A Comparative Study of Romantic Love in Three Literary Texts

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Abstract

Love is a universal language that can unite two or more persons. It becomes romantic when it finds itself in the wrong context, a rigid situation, an unrealistic relationship, and an uncertain situation. The study examines romantic love literarily in three languages and cultures (Yorùbá, English & French) of three different centuries – the sixteenth century (England), the nineteenth century (France), and the twentieth century (Nigeria). The paper specifically analyses Romanticism in William Shakespeare*'s Romeo and Juliet*, Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas, and* Akínwùmí Ìṣ̀ọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú* through the adoption of Hebert's Architextual and Intertextual comparative methods. Contrary to popular opinion, which limits Romanticism to 19th-century literary activities, this study argues that Romanticism had existed even before the 19th century and still exists in different forms in this modern epoch. This is why the 17th-century Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, 19th-century Hugo's *Ruy Blas,* and the 20th-century Ìṣ̀ọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú* are captured as romantic works spanning different countries, centuries, geographical locations, cultures, and situations.

Keywords: Romanticism, Romantic Context, Romantic Love, Unrealistic relationship & Tragedy.

Introduction

Romanticism is derived from the French word '*roman'* which means a novel. Being romantic will therefore mean behaving like a literary character in a non-fictional world. Romanticism is a literary movement of the late 18th century and middle 19th century in Europe and America. It promotes the individual over the community; sentiment over reason; courtship over marriage; and love at first sight over organized relationships. According to Clemens (2009), Romanticism can be defined as "a movement in the literature of virtually every country of Europe, the United States, and Latin America between 1750 and 1870, characterized by reliance on the imagination and subjectivity of approach, freedom of thought and expression, and an idealization of nature. The term romantic first appeared in the 18th-century English and originally meant romance-like; that is, resembling the fanciful character of medieval romances." This definition of Clemens is universal as he considers the movement in the whole world. According to M.A. Johnson (2004, p. 41) "Romanticism is defined as an upsurge of man's imaginative spirit and search for the absolute favours reflecting exceptional situations in literary works, poetry in particular, and fully tapping the resources of language in the depiction of human emotions." Johnson highlighted the concepts of imagination, search for the absolute, and emotions in her definition. *Romanticism,* which is a way of life or an ideology that leads to abnormal behaviours and expressions, must not be confused with the word *Romance,* which, according to Karandashev (2015: 4), is the fanciful, expensive, and pleasurable feeling from an emotional attraction towards another person".

Karandashev (2015: ibid) defined romantic love as "the form of love that is most salient in public view, but it has different subcategories; some of them are related to sexual love". One cannot separate sex, which is the ultimate expression of romantic love, in a romantic period of courtship. Karandashev (2015: 5) distinguished romantic love from platonic love. He declared that "platonic love is purely spiritual and emotional and presumably free from physical desire. It is exclusively expressed in a non-erotic way and lacks emotional closeness'. Most romantic writers express their freedom of literary creation to produce literary texts of aberration. Littell (2008: 309) described romantic writers by saying that they "focus on the individual led to the creation of a different kind of hero: unique, bold, sometimes brooding or eccentric". Romantic writers produce romantic heroes who are idols, superstars, individualists, and ideological freedom fighters. Littell (2008: ibid) further explained that romantic heroes "were often larger than life, and always unforgettable. Their stories are still told today, and they inspired a modern array of equality vivid character".

This is a comparative study of English; French and Yorùbá cultures feature a constant generational conflict between parents' children. The bone of contention is "marriage with love or marriage without love." The parents recommend a marriage partner based on culture while the new generation seeks to marry the one, they love. This romantic context makes the love between young people to be a romantic love. Previous studies that examined Romanticism in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas,* and Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* have failed to compare Romanticism to romantic love. Other specific objectives include: (i) examining what makes love romantic through the analysis of obstacles to the realization of their dreams in the three texts, (ii) depicting how they react to these obstacles, (iii) examining the factors that contribute to their tragic ends and (iv) how the texts end in a tragedy.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Hebert (2013) proposed nine comparative methods which includes (i) intratextual comparison - endotextual analysis of elements of the same literary work, (ii) intertextual comparison - exotextual analysis of elements of two or more literary works, (iii) intersemiotic comparison - comparison of a literary text and a non-literary text, (iv) architextual comparison - comparison of a literary text and a literary movement; (v) infra-architextual comparison - comparison of different parts of a literary work and different parts of many literary works; (vi) intergeneric/interdiscursive comparison - comparison of a tragedy and a comedy or a lyric poem and an epic poem; (vii) intrageneric/intradiscursive comparison- comparison of a novel and another novella play and another play; (viii) typological non generic comparison - comparison of a literary text having as theme polygamy and another text having as theme monogamy; and (xix) text/world comparison - comparison of a literary text and the reality of the real world. (Hebert, 2013 & 2014)

