Kente: Cape Coast Journal of Literature and the Arts
Online ISSN: 2579-0285
https://doi.org/10.47963/jla.v1i2.1752

Kente

Cape Coast Journal of Literature and the Arts

An Open Access Journal
Online ISSN: 2579-0285

https://doi.org/10.47963/jla.v1i2.1752
Volume (1) Number (2) 2026
Page: 21-37

Additional Information

Submission guide: https://journal.ucc.edu.gh/index.php/kente/about/submissions

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Archive: https://doi.org/10.47963/jla.v1i2.1752

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KENTE 2026
Vol. 1 No. 2

"OH, FRIENDS, DO LOOK AT KWEKU ANANSE'S AMAZING WAYS": THE SONG AS A SUBTEXT IN EFUA SUTHERLAND'S *EDUFA* (1967) AND *THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA* (1975)

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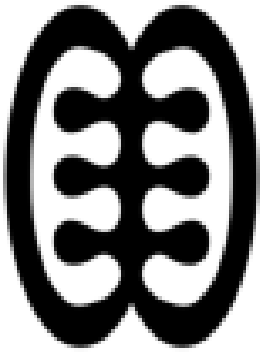

ABSTRACT

A rich body of scholarship exists on Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa*; however, previous studies have largely concentrated on the thematic and ideological dimensions of these texts, leaving the function of songs as subtextual devices considerably underexplored. This is a notable gap, given the prominence of songs within the narrative architecture of both plays. The present paper addresses this lacuna by examining how songs in the selected plays operate as subtexts in the construction of meaning and narrative. The central argument advanced here is that songs in these texts function not merely as ornamental embellishments but as integral components of the dramatic structure, carrying significant narrative, thematic, and ideological weight in their own right.

KEYWORDS

Anansegoro, oral poetics, text, songs, subtext

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Introduction

This article examines the use of songs as subtexts in two Ghanaian plays: Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* (1967) and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975). The deployment of songs as subtextual devices is not an entirely new concern within African literary scholarship. Indeed, a number of critics have reflected on the centrality of song in both oral and written genres, particularly within African drama. Mokwunyei and Sotimirin, for example, have each emphasised the importance of songs as integral elements of Nigerian drama. While Sotimirin foregrounds the contribution of songs to a total theatre dramaturgy, Mokwunyei argues that songs serve as a primary mode of communication alongside dialogue. Together, these scholars underscore the centrality of songs as a communicative and narrative device in African dramatic tradition. As Mokwunyei observes (112), songs in African drama are frequently employed as a form of verbal expression through which the thoughts and emotions of characters are conveyed, and through which dialogue is enriched and sustained. Sotimirin further notes that songs serve as a means of preserving cultural identity, critiquing the colonial experience, deconstructing colonial impositions, reaffirming indigenous identity, and projecting a revival of African heritage.

Since the publication of Sutherland's *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa*, a rich body of scholarship has emerged on both texts (see Conradie; Affiah and Osuagwu; Nugah; Mireku-Gyimah; Say; Abakah and Marfo). By and large, however, these studies have concentrated on the thematic concerns generated by the texts, among them the convergence of literature and culture, the adaptation of the trickster tale in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, the treatment of the Greek myth of Alcestis in *Edufa*, gender construction in the African setting, and the themes of deception and gullibility. The animating concern of the present paper is that this body of scholarship has, in its predominant focus on thematic issues, largely overlooked the narrative significance of the songs embedded within both texts. Very few scholarly attempts have been made to examine the song as a subtextual device operating within the main body of these works. Yet a careful reading of both plays reveals that Sutherland weaves songs into her dramatic narratives not merely for their entertainment or performative value, but as significant subtextual instruments that carry substantial narrative and interpretive weight.

Given the near absence of sustained scholarly examination of this dimension of Sutherland's work, this article undertakes a critical reflection on the narrative significance of songs in *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa*. The study is situated within the broader intellectual project of understanding oral poetics and their constitutive role in African literary expression during the post-independence era. It is argued that the songs, as integrated elements of the main texts, function as subtexts by providing critical information and commentary that deepens our understanding of both plays. Against this backdrop, the paper is guided by the following questions: (1) In what ways do songs in *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa* function as subtexts within the narrative framework of each play? (2) What specific narrative mechanisms do these songs activate?

