to do nothing, we would show our faces here” (p. 83), the chief emissary explains.

But unlike the three Chief-Who-Is-Chief, through his messengers, says that: He accepts total responsibility for everything concerning the woman who had but one more step to take to enter his home. Therefore, from his hands... here are all requirements for her funeral... (p. 78).

Symbolically, he marries her and also provides a coffin-a glass coffin-in addition to other assorted gifts as would be needed, customarily, for a grand funeral befitting the late wife of a prominent chief:

... Here is the ring a husband places on a wife's finger. Here is a bag of money, spend it on the funeral. Here are cloths which any woman who is confidently feminine would select with a careful eye; ... dumas, white kente, silk kente, velvet, brocade. The drinks ... are in such quantities that we couldn't bring them here ... this bottle of Schnapps ... is what is mandatory for me to place in your hands... this must be the drink with which the farewell libation is poured when his beloved one is being placed in the coffin ... (p. 87).

"Finally", the messenger points out that, it is the desire of Chief-Who-Is-Chief "to do for Anansewa what a husband does for a wife. And so he sends his coffin, one made of glass. Place his wife in it for him ..." (p. 87).

Thus Chief-Who-Is-Chief comes finally to exhibit genuine love for Anansewa even though she is dead and he is under no obligation to go to that extent. This gesture touches Ananse so much that, overwhelmed by this chief's unique affection, concern, generosity and thoughtfulness, Ananse summons all his wits and acts in a way as to make this lovely chief win the "contest". As it happens, Anansewa resurrects for the preferred suitor, by the powers evoked through Ananse's libation prayer-ironically, using the bottle of Schnapps presented by Chief-Who-Is-Chief.

Ananse and his daughter, Anansewa, are greatly assisted in all this drama by Ananse's lover, a "fashionable", modern, career woman called Christie. Before all this, however, Ananse hurriedly arranges with the Institute for Prospective Brides headed by Christie to get Anansewa trained and groomed for marriage as a modern, educated woman. He also arranges with Anansewa's grandparents, Aya and Ekuwa, to get her properly prepared for marriage, especially marriage to a chief, according to custom, by ensuring that Anansewa is taken through the puberty rites which Sutherland refers to as the "outdooing ceremony".

THE NEW WOMEN RELATED TO ANANSE

In *TMA*, we find four new women related to Ananse (Anansewa, Christie, Aya and Ekuwa) instead of the only woman, As, also called konor Yaa or Okondor Yaa (Opoku-Agyemang, 1999), who has long been known in the Akan folktale tradition as

Ananse's wife. Anansewa is the daughter, Christie is a lover who desires to be Ananse's wife and, by the end of the play, there is every hope that she will become Ananse's wife.

Aya is Ananse's biological mother and Ekuwa is Ananse's aunt (Aya's sister); they are two other women who are also new entrants in the extended family of Ananse. All these female characters are dynamic, active, "life-like" and help advance the plot as well as the themes of deception, gullibility, love and marriage in the play. Whereas Anansewa and Christie are main characters, Aya and her sister, Ekuwa, may be classified as minor characters.

Anansewa: Anansewa is introduced very early in the play. She is the daughter of Ananse- "Pa Ananse" -and, like the father, she dominates the story. In fact, Sutherland presents Anansewa to the audience as a lovely young lady, the only daughter and the only child of Ananse. This is unlike in the Akan folktale tradition where Ananse has no daughter whatsoever. There, the children are only boys (four in all) and, as previously noted only one of them, Ntekuma, is normal. Ntekuma is known to be a foil to the father in most of the tales in which Ananse's tricks backfire.

For example, in one Akan folktale, the story is told that once Ananse plans to possess and control all the wisdom of the world and proceeds to sweep every bit together into a pot. He then tries to carry the collection of wisdom in the pot to hide on top of the tallest tree for himself alone. However, no matter how hard he tries, he is unable to climb the tree because he hangs the pot in front of him instead of behind him. It is his little son Ntekuma standing below and observing the proceedings, who suggests to the frustrated father to carry the pot at his back. Ananse tries and it works! He manages to climb smoothly to the tree top. Nevertheless, on realising that Ntekuma the tiny boy could give such a wise advice to him, who is the only one supposed to have all wisdom, Ananse becomes disappointed that some wisps of wisdom might have remained on earth after all, so, out of a deep sense of failure, he drops the pot which breaks to scatter all over the world all the wisdom stored in it. For this reason, wisdom has become the heritage of all humankind (Sackeyfio *et al.*, 1994).