This study adopts two of the nine comparative methods proposed by Hebert (2013) as they are very useful for the analysis of the plays. These are Architextual Comparative Method (ACM) and the Intertextual Comparative Method (ICM). Architextual Comparative Method (ACM) enables the comparison of the three literary texts to a literary movement of Romanticism while the second, Intertextual Comparative Method (ICM) facilitates the comparison of the three works. Comparison of a work to a literary movement is the uniqueness of this study, and this justifies the choice of Hebert's method. These methods are suitable for the study as they allow the comparison of three texts; and then the comparison of Romanticism in three different literary texts of different centuries, cultures, and peoples. Also, the methods were employed to carry out the analysis of romantic love in the three selected

literary texts. The three texts were subjected to four questions and seven factors to enable objectivity and empiricism of the text analysis.

This study is a comparative study of romantic love in two plays and one novel. Hugo's play *Ruy Blas* is the primary literary text that inspired this study. Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* is added to being an English play that has always been criticised as a romantic work, even when the playwright did not belong to the English romantic writers. It also serves as a meeting point between the two researchers: literary critics of French Literature and Yorùbá Literature. Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* is selected because the work suits the aim of the study which is romantic love. Certain factors that make love romantic were examined in the three works and were presented in a tabular form for comparative textual analysis. Factors examined include: age difference, parental philosophy, religious belief, parental ambition, cultural ideology, adultery, adolescence, and social class.

Textual Analysis of the Three Literary Texts

Love can never be said to be romantic if there are no obstacles to expressing it. These obstacles include parental control, separation of partners, and differences in social status such as wide age differences, different traditions, cultures, races, and beliefs. The love between adolescents is often romantic because they are under parental control and cannot have access to each other every time publicly without adults' criticism. The love between two people of different age groups is said to be romantic as the lovers have to resist societal criticism to continue their relationship. (Tiamiyu 2017a & 2017b) France's President, Emmanuel Macron, aged thirty-nine (39), and his wife, aged sixty-four (64), is a good example of romantic love in the 21st century. Their relationship would have become catastrophic if it were to be either in the 17th century of *Romeo and Juliet*, the 19th century setting of *Ruy Blas,* or the 20th century setting of *Ó Le Kú* To explore and analyse these three literary texts, the following research questions will be examined. These are: (i) What constitutes the obstacles to the realization of romantic love for both partners? (ii) How do the romantic lovers react to these impediments? (iii) How have these hindrances led to the tragic end of the texts? (iv) What constitutes tragedy in the texts?

Analysis of Romantic Love in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has always been captured as a romantic play, though what makes it a romantic text has not yet been studied before now. Every literary critic of Romanticism is aware of the fact that Shakespeare

does not belong to the Romantic writers such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Shakespeare is the most romantic English playwright of all time because almost all English romantic writers were poets. This explains why most critics of Romanticism concentrate on studies of romantic poems, which are lyrics. The criticism of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is essential because literary works change in meaning over time. This is because we understand the past better as we move into the future. The critical approach, methodology, experience, and competence of the critics can bring new interpretations and discoveries to any literary text even in the period of Antiquity.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* presents two adolescents who fall in love in a world of constraints called Verona. The fact that these adolescents have to meet secretly to express their feelings makes their love a romantic one. The following factors constitute obstacles for Romeo and Juliet to express their love: (i) the ancient grudge between Lord Capulet and Lord Montague, (ii) Tybalt's hatred for the Montagues as well as his temperament, (iii) the killing of Mercutio by Tybalt, (iv) Killing of Tybalt by Romeo as an act of revenge, (vi) Absence of Romeo in Verona by running away to Mantua to escape the judgment of the Prince of Verona; and (vii) Imposition of County Paris on Juliet as a husband. All these are the obstacles for the romantic partners to realize their dream of marrying and living afterward as husband and wife.