In this paper, subtext is understood, in its common usage, as explained by Wineburg and Genis, as the underlying or implicit meanings present within a text, beyond its explicit or surface-level content. It encompasses thematic, symbolic, and psychological elements that are not directly stated but can be inferred or interpreted by attentive readers (Genis). Per Genis, subtext serves as a vehicle for conveying ideas, messages, and concepts that the author does not overtly express. The implicit meanings embedded in subtext can illuminate characters' emotions, thoughts, and personalities, foreshadow future developments, transport the reader to the past in order to facilitate an understanding of present circumstances, highlight the central themes and concerns of a narrative, and furnish the reader with essential contextual grounding (cf. Rusinko; Clyde). Boren (2023) extends and refines this understanding by situating subtext

specifically within the domain of craft, defining it as a technique that fiction writers consciously employ during story construction to achieve specific and intentional effects, effects that create and enhance the relationship between the writer and the reader. This understanding is particularly instructive for the present paper, as it draws attention to the deliberate and purposeful nature of subtextual devices, which are not accidental or incidental but are consciously integrated into the narrative for specific communicative ends. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that Sutherland herself, in the foreword to *The Marriage of Anansewa*, signals her deliberate shaping of the Anansegoro tradition into a theatrical form with established conventions, an indication that the songs embedded in her plays are similarly the product of conscious artistic choice rather than mere performative habit. In the context of Sutherland's plays, therefore, songs are understood as subtexts precisely because they are consciously employed narrative instruments that work beneath and alongside the main narrative to achieve specific and intentional effects: foreshadowing future developments, transporting the audience to the past through the technique of flashback, providing expositional grounding, and revealing the inner thoughts and emotions of characters. These functions are not incidental to the songs' subtextual operation; they are the very mechanisms through which that operation is achieved. Subtext, in this paper, is accordingly understood as the outcome, and narrative function as the mechanism that produces it. It is in this integrated sense that songs are treated as subtexts throughout the argument that follows.

Efua Sutherland: Drive, Experimentation, and Contribution

Efua Sutherland occupies a distinctive and foundational place in the Ghanaian literary tradition, widely recognised for her pioneering efforts to incorporate Ghana's oral heritage into written literary forms as a means of advancing and affirming Ghanaian culture (Asiedu). Her two celebrated plays, *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa*, which serve as the primary texts for this article, offer compelling evidence of this creative and cultural project. As Yirenkyi and Amponsah have observed (100), Sutherland was deeply invested in the quest to develop a theatrical genre that would foreground and celebrate the African contribution to world theatre. This aspiration became the generative force behind her conception of Anansegoro, a theatrical form rooted in the storytelling tradition of Anansesem practised among the Akan-speaking peoples of Ghana.

It is necessary to briefly introduce the concept of Anansesem before turning to Sutherland's development of Anansegoro, given that the latter draws its foundational principles from the former. As Asiedu explains, the word "Anansesem" is an Akan compound comprising two constituent elements: "Ananse," meaning "the spider," and "asem," meaning "word" or "statement." In combination, the two terms denote "the tales of Ananse" or "Ananse's words," and refer collectively to the body of stories told and performed within Akan communities. As a living tradition, Anansesem typically takes the form of communal storytelling, characterised by the presence of a lead storyteller, musical interludes known as mboguo, and the active participation of an audience (Asante and Edu). It is from this rich performative tradition that Sutherland drew her inspiration for Anansegoro. In the foreword to *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975), she reflects on the origins of this concept, explaining that:

> There is in Ghana a storytelling art called *Anansesem* by Akan-speaking people. The name, which literally means Ananse stories, is used both for the body of stories told and for the storytelling performance itself. Although this storytelling is usually a domestic activity, there are in existence some specialist groups who have given it a full theatrical expression with established conventions. It is this system of traditional theatre that I have developed and classified as *Anansegoro* (p. 3).

The extract above reveals that Sutherland adapted and further developed the Anansesem tradition of the Akan-speaking people of Ghana into what she designates as "Anansegoro." As previously noted, "Ananse" denotes the spider, while the Akan word "agoro" signifies "all manner of plays." In combination, these two words encapsulate the performative dimension of Ananse stories, collectively referring to "Ananse plays" or "Ananse theatre." The concept of Anansegoro, therefore, pertains to Sutherland's transformation of the oral narrative tradition into a fully realised dramatic form governed by established theatrical conventions.

The principal point of divergence between the two concepts lies in the transition from oral storytelling to theatrical performance. Whereas Anansesem primarily unfolds within communal and domestic settings, and occasionally within specialised storytelling gatherings, Anansegoro, as conceptualised by Sutherland, elevates and transforms this tradition into a formalised theatrical art form with codified conventions. In this sense, Anansegoro represents a considered departure from the informal character of Anansesem, reconstituting it as a structured and deliberately crafted dramatic presentation.