The siblings of Ntekuma are spectacular. One has a big head (his name is Tikenenkenen literally meaning Very Very Big Head); one has a big stomach (his name is Afurudohwedohwe literally meaning Very Very Big Stomach) and the other has tiny legs (his name is Nyankorɔnhweea literally meaning Very Very Tiny Legs) as we have previously observed of them.

Anansewa has no siblings or mother in *TMA*. Her mother, who is anonymous in the play, is dead and so Anansewa lives with only her father. However, she has

a loving paternal grandmother and a grand-aunt being Ananse's mother, Aya and his aunt, Ekuwa.

On the one hand, Anansewa loves life and represents modern ladies. She likes to go out but the father wants her to stay at home and serve him as is seen in the following conversation between the two:

Ananse: Going-and-coming is necessary.... Otherwise nothing succeeds. I went to buy paper. Here is typing paper. Here is carbon paper. Here are envelopes... Sit down with the machine.

Anansewa: [*Petulantly*] Ah, I was coming to tell you I was going out.

Ananse: My daughter, it isn't well at home, therefore sit down, open up the machine I bought for your training and let the tips of your finger give some service for which I'm paying. I have very urgent letters to write.

Anansewa: Just when I was going out? (p. 10)

Ananse: There you sit looking lovely and it is exciting for you to go out in all your beauty. That's all you know. But tell me, won't you return home, here, afterwards? (p. 11).

On the other hand, Anansewa is observed to be a daughter who is respectful and understands her family difficulties. For instance, she stays behind to assist the father. Further, she knows that her fees as well as the last instalment on the typewriter she needs for her training are in arrears and that the burden of that need is on her father. Thus she is prepared and also responsible enough to undergo practical training and study hard to become self-sufficient and useful not only to herself but also to her family, especially her father, who is struggling to see her through education. She is literate, knows shorthand and is training to be a professional career woman. We as audience find her able to type her father's letters.

Besides formal schooling, Anansewa also humbles herself to go through the traditional preparations and training meant to make her a proper Akan woman and the wife of a chief, a woman of substance and a role model to the community. We are told that she actually likes and enjoys her outdoor ceremony "so much" and that, according to her grand-aunt, Ekuwa, Anansewa "keeps on asking questions in order to learn as much as she can" (p. 45). Later, when it becomes absolutely necessary for her to "die" as her father requests her to do, she agrees, though not without asking questions, as is observed, for example, in the following dialogue between the two:

Ananse: ... [*Darting closer to her*] Open your eyes wide and let me see.

Anansewa: What? Very well. I've opened them.

Ananse: [*Peering into her eyes*] for what reason? [*She laughs.*] Shut them tight.

Anansewa: [*Smiling a little and obliging*] I've shut them tight.

Ananse: Mhm Stiffen your limbs.

Anansewa: [*Opening her eyes*]. For what reason? [*She laughs*]

Very well, I have stiffened my limbs. [*She does so.*]

Ananse: Do it properly, I want you to look as though you are dead.

Anansewa: What do you mean? [*She laughs.*] I have never died before.

Ananse: My daughter, I implore you, don't waste time. What I'm doing is in serious preparation.

Anansewa: [*Understanding nothing at all*] Preparation?

Ananse: Yes my daughter, stiffen yourself.

Anansewa: [*Doing so with laughter*] There you are. Are you satisfied?

Ananse: Very pleased. It's really coming right. Try not to move any part of your body. [*Anansewa tries.*] Oh yes... And now... Can't you hold your breath?

Anansewa: [*Finding this too much*] Hold my breath! I shouldn't breathe? As for that, definitely no, I can't do it and will not.

Ananse: Oh but my daughter, it's necessary for you to die!

Anansewa: Me? [*Words fail her.*] But father, I'm alive. I'm open-eyed. How can I switch my life off and on like electricity?

Ananse: Don't spout silly jokes, you don't understand what we are doing.

Anansewa: Then make me understand; because this game you're playing is full of mystery. I don't like it.

Ananse: My daughter.

Anansewa: My father.

Ananse: You are forcing me to tell you those four people are coming. Just coming? They are rushing here. Sprinting.

Anansewa: Who? ...

Ananse: ... racing here like fire blazing through grass... (pp. 55-56).

And she “dies” when the time finally comes, in order to save her father from humiliation, among other things, as the suitors, “those four people are coming”, “Just coming”, “rushing”, “Sprinting”, “racing here like fire blazing through grass” as Ananse puts it (p. 56). Thus Anansewa is strong and intelligent but also obedient.