The romantic lovers, Romeo and Juliet react to these obstacles through the following: (i) Night and secret meetings, (ii) Romeo Jumping over the wall of the Capulets' villa, (iii) Secret marriage conducted by Friar Lawrence, (iv) Juliet's defence of Romeo secretly owing to criticism as a result of death of Tybalt, Lady Capulet's nephew, (v) confrontation of her parents on the choice of marriage, (vi) drinking of sleeping syrup by Juliet to deceive her parents by pretending to be dead; and (vii) Romeo's purchase of poison from an apothecary to commit suicide.

These hindrances constitute a classical system while the responses of the new generation can be summed up into the romantic system. "The cat and rat race" always occurs from generation to generation. These impediments are stronger than the moves to escape from them thereby leading to a tragedy. The older generation is rigid on shifting ground while the new generation is not also ready to compromise. Thus, these hindrances lead to the tragic end of the play in the following ways: (i) The ancient grudge between the two families serves as a demarcation which makes the children to be in different contexts. They cannot meet openly in the day to express their feelings.

This dispute continues from the beginning to the end of the play. This serves as a rope tying and separating the lovers by force which eventually leads to its tragic end. (ii) The killing of Mercutio in the family of Montague

and that of Tybalt in the family of Capulet increases the tension and strengthens the dispute. The enmity increases and this makes the families worse enemies. (iii) The imposition of Paris on Juliet only pushes to collide with friar Lawrence to deceive her parents by driving a drug that can make her partially dead for 24 hours. (iv) The failure of Friar John to deliver Friar Lawrence's letter from Verona to Mantua significantly contributes to the tragic end. This is the reason Romeo buys a bottle of poison from Mantua to commit suicide and fails to exercise patience for Juliet to wake up. (v) Romeo's death pushes Juliet to commit suicide by stabbing herself with Romeo's dagger at the Churchyard. This is because her reason for living is Romeo and without him, life is not worth living.

The play is a tragedy because of the death of five characters, the failure of the romantic lovers to realize their dream, and the settling of a dispute between the parents when their children are dead. Juliet struggles to keep her secret wedding with Romeo but fails to do so even when she has to deceive her parents by pretending to be dead, to sleep in the cemetery to achieve this. Friar Lawrence's assistance to keep the romantic lovers together in marriage fails, his letter to Romeo and visit to the graveyard to stop the mishap also did not achieve the intended result. Romeo fails to marry his true love as he abandons Rosaline for Juliet. He runs away to Mantua to avoid being killed to live for Juliet. His death is a result of the communication gap between him and Friar Lawrence. Paris' death for the lady who does not love him constitutes another tragedy. How can a man die for a lady who does not even love him and who will not love him after he dies? One should also pity Paris for obeying his future in-laws' proposal of marriage without wooing the lady and without seeking her consent to marry him.

Analysis of Romantic Love in Hugo's *Ruy Blas*

Victor Hugo, the leader of the French Romantic club called *Cénacle*, depicted the romantic traits he argued for in the preface of his play *Cromwell* published in 1827. To demonstrate romantic plays to other French romantics such as Lamartine, Musset, Vigny, Nerval, and Bertrand, Victor Hugo published two plays *Ruy Blas* (1827) and *Hernani* (1830). These two plays were the applications of characteristics of a romantic play such as the condemnation of rule of unity of time and unity of place. A play can now end more than twenty-four (24) hours and the setting can be more than a place. The play *Ruy Blas* is considered the most appropriate for this study as it presents two lovers whose love is impossible to realize. This conforms to the researchers' perspective of romantic love. How can an assassin get married to his target? In

the 19th century when the play was written, a commoner couldn't get married to a queen.