The most significant element in the relocation of the oral narrative tradition into theatrical form is the figure of the Storyteller. In the traditional Anansesem context, the storyteller occupies a central and authoritative position within the narrative, regarded as the custodian and proprietor of the story by virtue of intimate and thorough knowledge of its content and meaning. In this capacity, the storyteller retains the freedom to suspend the narrative at will and to engage directly with the audience, thereby sustaining the participatory and communal character of the performance. *The Marriage of Anansewa* demonstrates how this role has been deliberately adapted within the Anansegoro framework, marking a significant point of convergence between Sutherland's theatrical conventions and the oral storytelling art of Anansesem.

Within the Anansesem tradition, musical performances known as *mboguo* occupy a prominent and functional role, a feature that is similarly preserved in Anansegoro. In its traditional usage, *mboguo* served the purpose of abruptly interrupting the narrative when inconsistencies were detected in the story or when the narrator failed to articulate the tale with sufficient skill (Sutherland, *The Marriage of Anansewa* 3). In contemporary practice, however, the function of *mboguo* has evolved considerably. Sutherland observes that many *mboguo* are now woven into the fabric of the story itself, performed in context as constituent elements of the narrative rather than as external corrective interventions. It has become customary for those present to contribute *mboguo* that reflect prevailing moods, regulate the pace of the performance, animate the audience, and enrich both action and characterisation (Sutherland, *The Marriage of Anansewa* 3). This evolution in the function of *mboguo* is particularly instructive for the present study, as it demonstrates that musical performances, when consciously incorporated into a dramatic narrative, may assume an integral and constitutive role within that narrative, lending further support to the central argument of this paper that songs in Sutherland's selected texts operate as subtexts rather than as incidental or decorative accompaniments.

Both the Anansesem tradition and Sutherland's conception of Anansegoro are fundamentally grounded in the active involvement of the audience. As previously noted, the communal character of Anansesem is inseparable from the practice of audience participation, which constitutes one of its defining features. This participatory ethos has been inherited and preserved in its entirety within the framework of Anansegoro. Like Anansesem, Anansegoro actively requires the involvement of its audience, whose members are regarded not as passive spectators but as performers to varying degrees, whether in an active or a potentially active capacity (Sutherland, *The Marriage of Anansewa* 3).

The Song as a Device for Foreshadowing

One recurring function of songs as subtexts in the two plays under examination is the instrumental role they play in foreshadowing future developments within the narrative. Sharpe explains that foreshadowing, as a narrative device, concerns itself with directing the reader's or audience's attention towards forthcoming events in a story. In a related vein, Scirea et al. describe foreshadowing as the provision of hints and clues embedded within a narrative that gesture towards what may transpire as the story progresses. In both formulations, the primary function of foreshadowing is to build anticipation and heighten the audience's engagement with the unfolding narrative. Boltz et al. identify two broad categories of foreshadowing. The first is true foreshadowing, which furnishes the audience with accurate cues that reliably anticipate how events will develop within the story. The second is false foreshadowing, a device employed, as Genette observes, to generate a sense of uncertainty and surprise by introducing narrative cues that prove misleading, as the actual events deviate from those initially suggested.

Sutherland's use of songs for foreshadowing purposes aligns with the concept of true foreshadowing. This argument hinges on the notion that the song within the selected texts serves as an accurate indicator of future developments. To explain this, reference is first made to the funeral chant performance of the chorus in Act 1, Scene 1, page 4 of the play text, *Edufa*:

> Our mother's dead,
> Ei! Ei – Ei!
> We the orphans cry,
> Our mother's dead,
> O! O – O!
> We the orphans cry.

The song quoted above poignantly captures the death of a mother and the profound grief that descends upon her orphaned children in its wake. The themes of loss, mourning and vulnerability that pervade the play are not merely present in this song. They are foregrounded with considerable emotional and dramatic intensity. From its very opening lines, the song establishes a prevailing tone of sorrow and helplessness that colours the audience's engagement with the narrative from the outset. It is argued here that this funeral chant, as performed by the chorus, functions as a subtextual foreshadowing of the imminent tragedy that will befall Ampoma and of the grief that will subsequently engulf those around her, most acutely her children. Significantly, Ampoma herself demonstrates an acute awareness of the grim fate that awaits both her and her children. This is rendered with particular poignancy in Act 1, Scene 1 (pp. 7-8), where she gives voice to this foreboding through a striking metaphor, comparing herself and her children to two little goats struggling on a distant hill:

> AMPOMA: Like two little goats. I'm leaving them. I? Two little goats are struggling on the faraway hillside. I see their eyes glowing in the dark; lonely. Oh, my little boy! And you, my girl with breasts just budding! What hands will prepare you for your wedding? [She sobs quietly.] (Act 1, Scene 1, pp. 7-8)

The connection between the earlier song "Our mother's dead" and Ampoma's statement is therefore unmistakable and serves to consolidate the inference that the funeral chant performed by the chorus in Act 1, Scene 1, functions as a subtle but deliberate intimation of the impending death and dire fate that awaits Ampoma. Her contemplation of her children's future, extending even to the prospect of their weddings, further reinforces the foreshadowing of her imminent demise and poignantly anticipates the challenges her children will be compelled to navigate in the absence of her maternal presence and guidance. The anguish that Ampoma's children will

inevitably endure upon her death is thus rendered all the more resonant by its mirroring of the orphan's grief at the loss of a mother, as expressed in the chant.

As Boltz et al. assert, true foreshadowing equips readers with precise and reliable cues that facilitate their comprehension of the narrative as it unfolds. The funeral chant in *Edufa* effectively fulfils this function by embedding candid and emotionally charged cues into the text that illuminate its thematic and emotional trajectory, thereby deepening audience engagement and sustaining anticipation for forthcoming events. Of particular significance is the fact that this song recurs across multiple scenes throughout the play, each repetition intensifying the atmosphere of impending tragedy. The sustained presence of the funeral chant progressively heightens the sense of inevitable catastrophe, drawing readers deeper into the expectation that Ampoma's children will ultimately be confronted with the same devastating loss and suffering that the song so vividly depicts.

A comparable deployment of true foreshadowing through song is discernible in *The Marriage of Anansewa*. Act 3, page 44 of the play, introduces the reader to the preparations for an outdoor ceremony in honour of Anansewa. As the act progresses, the narrative focus shifts to a group of girls visible in the distance, whose presence and dramatic significance are announced and mediated through song:

> Aba*e,
> We've come to perform.
> Aba*e,
> We've come to perform.
> Let it be perfect,
>
> A gift from God.
>
> We've come to perform.
> Let it be perfect,
>
> A child from God.
>
> We've come to perform.
> Let it be perfect,
> Aba e,
> We've come to perform.
> Aba e,
> We've come to perform.
> Aba e,
> We've come to perform.
> Let it be perfect,
>
> Blessing from God.
>
> We've come to perform.
> Let it be perfect,
> Aba e,
> We've come to perform.
> Let it be perfect, (Act 3, pp. 46-47).

The song quoted above functions as a deliberate precursor to the events that unfold in the opening scene of Act 3, foreshadowing with considerable dramatic effect the significant occasion that is set to bring blessings and joy to the characters. The insistence on perfection embedded within the song's lyrics intimates that the ceremony is expected to be flawless, underscoring its profound significance for all the characters involved. This is precisely the anticipatory dimension of foreshadowing that Lacy identifies as one of its defining characteristics. For Lacy, anticipation in foreshadowing is distinguished by its prophetic quality, in that it typically furnishes an accurate projection of the events that are to follow. Understood in this light, the song effectively cultivates a sense of expectation in the audience and gestures meaningfully towards the magnitude and ceremonial weight of the forthcoming occasion. Taken together, the evidence drawn from both *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa* demonstrates that the use of songs as foreshadowing devices in these texts is consistent with the principles of true foreshadowing. As the analysis has established, the songs embedded within both plays function as reliable and precise indicators of future developments, equipping readers with the interpretive cues necessary to anticipate and appreciate the events that lie ahead within each narrative.

The Song Facilitates Flashback

Flashback, as Cuddon defines it, is a narrative device through which an author interrupts the present timeline of a story to refer back to events that occurred at an earlier point in time. As Nayak further elaborates, flashbacks serve as a means of exploring a character's memories, emotions, and formative experiences from the past. They are introduced into literary works to supply background information or contextual grounding for current narrative events (Mafela) and may equally function to generate dramatic tension or to establish meaningful contrasts between past and present circumstances (Gebeyehu).