Yet, she knows her rights and will not marry blindly just to satisfy culture. As such, she questions the father as to whatever she does not understand and insists at one point that she is old enough to choose her own husband -“I’m not a child. I’m twenty” (p. 20) - and so would not have the father choose any “old chief” (p. 20) for her or, as she puts it, sell her as a commodity-“I will not let you sell me like some parcel to a customer. [*She sings on*] I will select my lover myself/I’ll never comply./ I will not let you sell me.../Not ever!/Not ever!” (p. 20).

Later, however, when she learns that one of the chiefs is a wealthy, caring, good-looking and relatively younger man: a “finely built, glowing black, larged-eyed, handsome as anything, courageous and famous” (p. 22) chief, who has been remitting her through the father and “not just showing interest with his mouth” (p. 22), she falls flat in love with him and so cooperates with the father to win this chief as her husband.

In this sense, Anansewa makes a choice of the husband she loves and not one imposed on her by tradition. This comes out clearly in the following dialogue between her and her father in which Ananse tries to hint that, he has taken gifts from four good chiefs and not just one, thereby already “entangling” her in the affair:

Anansewa: What four chiefs are racing here?

Ananse: Oh-h-h, dear! Rouse your memory if it’s asleep and remember. I tell you there is no time to waste. Each chief’s messengers are on their way, urgently sent to place your head-drink on the table.

... I tell you each chief is coming running to claim you as his wife.

Anansewa: [*Laughing*] over my dead body. ... I repeat, over my dead body. How can they claim me as their own? ... They dare not.

Ananse: ... They can dare.

Anansewa: Father, why? All that aside, why do you say ‘they’? Why don’t you say ‘he’, the single one?

Ananse: [*His eyes darting*] are you asking me why?

Anansewa: Yes why? Because I know that it’s only one chief we are expecting to come. And as far as that person is concerned, he cannot come too quickly for me. I’m waiting for him asleep and awake. As for the other three chiefs, my father, you made them take their eyes off me long ago, remember. Right at the beginning, you refused to accept gifts from their hands.... (p. 56).

From the foregoing discussion, Anansewa is very much human unlike her father’s children in the Akan folktales. Thanks to Sutherland’s rich imagination and artistry, Ananse can now boast of a daughter and, for that matter, a normal, modern and believable one who can think, understand, question and act. Sutherland’s fertile imagination leads to the creation of Anansewa thus deepening interest in her play as an African classic and in the Akan folktales as a cultural heritage.

Aya and Ekuwa: Aya and Ekuwa are also two new women related to Ananse. Unlike Anansewa, they are introduced much later in the play, in Act Three. Sutherland creates Aya as Ananse’s mother. For once in the Akan folktales, Ananse has a biological mother, Aya. Aya is flesh and blood and a loving Akan grandmother of Anansewa. She adores her son, Ananse and her grand-daughter, Anansewa, for whom she has been invited to serve, by performing the traditional “outdooring ceremony” for her. By this ceremony, Aya is to initiate her grandchild Anansewa into womanhood, especially as a woman prepared to take a heavy responsibility as a chief’s wife.

Even though the ceremony seems delayed and Aya complains a little, she goes ahead with her sister, Ekuwa, to do the best for Anansewa, whom they variously refer to with so much affection and terms of endearment such as “your grandchild”, “this grandchild of yours” (p. 44), “our child”, “my grandchild” (pp. 45, 46 and 47), “my gold child” (p. 47), “my grandchild Anansewa”, “our girl” and “this grandchild of mine” (p. 50).

It is instructive to note that Aya is a paternal grandmother. Now, as far as the Akan custom of matrilineal inheritance is concerned, paternal grandmothers are mostly not too keen on their grandchildren for the simple reason that these grandchildren belong to their mother’s family lineage. Therefore, usually, grandmothers are rather more interested in their daughter’s children, that is, the maternal grandchildren. Often a proverbial question is posed to explain this: “*Woahunu akok nini a ne mma di n’akyi da?*” literally meaning “have you ever before seen a cock whose chicks are following it?” But contrary to this tradition, Aya shows great interest in Anansewa and her success in life, both present and future, as far as the ceremony and its significance are concerned. And she offers Anansewa the best gift

which is a prayer for a husband who has respect for his fellow human beings. Hear her:

... My grandchild, Anansewa, your old lady knows what is of real value in this world. You notice that this outstretched hand of mine is empty, it contains nothing. And yet, this same empty hand will succeed in placing a gift into your brass bowl. What this hand is offering is this prayer of mine. May the man who comes to take you from our hands to his home be, above all things, a person with respect for his fellow human beings (p. 51).