If love is romantic, it has to be a kind of love in the courtship period, love between secret lovers; love between two people that their society will likely oppose to getting married. This situation occurs in many romantic plays such as Musset's *on ne badine pas avec l'amour*, Vigny's *Chatterton*, Hugo's *Hernani*, Shakespeare's Romeo *and Juliet,* Goethe's *Faust* and Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú!* The following obstacles prevent Ruy Blas and the Queen of Spain from getting married and living happily thereafter: (i) The fence of the palace was too high for any secret lover to penetrate, (ii) The status of a queen makes it impossible for her to walk freely on the streets at night, (iii) The quest for vengeance of Don Salluste to assassinate the Queen, (iv) The conflict between two suitors of the Queen, don Guritan and Ruy Blas, (v) The mission to assassinate the Queen by Ruy Blas on behalf of his master, Don Salluste, (vi) The fake life Ruy Blas lives as don Cesar, which he impersonates, (vii) The context of assassin versus victim, (viii) The arrival of real don Cesar at the place to stop Ruy Blas, the impostor; and (xix) The pressure of don Salluste on Ruy Blas to carry out his mission.

The romantic lovers, Ruy Blas and the Queen of Spain react to these obstacles through the following: (i) The Queen falls in love immediately after he sees Ruy Blas by taking him as don Cesar, the noble who writes a love letter to her, (ii) Ruy Blas pretends to be in love in order to kill the Queen, but he falls really in love and delays the execution of his plan, (iii) The Queen promotes Ruy Blas and assigns more official duties to him for criticizing the nobles for their corruption, (iv) The activeness and dynamism of Ruy Blas makes the Queen to declare her love for him, (v) She becomes shocked to see Ruy Blas with don Salluste, the noble she had insulted, (vi) Ruy Blas declares his real identity to the Queen, kills his master and kills himself too.

These contexts (assassin versus the targeted victim, a commoner versus a queen as well as an impostor versus a real person) show how difficult it is to live according to the love between the partners. The Queen of Spain- being a young lady who is not married- and Ruy Blas - a servant acting like a noble to have access to the monarch- are both subjected to a romantic love situation. These hindrances lead to the tragic end of the play through the following points: (i) The life of a prisoner in which the Queen is living makes her fall in love quickly with an impostor, Ruy Blas and makes it difficult for Ruy Blas to continue living as a lover of the mother of the dynasty, (ii) Don Salluste's appearance at the palace court for vengeance and to usurp the throne from the Queen precipitates Ruy Blasto kill his master, (iii) The duel between the two prospective suitors of the Queen announces the tragic end of the play, (iv) The arrival of the real don Cesar also pushes don Salluste to hasten his

hired assassin who has to, first of all, make the Queen fall in love before killing her, and (v) The context of assassin versus the victim is not favourable for a positive outcome.

Victor Hugo's Ruy Blas is a tragedy for the fact that two characters die (don Salluste and Ruy Blas), and the Queen fails to realize her dream of marrying the man she loves for the first time. Ruy Blas fails to change the plan and continues to live. He has to kill the master planner of the coup instead of assassinating his lover, the Queen of Spain. The tragedy lies in the fact that a commoner who falls in love with a queen who loves him in return fails to live in reality. This makes him commit suicide to continue dreaming instead of living as a commoner later. The disappearance of the ephemeral love of a commoner by the Queen makes her cry bitterly and even calls Ruy Blas' name instead of calling him Don Cesar as she did before the truth was revealed. The killing of an old master who was insulted by the young Queen to prevent the overthrow is another example of tragedy. This will likely be the position of somebody using the method of deconstruction to criticise this play.

Analysis of Romantic Love in Ìṣòlá's Ó Le Kú!

There is no gainsaying the fact that Akínwùmí Ìṣola is a romantic writer. Although some writers like Kẹ́hìndé Adépégba (2004) and others have written romantic texts like *Òkèlè Àkọ́bù*, yet, Akínwùmí Ìṣola is clearly distinguished as a romantic author, poet, and playwright. Examples of romantic themes in his literary works are well portrayed in his poetic work - *Àfàìmọ̀ àti àwọn àròfọ̀ mìíràn*; (1978) drama text, titled *Nítorí owó* (2014), and novel *Ó Le Kú* (2015), which is being examined in this paper. In the three literary texts mentioned above, Ìṣòlá portrays romantic subject matter far above what obtains in the Yorùbá traditional setting as classically depicted by most early Yorùbá authors and poets. Ìṣòlá's worldview about the manner of expressing romantic love is a departure from the regular practice in the Yorùbá culture, in the sense that it is the societal values that usually dictate the pace, manner, conditions, and premise upon which prospective lovers must base the regimented expression of their love affairs.

