

**READINGS  
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&  
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# REFLECTIONS ON THE DOMINANT AFFECTIVE PERSONALITY OF OLA ROTIMI AS EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS TRAGIC HERO CHARACTERISATION

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## Introduction

The affect component of personality comprises, essentially, attitudes that betray one's deep-seated feelings about the object of his attention at any particular point in time. This feeling may be more subjective than objective. But it often carries a unique behavioural cue that motivates the individual to choose to behave in a particular way. This particular way has always functioned to give a label to the individual's personality type in terms of attitude categorisation.

The affective domain comes as the third component of the tripod that bears human personality profile. The other two components are the cognitive and motoric dimensions. When the cognitive aspect predominates the personality characterisation of an individual, there is a suggestion in the direction of intellectualism and analytical astuteness. A cognitive personality is therefore a prisoner of thought; he is more calculating than speculative and answers more to a description of reflectivity than impulsivity. Sherlock Holme's characterisation as a super detective in the popular fictional series created by Cummings aptly illustrates this point. Indeed, in negotiating the real through the imagined, detective stories are often taken as purveyors of fantasies.

Personality components are not separate entities that function independently of each other. Rather, the smallest unit of human activity classifiable as a behaviour component comprises the three personality domains. In spite of this, human behaviour can still be analysed as being more typical of one component than the other two, even though the three components are present in different doses.

The 'action' component of personality as the tag suggests describes the manifestation of thought-based feelings in behavioural exhibition. The limbs are principally instrumental to action manifestation in human organisms. All behaviours are animated through the use of the hands, the legs, the mouth and the eyes, which often do assist as vehicles of behavioural expressions. For this reason, plays or narratives that emphasise the active use of the limbs depict the psychomotoric bias of the author's personality profile. Modern movies like the James Bond series that combine visuals with exaggerated human feats demonstrate such personality trait in their producer(s).

The works of some writers emphasise the active use of the affective component of human personality. Hence, there is a demonstration of deep feeling by the author for certain personalities who populate the universe of the text. Ola Rotimi is one of those dramatists whose works reveal this interconnection between the text and the author's personality 'context' or whose plays provide demonstrable insights into the behavioural make-up of their creator. He corroborates this view

when he discloses in an interview: "every character in my dramaturgic creativity has a bit of me. You can't divorce a person from his works; his creative works, it is impossible" (Rotimi: 1989, 43). The aim of this essay therefore, is to explore the manifestation of affective bias in Ola Rotimi through his *dramatis personae* especially the tragic heroes. In doing this however, it contends that a careful assessment of his plays shows the presence in appropriate measure and mixture, of the cognitive, the affective and the motoric human personality dimensions. Nonetheless, there are strong indications of the dominance of affective disposition. Before discussing these indications, we need to put in proper perspective, the psychological foundations of what is commonly referred to as "affect".

### Psychoanalytic Basis of Affect

Psychoanalysis is one of the major therapeutic approaches commonly used by psychologists to explain and find solutions to subconscious related personality dysfunctions. Put differently, the approach explores emotional and psychic resources of the personality to explain human behaviour in a particular context. This approach was theorised and developed into a model by Sigmund Freud (1852-1936), an Austrian physician. The theory was based on the fact that unconscious forces act as determinants of personality. "Unconscious" in this vein, refers to that part of the human personality of which a person is unaware and which is a potential determinant of behaviour. Schwartz and Willbern (1982) further illuminate the concept when they remark that the unconscious is "an assumption about the way we structure reality in relation to our wishes and fears; it makes it impossible for naïve trust or the idea of unmediated expression to govern our understanding of discourse" (207-08).

Psychoanalysis is, therefore, based on the contention that powerful forces inherent in the individual, of whom we are not aware, principally trigger behaviour. These hidden forces are shaped by childhood experiences and they play an important role in energising and directing our everyday behaviour (Feldman: 1993, 56). To a psychoanalyst, even a slip of tongue by a client when speaking can be a key into unravelling the unconscious personality entanglements that have been obstructing normal behaviour. The common belief of theorists who adopt this school of thought as their model is that many of life's experiences are painful and the unconscious provides a "safe" haven for our recollection of such events, a place where they can remain without continuously disturbing us. With the same stretch of reasoning, the unconscious is believed to contain instinctual drives such as infantile wishes, desires, demands and needs that are hidden from conscious awareness because of the conflict and pain they would cause us if they are part of our everyday lives (see Freud: 1984). When the emotion expressed is incongruent with what is generally considered normal in any given situation, the victim's unconscious may be fingered as having erupted into the surface and a moment of uncontrolled anger, joy or any such strong feeling serves as a good example in this regard. According to Freud, to fully understand personality, it is necessary to illuminate and expose what is in the unconscious. But because the unconscious