In *TMA*, Sutherland creates a situation where Anansewa's mother is no more and we do not as much as hear of or find her maternal grandmother at all. Instead, it is her father's mother-her paternal grandmother-who is present and must perform the highly important "outdooring ceremony" for the young lady. It is acknowledged that the ceremony appears delayed on account of Anansewa (probably because her mother is dead) and Aya rightly questions "why now?" Also, Aya becomes sincerely emotional and briefly laments the sad absence of Anansewa's mother at such a crucial time and at such a memorable day in the girl's life. All the same, Aya takes consolation in Ekuwa's words of reason-"... I don't believe you want to ruin Anansewa's joy" (p. 45). So Aya gathers herself up and tackles the task head on, with such love and enthusiasm! And this paternal grandmother does the job remarkably well while taking up any other role which Anansewa's own mother would probably have played had she been alive.

Ekuwa confirms this when she declares of her sister, "Mm, Aya, are you already here? I see you are keeping your eyes wide open to make sure that nothing goes wrong with your grandchild Anansewa's outdooring" (p. 44). Perhaps, with the portrayal of Aya in such a positive light as far as she is Anansewa's paternal grandmother, Sutherland is pointing out that this is how things ought to go, that paternal grandmothers must show love and affection to their son's children the same way they do to their daughter's.

On the part of Ekuwa herself, she offers her grandchild, Anansewa, "service", calling her "my child of beauty" and wishing her very very well (pp. 48 -49) and we find her also as lovable as Aya, but somehow more objective. It is she who points out the wisdom in the adage that says "Better late than never" when she explains to Aya about the need for the "outdooring ceremony" to take place even if it has somehow delayed for Anansewa. Ekuwa observes, "... I've been trying to explain it to you. If this grandchild of yours is going to marry a chief, then, it is our duty to prepare her in every way for the position she will be occupying in a palace" (p. 44). To this, Aya responds with the following words charged with sincere emotions:

Aya: All right. Whatever it may be, I'm happy to see my Anansewa conducting herself in the manner that graces a woman. You do not know what feelings are breaking and ebbing like waves inside me because of

this ceremony we are performing. This wave brings happiness and that one brings pride and another, sadness. Yes, it is true that you and I are here doing all we can and yet when I remember that the person who should be here as well, bustling around Anansewa should be her own mother, then, my sister Ekuwa, a wave of sorrow crests up inside me mangling my innards. [*She starts to dirge*] And it isn't as though it is where we could send her a telegram to say, 'come'. It isn't as though we could send a messenger by taxi to fetch her. [*She is about to wail seriously.*] Truly, death has done some wickedness (p. 45).

Still, Aya portrays the bad mother-in-law behavior prevalent among some Akan/Ghanaian women towards their in-laws. In fact, before Aya meets Christie personally for the first time, Aya's remark to her sister Ekuwa is that Christie is "senselessly extravagant" (p. 45) and she also complains without any proof that Christie "is serving my son Kweku too hard" (p. 45). By those remarks made behind Christie's back, Aya is suggesting that Christie is after her son Anansewa's wealth.

Worse, we note how Aya despisively refers to Christie as "that woman" and "the woman" (p. 45) whereas Christie lovingly calls her "Mother". In fact, when Christie comes in, she addresses her nicely as "mother" and delightedly exclaims to her: "How I have dressed up my daughter Anansewa!" Sadly, however, Aya sarcastically mimics Christie's words to her sister, later, again in the absence of Christie-with the words "'I've dressed up my daughter Anansewa', indeed!"

Aya even goes to the extent of adding contemptuous remarks such as "When did my grandchild become her child?" and also "Whom is she calling mother? Me?" (p. 46). When her sister Ekuwa tries to point out that Christie is there on Anansewa's invitation and that she is just trying to help, Aya, "[snorting]", has only this to say that, "The way I see it she is leaning her ladder on my grandchild in order to climb up to my son" (p. 45).

It is clear from these and other reactions of hers that even though Aya is nice to Anansewa, when it comes to Christie, Aya changes from being a nice person- possibly because she does not approve of the relationship between Anansewa and Christie. It may be argued that Anansewa has not married Christie yet and so Aya may be right not to encourage illegitimate marriage or immorality, but then courtship must precede marriage? Or, being traditionalist, Aya is not interested in courtship?