Ìṣòlá s romantic works are generally accepted by the modern Yorùbá society because they reflect or express the hitherto suppressed desires of contemporary society, especially the youths of the 19th & 20th centuries. Scholars who have worked on Ìṣòlá's aforementioned works align with the view that *Ó Le Kú* is the foremost Yorùbá thrilling romantic novel that depicts the trending, fashionable, and romantic behaviour of the modern-day generation. First published in 1974 and shown in the cinema years after, Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* portrays such themes as romance, cultural shift, education, social revolution, and

ideological conflict. For instance, the Yorùbá youth's advocacy for the emotionalization of romantic affairs has been exposed to Western education which gives some sort of freedom and independence from the stereotypical love expression dictated by culture and parental ethical judgment. Contrary to the Yorùbá tradition, Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ are in a secret and obsessive relationship. According to the Yorùbá culture, it is Àjàní's parents who have the moral right to seek Àṣàkẹ́'s hand in marriage from her parents. Besides, the Yorùbá custom demands that spiritual inquiry be made from the *Ifá* oracle or any other spiritualists. But, Àjàní defies this cultural ethos with his audacity and requests for Àṣàkẹ́'s hand in marriage by himself from Àjàní's father. Baba Kékeré, Àṣàkẹ́'s father aligns with the Yorùbá age-long tradition of first inquiring from the gods. According to the Seer-Caleb, the oracle does not support the prospective marriage of the two lovers. Aside from this, Baba Kékeré thinks that Àjàní's marriage proposal is self-imposing and needs the endorsement of his eldest brother living in Ghana as the eldest in the family.

The several "logical pleas" by the lovers (Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́) for the eldest member of the family to reason along and support their marriage proposal proves abortive. Desperation and infatuation engrossed the two lover birds connive into making a drastic and rash decision of impregnating Àṣàkẹ́ with a view that her parent would have no choice but to give in to their self-opinionated plans. The plan of Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ is not only a rude shock to the family but a taboo in the Yorùbá society for a lady to get pregnant before a wedding or outside wedlock. The information about Àṣàkẹ́'s pregnancy for Àjàní does not make her father bulge. Rather than getting approval from Àṣàkẹ́'s parents the pregnancy creates more hatred and constitutes a major setback on the personal and cultural reason they cannot be married. Before the ugly incident of pre-marital pregnancy, Àṣàkẹ́'s father mandates Àjàní to wait for Àṣàkẹ́ to finish her tertiary education if he is interested in marrying her. This is intended to serve as an excuse to vehemently kick against what he considers an underage marriage for Àṣàkẹ́. The immeasurable number of ladies who are getting married in Nigerian tertiary Institutions and still excel in their studies debunks the notion that education cannot be combined with marriage

Baba Kékeré devises different tricks to keep Àṣàkẹ́ indoors, a kind of "house arrest". Ìjàọlà is the only sympathizer who counsels Àjàní to be patient because they both belong to the same romantic age. Despite the obstacles and challenges to the fulfilment of marriage plans by Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́, Àjàní courageously pushes on in his attempt to express love to Àṣàkẹ́. He visits her to strengthen his romantic commitment to her. The exchange of love letters between them is a modern-day romantic behavior common among the elite group. Àjàní affirms that although he would have to marry another lady, yet,

his first love would still be retained for Àṣàkẹ́ and nothing can contest that in his heart. (p.120)

Asake pade Ajani ni ile-itawe yunifasiti ni akoko yii. Ajani ki i. Won soro die, Ajani naa so nigba naa pe looto, oun le fe elomiran sugbon ko si ife to le dabi ife to wa laarin awon nibere. O ni oun si mo pe bi Asake naa tile tun fe elomiran, ki o tole ri eni ti o maa feran re bii toun ona a jin.

(Àṣàkẹ́ met Àjàní at the University at the time. Àjàní greeted her. They talked for a while. Àjàní said that, truly, he can marry someone else but there is no love that can be like the one between them at the onset. He said that he knows that, though Àṣàkẹ́ too married someone else, it will take a while for her to see someone else who will love her like him.)

Àṣàkẹ́ confronts her father and expresses strong emotional pain for being hindered to marrying Ajani, the man of her choice.