disguises the meaning of the material it holds, it cannot be observed directly. It is for this reason that it becomes necessary to isolate certain cues that are emblematic of the unconscious. Hence, cues as a slip of tongue, fantasies and dreams are often used as a link to reach the unconscious. Literary works in this regard have been regarded as being analogous to the dream world which in the words of Schwartz and Willbern (1982) is "the defensive transformation of infantile wishes" (209), serving as a reparation for a kind of loss or fulfilment of a particular yearning.

For a long time, psychoanalysis has provided a good explanation for strange and seemingly illogical behaviour exhibited, particularly, by adults. In spite of the emergence of modern clinical and counselling therapeutic techniques, psychologists still find a good use for psychoanalysis.

### Biological Basis of Affect

At this juncture, it should be mentioned that affect has a biological base often employed by psychotherapists who have adopted the biomedical dimension as their tool of analysis. This school of thought attributes the level of adrenalin and nor-adrenalin present in the blood stream as being responsible for the intensity of freedom allowed emotional outburst which is often manifested in high pitch of anger, flight response to a feared object, ecstatic joy, etc. The nervous system, according to Papua and Olds (1988) is not the only biological system governing behaviour. Both the central and the peripheral nervous systems work closely with the endocrine system. These are a series of ductless glands that secrete hormones directly into the blood stream. Hormones are chemicals that can influence the rate or the direction of activity in some internal organs of the body by speeding up or inhibiting the growth of the cells in those organs. For example, when the adrenal glands (Adrenal Medulla and Adrenal Cortex) are stimulated, adrenaline and nor adrenalin are secreted. The secretion of these hormones is important in coping with stress (Papua and Olds: 1988, 68). These metabolic substances are supposed to be produced in the human kidney. And the capacity of the individual to produce this in quantum differs from one person to the other.

Other psychotherapists have adduced several reasons for emotional build up in human beings. Prominent among these is the Behaviour Modification school of thought where the environment is principally factored into having the capacity to make or mar the individual. This school of thought believes that the environment has two components, namely the physical and the human dimensions (Skinner: 1953). The physical environment comprises such items as the hard, inanimate physical structures, free access to lush evergreen lawn, or an undisturbed seaside breeze etc. The human environment, which is believed to wield more potent powers in influencing the mind, consists of the significant others in an individual's life space, such as the parents, other siblings and group referents with whom an individual interact during his developmental years. It is the backgrounds such as these that are supposed to have presented a series of stimuli to which a developing individual is expected to respond one way or the other. The particular way chosen by an individual depends, importantly, on the kind of influence exerted by the joint interaction of the two types of environment on the individual. For example, a child

reared in a crowded environment where he has to share a room with five other siblings for example, may develop an affect that has a bias for territorial poaching. Also where indulgent, pampering parents rear a child, such a child may grow to become very dependent. Consequently, he may exhibit an emotional weakness in the face of life challenges, particularly when and where he is expected to be assertive.

The cognitive psychotherapeutic school of thought, as Smith and Mackie (1995) rightly observe, believes that human personality profile is a function of an intricate cognitive process that takes into account such components as feelings, thought, perception, imaginative ability, aspiration, expectation etc. It also feeds upon the individual's ability to expedite these components in a way that they would bring maximum cognitive gains (4-9). For example, females' attitudes of crying to express anguish or displeasure, even though is classifiable essentially as an emotional behaviour, is not devoid of its cognitive implication. That is, for every human action, there is a thought-base that often links cause with effect. Hence, the crying attitude of females is at times a means of achieving a carefully envisioned end.

Whatever the merit or demerit of these schools of thought, their presentations here suggest that several psychological reasons can induce the affect disposition in human beings to a level sufficient enough for it to be noticeable as being dominant.