The truth of the matter is that, the behavior of some mothers-in-law or would-be ones in Akan land, Ghana and elsewhere is just as that shown by Anansewa's mother. It is surprising how the same person can show so much affection and yet so much disgust on account of the same son. Aya loves Anansewa, daughter of her son, but Aya dislikes Christie, partner of her son. Perhaps, once again, Sutherland is using Aya to point

out the anomaly in order to encourage a change in such “rival” mothers-in-law. “Love me love my dog”, Sutherland seems to advise.

Concerning Aya and her sister Ekuwa, however, there is a twist in the story which makes them pitiful, in that, after toiling so much to prepare Anansewa for marriage to a chief, in the end, they are told lies and chased away by Ananse, under the pretext that they cannot stand the sad but fake death of Anansewa. By sending them away, one can conclude that, the poor women would not be around to partake in the merriment in the marriage of their paternal grandchild, Anansewa, to Chief-Who-Is-Chief. What a pity!

Christie: Like Anansewa and the elderly women Aya and Ekuwa in *TMA*, Christie is a woman in Ananse’s life and a special one at that, being his lover. Her full name is Miss Christina Yamoah and she is described in the play as a “fashionable” woman, the proprietress of the Institute for Prospective Brides. Sutherland mentions her name much earlier at the end of Act Two when she is telephoned to take care of Anansewa at the Institute, yet Christie does not appear until later in the play, in Act Three, to dress Anansewa on the day of the “outdooing ceremony”, where Christie joins the grannies and Anansewa’s peers in the celebrations.

However, Miss Yamoah is made to dominate the funeral scenes since she literally becomes the face of Ananse while he seriously mourns his daughter, Anansewa, who is dead and lies in state, at a time when the old ladies have actually left having been tricked to leave by Ananse before Anansewa’s death.

Christie is therefore made to occupy a very important position including that of a linguist and she skillfully plays these roles to the admiration of all. In any case, she also reveals herself as a liar and a crook just like her lover, all in the name of love and materialism. This is particularly so as she ensures that the sad atmosphere is maintained while she tactfully prevents the situation, where the lie behind Ananse’s plan could be exposed. Above all, Christie finds a means of collecting whatever gifts are brought to Ananse by the sympathizers.

Christie respects Ananse’s mother and addresses her dearly as “mother” although she is not yet married to him and Ananse’s mother does not seem to like her. This shows how much she wants to be accepted as a daughter-in-law. According to Akan custom, the mother of one’s partner/spouse is indeed one’s mother as well. To all intents and purposes, Christie is very much in love with George Kweku Ananse, but Ananse seems to be dragging his feet concerning getting married to her.

Yet Christie shows such love, care and concern to Ananse and the daughter Anansewa that she assists the grandmothers in the preparation for the “outdooing ceremony” and, indeed, presents to Anansewa something valuable, in the form of a “sovereign” which is “so precious” to Christie; something she is so

emotionally attached to and says “I never thought I n never thought I would part with this sovereign in my hand” (p. 49).

As previously hinted, she ensures, more importantly, that neither Ananse nor Anansewa is exposed during the fake death, lying-in-state and resurrection of Anansewa. As Ananse wails uncontrollably on account of the feigned ‘loss’ of his only child albeit his beloved daughter, Anansewa, it is Christie who takes the responsibility of receiving the messengers of the four contesting chiefs, asks the mission according to custom and takes charge of the gifts they bring. She carefully guards the room where Anansewa’s “corpse” lies and makes sure no-one gets too near the ‘body’ and possibly see the corpse breathing. Also, she tries to console Ananse and makes the whole scam affair very believable. In the end, Ananse, whom Christie affectionately calls “Georgie”, succeeds, thanks to her as much as to Anansewa, whom Christie lovingly refers to as “my daughter” (p. 45), “my darling”, “my sweetie” and “my dear” (p. 49). Sutherland’s presentation of Christie would seem to give credence to the popular Ghanaian cliché that says “Fear woman”, an expression often used to underscore the cunningness of women and how dangerous they can be.

In the final analysis, there is hope that the two, that is, Christie and Ananse, shall become one just as is most likely to occur between the resurrected Anansewa and the much beloved Chief-Who-Is-Chief. Luckily for Christie, it is unlikely that she will not be around to partake in the final enjoyment, especially when Aya is far away.

With the introduction of the young, “fashionable” Auntie Christie in *TMA*, Efuwa T. Sutherland also reaffirms the saying that “beside every successful man is a woman.”