Nigba ti Asake gbo pe Ajani ti fi ojo iyawo sona, Ko tile gbagbo ni. Ni ojo ti igbeyawo sele bi aye ni Asake wa ni, bi orun ni ko mo...Inu bi Asake, o si dahun, 'E fi mi sile omo-ale ni mi. Ika ni yin. Eyin le si mi lona, mo ti ri ii pe iro ni gbogbo oro e n so fun mi. Tara yin le mo. N o k ii somo yin. Mo tile n lo fun yin'... Nigba ti ile su Asake mu iwe kekere kan, o mu kalamu re, o si ko awon oro wonyi: 'Ki i se ejo Ajanmi, sugbon emi ko le fara mo jija ti o ja mi sile. Ejo aburo baba mi ni. Ika ni. Ko feran mi, omugo si ni pelu. Sugbon mo lo fun yin o.' O mu igo majele kan, o da a konu, o mu ohun to wa ninu re. O si daso bori...Ariwo sese wa ta pe o pa ara re ni... (pp. 120-121)

(When Àṣàkẹ́ heard that Àjàní had fixed his wedding date. She does not believe herself. She does not know whether she is on earth or in heaven on the wedding day…Àṣàkẹ́ was annoyed, and she remarked, 'Leave me alone, I am a bastard. You are wicked. You are the one that misled me, I have realized that you lied to me in your counsel. You achieved your selfish motive. I am not your child. I am leaving the house for you.'… Àṣàkẹ́ took her paper and pen and scribbled these words: 'It was not Àjàní's fault, I cannot endure the way he broke my heart, It is the fault of my father's brother. He is wicked. He does not love me; he is foolish too. But I am leaving for you.' She took one poison bottle and poured it into her mouth, she drank the content… She covered herself with cloth…Then there was an outcry that she poisoned herself.)

She eventually poisoned herself with a mind that she could not be fulfilled without marrying her only love, Ajani. The tragic end shows that the love and romantic behavior that exists between the two is purely genuine and selfless. It further strengthens the view that humans, by nature are romantic beings and demonstrates that the Yorùbá cultural norm constrains self-expression and the emotional will of whom to marry.

Romantic Love in Three Literary Texts

The term *romantic* is used to suggest any kind of love relationship between two which may not materialize because the lovers belong to different social groups which are inimical to each other. Romantic love also entails any kind of sincere and unconditional love that exists between two people who are not allowed to be together because of maturity, socio-class, family principles and beliefs, cultural values, moral ethics, racial and tribal discriminations, level of education and social exposure, or divergent geographical location. Examples of romantic love include the following: love between a wealthy man's daughter and a poor man's son; love between a servant and his mistress; love between a young man and his stepmother; love between a pastor's son and an Imam's daughter; as well as love between a white woman and an African man during slave trade and colonial era. From the three texts examined in this study, there is a common concept of romantic love which serves as the driving force towards the existing societal system.

Although William Shakespeare does not belong to the class of English romantic writers like Lord Byron, Williams Blake, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, his plays published in the 16th century depict the traits of romanticism of 19th century (Tiamiyu, 2017b). For instance, *Romeo and Juliet* is considered one of the most influential romantic plays of all time. Shakespeare has immortalized himself through the acceptance of this play by different generations beginning from the 16th century to the present 21st century. From the play, romantic love can be said to exist between Romeo and Juliet simply because their love is a secret affair. They both belong to two different socio-contexts which constitutes a hindrance to the realization of their dream marriage. This romantic love between the two lovers leads to a romantic principle of nights, nature, imagination, dreams, and duality. It also leads to romantic behaviour like secret marriage, sneaking out at night without parental permission, confrontation with their parents and cultural beliefs, elopement, as well as murder and suicide. Romeo sneaks into the Capulets' compound through a ladder and a rope at night just to see Juliet.

He secretly gets married to her without her parents' approval. This occurs at Friar Lawrence Den, the Priest of Verona.

Romeo and Juliet are also considered romantic heroes and heroines because the Montagues and the Capulets are ancient enemies who are not ready to end their disputes and rivalry. This is manifested in Act One, Scene Four where Juliet inquires after "the strange man in a mask" who kissed her twice while they were dancing at the ball at her father's organized party.