### Ola Rotimi's Personality Outside his Plays

Olawale Emmanuel Gladstone Rotimi was, until his death, a playwright, actor, artistic director and a Professor of Dramatic Literature at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife. He was the initiator of Ife Festival of Arts in the late 1960s and the founder of Ori Olokun Acting Company, which later metamorphosed into the University of Ife Theatre Company. He wrote and directed several plays for the stage within and outside Nigeria. Some of them include: *The Gods are not to Blame* (an adaptation of Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*); *Kurunmi - an Historical tragedy*; *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi - a Play*; *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again - a Comedy*; *Holding Talks - an Absurdist drama*; *If...a Tragedy of the Ruled*; *Hopes of the Living Dead*; *Man Talk Woman Talk*; *When Criminals Turn Judges* and "*Tororo tororo roro - a Radio Play*".

In person, Ola Rotimi commands a physical appearance that is not particularly extra-ordinary. However, he possesses certain attributes that can be used as proof of a strong, distinctive but subtle personality. With the combination of a height that approximates 5.6 feet and a dimension that can be described as burly, Rotimi affects a personality carriage that commands notice. Even in the absence of the shagginess that characterises the beard and hair style of some accomplished artistes (one of which he is) Rotimi, in terms of appearance, is susceptible to the scientifically unproved but suspected behavioural tendency of short people to display a kind of quick temper, arrogance and assertiveness which

is not common in people of average or noticeable height. When he talks, he expects to be listened to.

As an academic who attained the peak of his career ladder and a dramatist, his attitude to work clearly demonstrates Rotimi's commitment to the pursuit of fairness, equity and justice\*. He is also concerned with excellence. He is not given to bending rules while he abhors twisting events or manipulating circumstances to achieve unmerited ends. He expects people to always work hard and reap what they sow or profit by what they do. He looks people straight in the eye and he is hardly swayed or intimidated by material puddings of life. Perhaps, this accounts for his fascination with mythical, historical or literary figures that are embroiled in struggle in order to achieve and/or protect the above values. Such figures bestride their universe with their strong commitment to what Rotimi believes should be the cardinal goals of man in the world, i.e. justice, fairness and equity.

Beside, it also informs the palpable authorial identification with the underdog in some of his plays especially *If...* and *Hopes of the Living Dead*. In setting the hapless tenants against their Landlord who represents the ethos of authoritarian democracy and the Lepers against a ruthless colonial authority, Rotimi identifies with the "oppressed" to assert their humanity hitherto denied by the inherently unjust social system. His affect is demonstrated in the manner of presentation and resolution of conflicts.

Characters as the spokespersons or agents of the playwright are imbued with certain behavioural traits that can be located in their creator, i.e. the playwright. Like the heroes of his plays, Rotimi induces the extreme of emotions in people around him. He takes his time to be convinced of an idea or a line of action. But once he is convinced, he deploys all the energy and determination required to accomplish the idea or pursue the line of action. He does not prevaricate: neither does he engage in diversionary inconsistencies. This is underscored in his address to the cast and crew of *Hopes of the Living Dead* on the day of the first reading of the play before the commencement of rehearsals:

My people, full rehearsals begin on Monday. This might be the most challenging production we'll ever confront. Which means that the rehearsals will be uncompromisingly rigorous. You all have the weekend to think things over. Those of you who can't stand hard work, stay away after the weekend. Those of you who show up on Monday, well, remember: in theatre, my bargain is that of the Devil himself. You volunteer your person, I insist on your soul, till the production is over. Goodnight (1988. 4).

He directed this play for the Convocation ceremony of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife in December 1988.

In a nutshell, Rotimi has a personality that somewhat recalls certain tendencies in the central characters of his dramatic works. Here is someone who would march to the gallows, with his thick-lensed glasses and head unbowed the moment his mind is made up that it is the right thing to do under the given,

circumstance. The heroes of his tragic plays like King Odewale, Aare Kurunmi and Oba Ovonramwen demonstrate such a seemingly unbending commitment to their conviction in several ways.

In religious belief, Ola Rotimi has the deep conviction that there is pre-ordination and that certain invisible divine forces do control and set the course for human (in) actions in life. Like the classical Greek tragedy, *Oedipus Rex* from where *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is adapted, Rotimi believes that man's success in whatever sphere of life is limited or enhanced by the extent to which he could mediate the unseen forces of fate and temper his own flaws. That is why King Odewale in the dénouement of *The Gods...* urges Aderopo and the people of Kutuje land not to blame the gods for his ordeal:

No, no! Do not blame the Gods. Let no one blame the powers.  
My people, learn from my fall. The powers would have failed if I  
did not let them use me. They knew my weakness: the weakness  
of a man easily moved to the defence of his tribe against others  
(p. 71):