This narrative function is discernible in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, where the integration of song as a vehicle for flashback serves to illuminate Ananse's transformed economic circumstances. The song in question transports the audience back to a period of acute financial hardship in Ananse's life, casting his earlier struggles into sharp relief and furnishing the reader with an interpretive foundation for understanding his present situation and the motivations that drive his actions. This song appears in Act 2, pages 37 and 38 of the text, and reads as follows:

> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, friends, do look at Kweku Ananse's amazing ways.
> It's with craftiness solely that he manages his life.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home

> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, friends, do look at Kweku Ananse's amazing ways.
> It's with craftiness solely that he manages his life.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.
>
> Oh, some time ago
> It was bad at home
> But maybe now it's getting better.

The excerpt highlights Ananse's past struggles and contrasts them with his current improved circumstances. The song is utilised in the form of a flashback to convey the character's improved economic situation. It acts as a reflection of both Ananse's past life and his present status. The lyrics emphasise the shift from a negative past to a more favourable present, indicating tangible improvements in Ananse's conditions. In his earlier years, he faced hardship as a poor man trying to escape poverty, as evidenced in Act 1, page 9 of the text. There is no doubt that things have improved for Ananse, as shown by his interruption with the statement:

> If only things would stay as they are a little longer. But the time is running short on my daughter's affairs. (Act 2, p. 38)

The song constitutes Ananse's own forthright acknowledgement of the marked improvement in his fortunes. It simultaneously articulates his earnest wish that the prosperity and comfort he has worked to secure for himself and his daughter, Anansewa, will endure without disruption. Beyond its expositional function, the song offers a penetrating glimpse into Ananse's character, foregrounding the cunning and resourcefulness that are the defining features of his disposition and his approach to the challenges of life. The flashback technique deployed here thus operates on two simultaneous levels: it supplies the audience with essential background to Ananse's present economic circumstances while also serving as an instrument of character revelation, bringing into clear relief the craftiness and ingenuity that animate his every action and that remain central to his identity throughout the play.

The Song Serves as Exposition

The term "exposition" derives from the Latin *expositionem*, meaning "showing forth," and functions as a narrative instrument for presenting, explaining, and conveying vital information to the reader. Its primary purpose is to lay the foundation of the narrative and to orient the reader to the world of the text (Nayak). Within the context of storytelling, exposition assumes an indispensable role in equipping readers with the essential contextual knowledge required to make sense of the narrative as it unfolds. More specifically, it serves to introduce background

information, establish the setting and circumstances of the story, and provide the necessary context for a fuller understanding of the plot, characters, and dramatic situation (Nasridinov and Usmonova). In its most fundamental sense, exposition functions as the threshold through which the reader is ushered into the world of a narrative.

The opening song in Act 1, page 9 of *The Marriage of Anansewa,* performs precisely this expositional function, serving as an introduction to the narrative proper. Through its lyrics, the song conveys crucial details regarding the circumstances of the central character, Ananse, offering the reader an immediate and vivid portrait of the difficulties and hardships he currently faces. In addition to revealing Ananse's personal situation, the song introduces and foregrounds the central theme of the play, namely the burden of hardship and the struggle to navigate the challenges of life, thereby establishing the interpretive framework within which the narrative is to be understood. The song, as it appears in the opening act of the text, reads as follows:

> Oh life is a struggle,
> Oh life is a pain;
> Oh life is a struggle,
> Oh life is a pain
> In this world.
>
> Life is a struggle,
> Citizens,
> Life is a pain
> In this world.
> Life is a struggle,
> Friends,
> Life is a pain
> In this world. (Act 1, p.9)

As Nasridinov and Usmonova have established, exposition serves the fundamental purpose of furnishing readers with vital background details and contextual grounding. The opening song fulfils this purpose with considerable effect, offering the reader an immediate and unambiguous account of the fundamental challenges and obstacles that confront the character Ananse at the outset of the play. Through its lyrics, the song brings into focus the weight of the hardships and trials that define Ananse's present circumstances, establishing the conditions from which the dramatic action will subsequently emerge. As the song progresses, Ananse enters the scene with marked urgency and assumes command of the solo parts, a gesture that underscores his personal investment in and intimate connection to the song's content. This is rendered with particular clarity in the stage direction provided in Act 1, page 9 of the text:

> [Halfway through the song, ANANSE enters hastily, escaping from the rain outside. He is wearing a shabby raincoat. At the entrance, he receives an old umbrella from PROPERTY MAN, and as he opens it up shakes off the rain. He shakes his head like a troubled man. Then, taking over the solo parts of the song, he walks round with an umbrella aloft, clearly indicating that the song he is singing recounts his own story to the PLAYERS and the audience.]