> Juliet: Go ask his name. – If he is married, /My grave is like to my wedding bed./Nurse: His name is Romeo, and a Montague,/The only son of your great enemy./ Juliet: My only love sprung from my only hate!/Too early seen unknown, and known too late!/Prodigious birth of love it is to me /That I must love a loathed enemy.

From the above excerpt, it is very obvious that Juliet is not willing to withdraw from her romantic adventure with Romeo regardless of the relational threat it poses to both families. This means that romantic love is either an impossible love or a true love that falls between two hostile environments like a seed attempting to grow amid thorns.

Factors Leading to Romantic Love: Comparative Analysis

Since romantic love is a kind of love that is impossible to express publicly, young romantic lovers often engage in clandestine activities like meeting each other at night, lying to their parents to meet secretly, making love secretly when the sexual urge becomes high, and abortion of unwanted pregnancy. A romantic lover may sometimes steal his or her parents' belongings and present them as gifts to his or her lover. Usually, several factors characterize romantic love. These include: wide differences in age, parental philosophy, religious belief, social class, parental ambition, cultural ideology, adolescence, and adultery, among others.

Factors/Texts	**Ìṣòlá's Ó Le kú**	**Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet***	**Hugo's *Ruy Blas***
Age Difference	The same age group	The same age group	The same age group
Parental Philosophy	Education before marriage	Choice of husband by Lord Capulet	Not applicable

Religious belief	Not applicable	Religion does not pose a threat	Not applicable
Social Class	Àjàní & Àṣàkẹ́ belong to the lower social class	Romeo & Juliet are from the elite/upper social class	Ruy Blas (a servant) falls in love with the Queen
Parental Ambition	To have a university degree	To continue the decades of dispute between the Capulets and the Montagues	Not applicable
Cultural Ideology	The same cultural background	The same cultural background	Very divergent: Ruy Blas (Romantic ideology), Queen (Classical ideology)
Adolescence	Both are adolescents	Both are adolescents	Both are adolescents
Adultery	Fornication applicable	Fornication Implied	Not Applicable

(a) Age Difference: From the three texts in this study, both romantic partners are young lovers. The ladies are teenagers while their lovers are young men in their early twenties. This demonstrates that age is not a barrier to romantic love. Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ love each other. They share the same culture, philosophy, taste, fashion, and emotional expression. Romeo and Juliet are also of the same age bracket just like Ruy Bals and the Queen. France's President (Emmanuel Macron) and his first lady (Brigette Marie/Claude Macron) constitute a modern example of romantic partners. Brigette Marie/Claude Macron was born in 1953 while her husband, Emmanuel Macron was born in 1977. At the time they got married, Brigette Marie/Claude Macron was 54, while Emmanuel Macron was 29 years old. This kind of marriage is not likely possible in the 16th, 19th century, or even the contemporary African society because of the social norms and parental philosophy.

(b) Parental Philosophy: Both Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú* and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* depict the parental philosophy which contradicts the philosophy of their children. In Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*, the role of

parents in children's love affairs is exempted as there are no parent figures in the text. Isola's novel satirizes illiteracy as Baba Kékeré, a parent figure, struggles to give his daughter what he does not have the opportunity to attain. This must have been a function of his social status and the humiliation experienced in post-independence Yorùbá society. Àṣàkẹ́'s father opposes her marriage to Àjàní before the completion of her university education. His view is that marriage after secondary education will prevent his daughter from proceeding to a higher institution. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Capulet, like most parents of his time, believes that the choice of a husband for his daughter is his sole responsibility. This is why he imposes Paris on Juliet. He believes that Paris is a gentleman, decent, and noble enough to be a son-in-law to the Capulets. The Capulets' philosophy about marriage (marriage without love) is different from Juliet's philosophy of love before marriage. This is one of the main causes of conflict in the literary text.

(c) Religious Belief: Both Ìṣọ̀lá and Hugo ignored the influence of religious sentiment in marriage decisions which is always a critical factor in romantic affairs. Although, Shakespeare depicts the Christian religion in the text, yet, this is not so significant as the lovers share the same religious belief. Religious belief can only pose a threat to love when both partners belong to different religious groups and their parents are rigid in their religious positions Friar Lawrence agrees with the secret marriage plans between Romeo and Juliet regardless of their parent's unresolved feud. He secretly weds the two romantic lovers in the church and gives Juliet a sleeping drug to escape the imposed marriage by her parents. In the African setting, it would be very difficult, even in modern times, for a Reverend's daughter to marry the son of a Chief Imam who is a Muslim. If eventually, they do, it would most likely be that they eloped or got married without parental consent. However, this may be very impossible in the setting of Isola's *Ó Le Kú*.