#### Tragic Heroes in Rotimi's Dramaturgy.

Rotimi endorses the view that a tragic flaw is present in every personality of distinction. This implies a certain fault in the person's character, which ironically serves both as weak and strong points. However, he shares to a considerable extent, the idea in Greek mythology that there is a limit within which man can operate, beyond which the gods will react negatively. More than anything else, the recourse to the oracle in his historical tragedies underscores his belief in the existence of forces located outside of the person, which are capable of determining the course of human life. This is known in psychology as "external locus of control". Those who subscribe to this concept are often found to be more subjective than objective, and subjectivity, without doubt, is the hallmark of the affective domain of human personality. However, in their subjectivity, Rotimi's tragic heroes demonstrate and evoke deep emotions in the audience. They radiate deep-seated feelings at each point in time, about the object of their attention, whether it is a person, an issue or a course of action.

The tragic hero characterisation in Rotimi's plays is influenced by a significant interaction between the physical and the metaphysical and between the present and the immanent. This reality can be accounted for in the Yoruba cosmology of his cultural origin and the Greek literary tradition encountered in the course of his education. In his plays, there is constantly a palpable allusion to a particular force in the universe that controls mankind. This force takes the shape of either the temporal or the historical. The temporal has as a thematic focus, the mundane observations and experience that are of note in the author's life, while the historical draws largely from historical occurrences that depend on mythical stereotypes for their life pulse. Rotimi strongly believes in the temporal and he uses the historical perspective to explain the Man-God interplay in matters of destiny. He declares: "I believe in destiny, that is the important thing. It is reflected in

struggles, successes and failures. There are certain things science cannot explain, Abiku for instance" (1989, 42).

Here, the supremacy of the invisible hand that controls human affairs in the face of man's subservience to the might of the supernatural is clearly emphasised. This perspective is exemplified in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, *Kurunmi* and *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*. It is to these three plays that we restrict our analyses in the essay.

The affect component of Odewale's personality in *The Gods...* comes to the fore from the beginning of the play. It is this affect that impels him to take actions that draw him nearer at every moment to the ineluctable clasp of fate. In his passionate concern for the common people, one can argue that Rotimi projects an element of his personality into Odewale. And as each move brings him closer to the unpleasant end, he does not waver in his decision to unearth the hidden and thereby set the community of Kutuje free from the plague that has been ravaging it.

When the play opens, Odewale is already presiding over the affairs of Kutuje land as the new King, installed after the death of Adetusa. He is deeply touched by, and he identifies with the plight of the people held hostage by sickness and death. As the pillar upon which the society's stability rests, he causes sacrifices to be made to appropriate gods: *Soponna* the god of poxes, *Ela* the deity of deliverance and *Sango* the god of thunder and rainfall. He also asks Aderopo to consult the oracle. In his words: "I know your pains, my people. I feel your suffering too" (p. 10). In pursuing the causes and cures of the epidemic, King Odewale remains resolute. That is why he would not want to listen privately to the outcome of Aderopo's consultation with the oracle at Ile Ife. This intense feeling also makes him to send for Baba Fakunle the diviner when all else appear to have failed. Ironically, the public declarations of the oracular finding about the causes of the general unease in the town stirs the urge in King Odewale, to find out the truth about the murderer of the late king. It initiates the process of self-discovery that leads to his disaster and the play's resolution. He does not waver or abandon the search mid way even when the accusing spear is unbearably at him. As Alaka further entangles the web of dramatic complication with the unwitting problematisation of Odewale's identity, Odewale's commitment to the chosen course of action – to unravel conundrum of his identity and the mystery of Kutuje's misery is unmistakable. Perhaps that is why he torments Alaka, his benefactor:

ODEWALE: Nobody move! Stay, everybody: you too, wife.

I may be of lowly birth but I am proud to know about it (p. 63)

From the moment of anagnorisis, when it is clearer that he is the much sought after "murderer and bed sharer", whose presence in the land is responsible for the violation of the normal rhythm of life, he embraces with his head high, the reversal of his fortune in the "scene of passion". Aristotle calls this vital moment in tragedy "peripeteia" (1974, 41).

Odewale brings on himself, the presage of misfortune that he has earlier invoked on the "criminal" to buttress his commitment to truth and justice. He gorges out his

own eyes according to his vow before the shrine of Ogun, abdicates the throne, gathers his incestuously begotten children and departs the land for exile. He pursues to a logical conclusion the search for truth and establishes the principle of his search for justice:

When  
The wood-insect  
Gathers sticks,  
On its own head it  
Carries  
Them (p. 72).