The stage direction quoted above reinforces the reading that the song serves as a mirror of Ananse's present struggles and as a medium through which he communicates his personal circumstances directly to the reader. As Ananse assumes the solo parts of the song, the text makes it increasingly apparent that the song has been fashioned to reflect the specific contours

of his situation, thereby consolidating its function as a significant instrument of exposition. This portrayal equips the reader with essential background knowledge about Ananse's condition, establishing the experiential and emotional foundation upon which the broader narrative is constructed. The opening song thus fulfils its expositional mandate with considerable dramatic effectiveness, simultaneously introducing the play's central character, delineating the tone of the narrative, and situating the reader within the particular social and economic realities that will drive the dramatic action. In doing so, it ensures that the audience arrives at a nuanced understanding of the challenges that beset Ananse, while at the same time building anticipation for the conflicts, tensions, and hurdles that will define his trajectory as the play progresses.

As soon as the song is over, Ananse makes the statement:

> While life is whipping you, rain also pours down to whip you some more. Whatever it was that man did wrong at the beginning of things must have been really awful for all of us to suffer so. [He calls:] Anansewa–a! Where is that typewriter of yours? Bring it here. [Pause.] I've been thinking, thinking and thinking, until my head is earthquaking. Won't somebody who thinks he has discovered the simple solution for living this life kindly step forward and help out the rest of us? [To the audience:] Brother, could it be you? Mother, how about you? Nobody?
>
> Oh the world is hard,
>
> Is hard,
> The world is really hard. (Act 1, p. 9)

Ananse's statement serves to intensify the sense of his present predicament, further cementing the connection between the song and the particular struggles that define his individual circumstances. It lays bare a dimension of Ananse's persona that is central to his characterisation throughout the play, revealing him as a figure perpetually wrestling with the harsh and unrelenting difficulties of life. This portrayal is entirely consistent with, and indeed deepens, the image of Ananse established in the opening song as a character burdened by formidable challenges, affirming the song's expositional role in orienting the reader to the human and dramatic realities at the heart of the narrative.

The Song Provides Insights into Characters' Emotions and Thoughts

A further recurring function of songs as subtexts in the selected texts is their capacity to provide insights into the inner emotional and psychological lives of the characters. The literary concept most pertinent to this function is that of the interior monologue. As Sellew explains, interior monologue is a narrative technique employed in literary works to render a character's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions directly accessible to the reader. Raoufzadeh et al. further elaborate that this technique grants the audience privileged access to the character's inner world, thereby revealing their motivations, desires and psychological state with a degree of immediacy that other narrative modes cannot readily achieve.

Asdasd (2016) identifies three distinct scenarios in which interior monologues may operate within a narrative. In the first, the monologue functions as a direct account of unfolding events as they are experienced by the character. In the second, the narrator's thoughts are presented in the form of flashbacks, establishing meaningful connections between past and present circumstances. In the third, the narrator's thoughts are woven into the fabric of the narrative itself as a reflective and introspective component. The question that naturally arises from this

tripartite framework is: in which of these scenarios do the songs in the selected texts fulfil the function of interior monologues?

Edufa opens with a prologue that introduces the character Abena, who is depicted collecting dew water at night within the compound of Edufa's home. This scene performs two important preliminary functions: it establishes the sibling relationship between Abena and Edufa, and it discloses that the gates of Edufa's compound have remained closed to visitors for a considerable period of time. It is argued here that the song embedded within this prologue operates as an interior monologue, functioning subtextually to distil and give voice to the complex emotions that weigh upon Abena at this particular moment in the narrative. The song appears in the text as follows:

> O, child of Ama,
> Child of Ama in the night
> Is Wandering,
> Crying, 'Mm-m-m-m,
> How my mother is pondering.'
> O, child of Ama,
> Why is she wandering,
> Why wandering,
> Why wand'ring in the night
> Like the dying?
> Mewuo! (Prologue, p. 2)

In this song, Abena gives voice to her anguish over a wandering child of Ama, conveying through her lament a pervasive sense of unease and desolation. The song functions as a direct reflection of Abena's interior emotional state, articulating the anxiety and sleeplessness that have beset her in the wake of recent events within the household, most notably Ampoma's deteriorating illness and Edufa's deliberate restriction of visitors to the compound. The song "O, child of Ama" thus employs the technique of interior monologue to remarkable effect, affording the audience a direct and intimate glimpse into Abena's inner world. It operates as a window onto her thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, laying bare her profound concern for Ampoma, the depth of her emotional distress, and the painful spectre of mother and child separation that haunts the domestic space of the play. An analysis of the song through the framework of Asdasd's classifications reveals that it satisfies both the first and third scenarios of interior monologue. In terms of the first scenario, the song narrates the unfolding events of the present moment, giving vivid expression to Abena's concern for Ampoma and to the unsettling and oppressive atmosphere that has descended upon Edufa's household. In terms of the third scenario, the deeply reflective quality of the song invites the audience into the interior of Abena's emotional experience, fostering a nuanced and empathetic understanding of her psychological state at this critical juncture in the narrative.