Ananse: Ananse himself remains the old Kweku Ananse in the traditional Akan folktales. He is the arch-hero, arch-trickster and, indeed, the “owner” of the tales, as is generally accepted. In *TMA*, for example, these are confirmed. Not only is Ananse the principal character but also he is the unbeatable trickster, who is able to play on the intelligence of a whole community including his own mother and aunt and even the “great” leaders of his society, being “four prominent chiefs of the land”!

We observe how the whole story of the marriage of Anansewa is dominated by Ananse. Again, we observe how, for instance, after Anansewa’s “outdooing ceremony” has been beautifully performed by his mother and aunt, Ananse finds a lie to tell them that an enemy has set fire to the family property-being their only cocoa farm back in their village, Nanka and so gets them packing there and then into a waiting taxi as they wail their fate, pointing accusing fingers at no one in particular and rushing back home to their village to see to the “problem”. Moreover, we also observe how Ananse confuses the whole community with his fake

bereavement not to talk of how he makes the chiefs the butts of his one big joke of a marriage to his daughter. Here, the true character of Ananse as a trickster, a cheat and a selfish man is upheld by Sutherland.

Yet Sutherland also transforms him as a more enlightened man in *TMA* in order to raise him to a new level in the scheme of things. And he becomes a good man, too. Ananse's new identity is the anglicized one with the new name 'George'. George Kweku Ananse becomes the new Akan man, who, unlike most Akan fathers of Sutherland's time, will educate his girl-child and not consign her to early marriage or confine her to only the kitchen just because she is female. Thus, while wishing for the best caring man to marry her, Ananse makes sure that his daughter will become educated, independent and economically empowered; therefore, he struggles to see her through school and professional training, no matter how much it costs him, financially or emotionally.

It is also worth noting that even though Kweku acquires a new foreign name, "George" ("Georgie") and with it an anglicized identity, he respects the traditions of his society and culture. For instance, he believes in traditional marriage and he gets an "outdooing ceremony" organized for his only daughter to prepare her for marriage, in fact, the high calling of a chief's wife, though a bit belatedly and also after having prepared her at the Institute for Prospective Brides, in the care of the fashionable Madam Christie, the propriety.

The significance of this seeming contradiction in Ananse is that, perhaps, it is possible to marry positive aspects of different cultures without harm, especially in today's globalised world. Again, Sutherland's creativity is at its best in the carving of the new Ananse of *TMA* and the Akan folktales.

CONCLUSION

This paper has studied Efua T. Sutherland's creative genius as far as characterization in *TMA* is concerned. It has shown that although *TMA* is built around the famous Ananse character of the Akan folktales, Sutherland artistically introduces a new dimension to the Ananse family by bringing in new entrants, who are all female and also by redefining Ananse's identity as a modern citizen of the globalised world. There is now a balance of four women to match the four males in the original Ananse family outside him and his wife, Asɔ.

Together with the grandparents, the new family of Ananse becomes more realistic, especially as an African family and the members play their roles well as major and minor characters to advance the play, both plot-wise and thematically. To a large extent, they all act and behave like real people in the real world of human beings. All these new features of the Akan folktales as depicted in *TMA* have been made possible

owing to Sutherland's success as a playwright with a powerful artistic presentation of characters.

However, as previously observed, Sutherland does not permit Asɔ to live. This is unfortunate in two main ways. First, because the traditional Ananse family appears immortal as no member of it has ever died in the Akan folktales. If anything, it is Ananse the trickster himself who, sometimes, pretends to be dead out of greed just to cheat the family of food (see for example Tale 35 titled "Wives should help their husbands to work", in Mireku-Gyimah (2011), but he resurrects soon after. So Ananse himself is also apparently immortal.

Sutherland should, therefore, have allowed Asɔ the wife to live, especially now that Asɔ has a daughter-and a strong one for that matter-to support her against her trickster husband and mostly weak sons. Had Asɔ been spared to live, there would have been a perfect balance of five males and five females, who would have represented the society better.

The existence of Asɔ the wife and Christie as a lover preparing to be a wife, or, possibly, a second wife would still not be out of place but rather even more representative of the traditional society, which permits polygamy. And Christie would be the perfect step mother-a rival who loves her husband and therefore loves whatever belongs to him, in this case, his child, Anansewa, as her own. Perhaps Sutherland simply kills off Asɔ just to try to avoid propagating polygamy which, outside traditional society, is largely considered as immoral and also to avoid adding to the woes of the suffering wife with the presence of a co-wife or girlfriend. Once again, in all these dimensions, it is all Sutherland's art at work.

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