It is important to note that Odewale approaches his tragedy with grandeur and this underscores the goal of tragedy which is the affirmation of man's nobility in the face of odds placed on his path by self, society and unseen hands of predestination (the gods).

Similar dogged pursuits of an identified course of action as well as a commitment to righting a perceived wrong are represented in the character of *Kurunmi*, the eponymous hero of the historical tragedy – *Kurunmi*. The play draws its subject from Yoruba (African) history at the dawn of colonialism in the late nineteenth century. There is the presence to a large extent of the affective possibilities in *Kurunmi*'s character. This hero keenly fascinates Rotimi and he demonstrates this by naming his residence at the outskirts of Ile Ife town after the Generalissimo of the defunct Oyo Empire. It is called "Kurunmi's Hideout".

In *Kurunmi*, the object that secures intense attraction of the hero is the concept of "tradition". *Kurunmi* is strongly persuaded about the import of tradition in the life of a people as well as its sanctity. To him, the continuous existence of a society is hinged on its tradition and the respect accorded it by the people. "The pride of man, my people, is his tradition" (p. 16), he remarks. Irreverence of tradition in this regard, is an invitation to perdition. Justice thus demands an unwavering observance of the due processes laid down in a people's tradition. It behoves on the powerful not to veer away from them simply because such departure is demanded by exigency. Hence, *Kurunmi* would not succumb to what he considers to be "a rude spit in the aged face of tradition" (p. 31) being masterminded by the least person of all, *Alaafin Abiodun Atiba* who is supposed to be the repository of tradition. The change in tradition here is informed by a self-perpetuation motive as the Crown prince or *Aremo Adelu* is expected to commit suicide when his father dies. The aim of this tradition is to forestall regicide by parricide. But *Alaafin Atiba*'s bid to install *Adelu* as the next *Alaafin* after him against the dictate of tradition hitherto is being contested by *Kurunmi*. He does not want to condone the subversion of tradition even if others in the King's cabinet are willing to. "There has been no exception to the rule, and wealthy *Atiba* can't now corrupt us to grant him a special favour. *Atiba* dies. *Adelu* – wo!" (pp. 19-20) he insists. Even when it is clear that he is the only important chief left in the Kingdom who still opposes the *Alaafin*, he does not waver. He would rather die

than be part of a plan to truncate the smooth sail of the cultural order. This strong will, couched in a dramatic irony "over my dead body" (p. 21) is the bastion of tragic epistemology in the play. As he puts it emphatically:

Go! Tell the world: *Kurunmi* will never prostrate himself to shoot a deer with a father one morning, and then squat with the son in the evening to shoot a goose! Never...never...I say n-e-v-e-r!

(p. 21).

Beside, *Kurunmi*'s word is his bond. And that is why one finds appropriate the proverb he uses to justify his stance in the ensuing conflict: "When an Elder sees a mudskipper, he must not afterwards say it was a crocodile" (p. 42).

Thus, from the beginning to the end, *Kurunmi* tries to defend the inviolability of tradition. In the course of this defence, he rallies round his army and his *Egba* allies to confront the *Ibadan* forces who are fighting in support of *Alaafin*'s innovation. Ironically, *Kurunmi* in his ardent defence of tradition somehow assaults the same tradition when he rises up in arms against the empire that he is installed by *Alaafin* to defend. But from the moment of his disagreement with the move to install *Adelu*, he has nothing but contempt for the *Alaafin* and those who endorse his scheme of "change".

Unfortunately, *Kurunmi* and the allies as a result of error of judgement meet disaster. He loses his army, all his sons, his position and his life. The depth of the tragedy is aptly borne by his name. "Ku-run-mi" in Yoruba means, "death has ruined me".