A further illustration of songs functioning as an interior monologue is encountered in Act 3, Scene 2, pages 41 and 42 of *Edufa*. The song in this instance is performed by Senchi, a close family friend of both Ampoma and Edufa, whose position within the social world of the play lends particular weight and poignancy to his utterance. The lyrics of the song, as they appear in the text, are as follows:

> Nne
> Nne Nne
> O, Mother
> Nne

Nne Nne

If I find you
Nne
Nne Nne
I'll have to worship you
Nne
Nne Nne

I must adore you
Nne
Nne Nne
O, Mother
Nne
Nne Nne

She's wonderful
She's wonderful
O, Mother
She's wonderful

Yes, if I find you
Nne
Nne Nne
I'll have to worship you
Nne
Nne Nne

I must adore you
Nne
Nne Nne
O Mother
Nne
Nne Nne.

The song yields profound insight into the depth of Senchi's emotional bond with Ampoma and the far-reaching impact of her illness and enforced separation on him and on the other characters who inhabit the world of the play. The recurrent invocation of the term "Nne" (Mother) gives articulate expression to the longing and nostalgia that her absence has awakened in both Senchi and Ampoma's children. The lines "If I find you / I'll have to worship you / I must adore you" communicate with striking intensity the depth of Senchi's affection for Ampoma and his yearning for her presence, a yearning that extends beyond Senchi alone to encompass the children's own profound desire for reunion with their mother.

In the broader context of the play, the song assumes a significance that reaches beyond Senchi's personal grief to speak to the deeper relational bonds that connect Ampoma to her children. While the song's primary focus is Senchi's emotional attachment to Ampoma, it simultaneously and indirectly illuminates the nature of the relationship she shares with her children. The fact of Ampoma's separation from her children on account of her illness lends the song an additional layer of emotional complexity and resonance. The repeated invocation

of "Nne" (Mother) acquires a distinctly bittersweet quality in this context, transforming into a collective expression of longing for an absent maternal presence. The lines "If I find you / I'll have to worship you / I must adore you" carry corresponding weight in this expanded reading, articulating a heartfelt and shared desire for reunion that encompasses both Senchi and the children in equal measure. In terms of Asdasd's classifications, the song fulfils the first scenario of interior monologue by giving sustained and immediate voice to enduring emotions in the present moment, laying bare the profound psychological and emotional toll that Ampoma's illness and separation have exacted upon those who love her.

Songs perform a comparably revelatory function in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, affording the reader privileged access to the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. This is illustrated with particular vividness in Act 1, page 24, where the players perform a song about the limping Ama. The song introduces Ama as a character distinguished by a physical impairment, and its lyrics give immediate and direct expression to her innermost concerns about her prospects of finding a life partner:

> She says, mmm mother;
> She says, mmm father;
>
> She says, how shall I find a mate?
> K-legged Ama,
> How shall I find a mate?
>
> Limping Ama,
> How shall I find a mate? (Act 1, p. 24)

The song functions as a vehicle for character establishment, introducing Ama to the reader through the immediate and arresting detail of her physical condition, which at once conjures a vivid image of a figure marked by visible difference and the social vulnerabilities that accompany it. Ama's plaintive question, "How shall I find a mate?", gives direct and unmediated expression to her emotional vulnerability and the uncertainty that clouds her prospects for romantic companionship. The repeated emphasis on her physical condition through the refrains "K-legged Ama" and "Limping Ama" serves to foreground her insecurities and to reveal the particular challenges she faces in her quest for acceptance, love and belonging. The song thus operates as an interior monologue in the first of Asdasd's scenarios, articulating the lived emotional experience of its subject in the present moment with unflinching candour. The parallels between Ama's predicament and that of Ananse are, however, equally significant. Just as Ama is constrained by the social consequences of her physical condition, Ananse is burdened by the limitations imposed by his financial circumstances. The central question of the song, "How shall I find a mate?", therefore resonates on a second and deeper level when read in relation to Ananse's situation, functioning as a metaphorical articulation of his longing for a better life, free from the grip of poverty and hardship. As Ama yearns for companionship and the dignity of a life partner, so Ananse yearns for prosperity and relief from the relentless pressures that define his daily existence. It is at this juncture, once the song draws to a close, that the Storyteller intervenes with the following lines:

> Kweku Ananse said he would!
> And he has done it
> He has done it
> O, mankind! (Act 1, p. 24)

The Storyteller's statement above functions as a tribute to Ananse's ingenuity and the audacity of his accomplishments. Viewed in the light of Ananse's successful escape from poverty

through cunning and carefully orchestrated schemes, the earlier song about Ama's longing for companionship acquires a compelling additional layer of meaning and interpretive richness. It no longer operates solely as an expression of Ama's personal yearning; it simultaneously comes to symbolise Ananse's own desire for material prosperity and, more significantly, his remarkable capacity to surmount seemingly insurmountable obstacles and transform his most ambitious designs into lived reality. The foregoing analysis makes it clear that songs perform a vital and multifaceted subtextual function in the selected texts, serving as privileged instruments for the revelation of characters' innermost emotions, thoughts, and psychological states. When examined through the analytical framework of interior monologue, the songs in both *Edufa* and *The Marriage of Anansewa* emerge not as peripheral or decorative elements of the dramatic text, but as carefully crafted narrative devices through which Sutherland grants her audience intimate and penetrating access to the interior lives of her characters.

The Song Conveys and Reinforces the Central Themes of the Plays

A central constituent of any literary work is its theme, broadly understood as the principal message or recurring preoccupation that emerges through the sustained interpretation of the text (Owusu). It is particularly noteworthy that many of the songs in the texts under examination perform a significant role in conveying and reinforcing the central thematic concerns of their respective narratives. A compelling illustration of this function is the funeral chant performed by the chorus of women in Act 1, Scene 1, page 4 of *Edufa*. The chant draws sustained attention to the theme of motherhood and, more specifically, to the devastating consequences of the loss of a mother figure, a concern that is absolutely central to the dramatic and emotional architecture of the play. The performance of the funeral chant "Our mother's dead" simultaneously introduces the figure of the orphaned child, abandoned and bereft in the wake of maternal death, a motif that subsequently assumes considerable significance in the development of the plot.

A comparable thematic function is performed by the opening song in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, which wastes no time in establishing the central preoccupation of the narrative: the experience of hardship and the relentless struggle of human existence. From its opening lines, the song tells the difficulties faced not only by Ananse but by the broader community of characters, laying the experiential and emotional foundation upon which the narrative is constructed. The repeated refrain "Life is a struggle / Life is a pain / In this world" is particularly instructive in this regard, as its insistent repetition gestures towards the universality of these challenges, situating Ananse's individual predicament within a wider and more collectively shared human experience. As the protagonist, Ananse emerges as the embodiment of these struggles, functioning as a representation of the common person confronted with the full weight of life's adversities, and in doing so, he commands the reader's sympathy and emotional investment. In establishing this thematic foundation, the opening song effectively sets the tone for the entire play, signalling unambiguously that the narrative will engage with the complexities of human existence and the varied ways in which individuals negotiate and respond to adversity. As the play progresses, the theme of hardship deepens and intensifies, becoming an increasingly prominent and pervasive motif as Ananse's struggles multiply and the obstacles arrayed against him become ever more formidable.

What the foregoing analysis makes evident is that a number of the songs in the selected texts perform dual and mutually reinforcing functions. This is exemplified with particular clarity by the funeral chant performed by the chorus in *Edufa* and the opening song in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, both of which operate simultaneously as vehicles of thematic articulation and as subtextual devices that deepen the audience's engagement with the dramatic and human realities at the heart of each play.

Conclusion

The study sought to enrich our understanding of the ways we can continue to perceive and appreciate the use of songs in written texts. The distinctive contribution this study makes to scholarship, therefore, is seen in the attention it draws to the centrality of songs as a subtext. The paper reveals that songs in Efua Sutherland's plays, Edufa and The Marriage of Anansewa, function as integral components of the main texts. They are not merely for entertainment but serve as narrative tools that aid in foreshadowing, facilitating flashbacks, providing exposition, conveying characters' thoughts and emotions, and reinforcing central themes of the narratives. In doing so, they affirm the argument advanced throughout this paper that Sutherland's deployment of songs is not incidental but constitutive, forming an indispensable dimension of her dramatic vision and the broader project of rooting African theatrical expression in the rich soil of indigenous oral tradition.

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