*On the whole, as actors and actresses who have worked with him as an artistic director would attest, such emphatic resolution, are typical of Rotimi. It is not surprising that historical personalities who demonstrate these traits specially attract him. Oba Ovonramwen, apart from Kurunmi, is another example.*

In the reconstruction of colonial history of Benin kingdom, this affective trait is emphasised in the character of *Oba Ovonramwen* around whom the conflict in *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* revolves. This is evident from the challenges that he is faced with, the options open to him in the circumstances and the judgement made by him. The stability of Benin Kingdom is menaced by internal rebellion and the onslaught of British imperialism when the play begins. At the centre of these is the *Oba*. In dealing with the internal dissension, *Ovonramwen* is firm and resolute. He prescribes death for *Obaduruagbon*, *Esasoyen* and other Chiefs who are found guilty of killing *Uwangue Egiebo*, a chief believed to be loyal to the *Oba*. In pronouncing their death sentence, *Ovonramwen* shows that the chiefs are being justly rewarded with their own measure. And from that moment, *Ovonramwen* becomes more conscious of threats to his authority. He is consequently more assertive and ready to contain opposition. He warns:

*Let the land know this: Ovonramwen Nogbaisi is henceforth set to rule as king after the manner of his fathers before him...no matter how long and stout the human neck, on top of it must always sit a head (pp. 6-7).*

With this determined bearing, he rebuffs the subterfuge and advances of British traders. The traders are seeking in-road into his kingdom, which extends as far and wide as Agbor, Akure and Itshekiri land. Though he is aware of the exploits of colonialists in other places, he would not truckle to foreign domination. He sees the visit of Gallwey and Hutton, Queen Victoria's envoys, as a harbinger of the impending cultural, economic and political domination of his people. He tries to prevent it by declining to endorse a treaty that would confer on the British traders unimpeded access to palm-oil, hitherto under the control of the Oba. He suspects the motives of the English throne and rejects the treaty in plain terms: "I shall not, with my own hand, sign that treaty. If it pleases you, put a mark on it yourself and call it **my** mark" (p. 20).

*In the same spirit, he declines to meet the entourage of Phillips during the Ague festival.*

*Ovonramwen's strong will in this regard brings him into collision course with the visitors as the latter are attacked and killed. Ironically, the festival that should be marked with peace and love turns out to be bloody as his lieutenants shed the blood of white men in their bid to preserve the sacredness of Ague. The ordeal of the Oba is accentuated with this situation. In response, British soldiers with the support of Black recruits carry out a retaliatory expedition. He and the chiefs are tried and convicted. Some of the Chiefs are sentenced to death while Ovonramwen is deposed. However, his affect comes to the fore in the course of the reversal of fortune that he suffers. He chooses not to surrender sheepishly to the British imperial forces. Rather, he prefers to "continue the grapple with the White man and die nobly in the sweat of it" (p. 64). He plans to go and join forces with Ologhosere and fight on until he is betrayed, re-arrested and sent on exile to Calabar.*

In Ovonramwen's moment of awareness, Rotimi shows that class or social distinctions are tenuous and ephemeral. To avoid being recognised, the Oba has to conceal his identity even in the forest. He is so transformed that he loses the royal awe. It is the royal messenger Uzazakpo who has an identity and is recognised by passers-by. That of the king is submerged, thus showing that only a thin line

separates the rich from the poor and the powerful from the less privileged. Rotimi's identification with this moral, from the viewpoint of commonality is clear and recurrent in his plays.

## Conclusion

By exploring the inter connections between psychology and literature; this chapter from the foregoing attests the import of inter-disciplinary framework in humanistic inquiries. It has shown that Rotimi's drama emphasise the active use of the affective aspect of personality, especially by the tragic heroes and by extension, Ola Rotimi, their creator. The concern of the paper is to illuminate the behavioural traits of Ola Rotimi, through a reading of his dramatic works especially the tragedies. It also attempts to enhance the reader's understanding of the plays, by providing insights into aspects of the playwright's personality that resonate in his works.

Rotimi has demonstrated an expertise made possible by his combination of wit and emotionality, with a touch of humility and humaneness. All these are shown in his approach to life as a person and in his perception of human limitations and possibilities. The paper contends that in his private life, Rotimi is a person given to affect which is a dominant trait of his personality. It argues further that this affect is projected into certain characters especially tragic heroes with whom he is fascinated to a considerable extent. Hence, a reading of his plays reveals that he shares the affective traits of Odewale, Kurunmi and Ovonramwen. These are strong personalities who dominate the space of their existence and who are resolute in their pursuit of what they adjudge the right course of action in a given instance.

## Note

- \* Until his death on August 18, 2000, the authors of this paper had personal interactions with Prof. Ola Rotimi at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, where they both lecture. Apart from the fact that both of them used to watch rehearsals and performances of plays directed by the playwright between 1995 and 2000, Adeoti played **Nwodo** in the 1988 performance of *Hopes of the Living Dead*, which Rotimi directed.

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