(d) Social Class: - Both Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú* of the 20th century and William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* of the 16th Century contextualise their romantic characters in the same social class, although in different ways. For instance, in Ìṣọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú,* Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ belong to the lower class. Their parents are both poor and illiterate. This explains why parents of that period were servants to their children's age mates. Since Àṣàkẹ́'s father wants to maintain his superiority over his daughter, he often condemns the moral support of his wife for Àṣàkẹ́'s position. Àṣàkẹ́ eventually confronts her father and even attempts suicide when Ajani marries Lọlá, a newly admitted student into the Nigerian University. Àṣàkẹ́'s father is, however, an exception considering his generation. Despite his educational status, he can win his argument concerning the marriage intention between his daughter, Àṣàkẹ́, and Ajani, her suitor.

The conflict between Western civilisation and African culture dramatically plays out in this intra-family saga. In William Shakespeare's play, both Romeo and Juliet belong to noble families, that is, the upper class. Romeo is a knight while Juliet is a lady. In the 16th century period of Europe depicted in the city of Verona, only girls from noble families could be considered as ladies. The fact that they belong to the same social class makes their love a natural one. Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* is the only literary work of the three texts in this study that depicts the influence of social class in the pursuit of love. This intensifies the context of romanticism as an impossible mission, an unrealistic adventure, and an unattainable pursuit. It was extremely difficult in 16th-century Europe for a commoner to marry into a noble family, let alone the Queen. The fact that Ruy Blas, who is a servant to a noble, falls in love with a teenage Queen makes the love specifically romantic. This is all the more reason the play ends in tragedy as Ruy Blas commits suicide when he fails to carry out the plot to kill the Queen he falls in love with.

(e) Parental Ambition: This occurs in both Akínwùmí Ìṣòlá's *Ó Le Kú* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Àṣàkẹ́'s father is ambitious to produce a university graduate because of the honor and prestige attached to being a learned person in the early 70s in Nigeria. Due to his low literacy and exposure, he becomes adamant in shifting ground to give his daughter out in marriage to Àjàní before she graduates from the University. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Capulet's ambition is to sustain the age-long dispute between his family and the Montagues. He is not ready to give his daughter out in marriage to his sworn enemy. Factors contributing to this dispute include: pride, honor, prestige, hatred, self-centredness, and wealth.

Neither of the two fathers is ready to be subjugated or humiliated by conceding to the love proposal of the two romantic partners in the classic text. Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* does not feature any parent figure or character. An example of parental ambition is the "best seller" film of the 20th century, "The Titanic," where Rose's mother imposes a rich man on her to save her family from bankruptcy. This imposition prompts Jack's intentional deflowering of Rose in a car parked in the ship store. The conflict from parental ambition leads to the loss of thousands of lives. Rose is from a wealthy family, while Jack is from a poor family. This parental ambition proves that parents could impose marriage on their siblings based on their ambition.

(f) Cultural Ideology: Both Romeo and Juliet share the same cultural ideology. They belong to the classical era, where the monarchy is absolute. This European culture of the 16th century portrays citizens who are submissive to the monarch as well as children who obey their parents. The culture then allows marriage between two noble families and between two commoners. Since Romeo and Juliet belong to the same noble families, they both

understand the cultural norms applicable to their society. The situation is the same in Ìṣọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú* because both Ajani and Àṣàkẹ́ are from the Yorùbá tribe, and they both believe in the importance of parental consent. This is why Àjàní did not impose his wish on Àṣàkẹ́. Upon continuous disapproval by her parents, he disengages from her and marries another girl, Lola, who is yet to have her university education. The only literary text where cultural ideology transforms into a romantic one is that of Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*. The implication of this is that culture plays a vital role in influencing parental consent in the choice of marriage. However, there is an observable trend that culture, in contemporary society, no longer constitutes a major threat or hurdle for romantic lovers. Ruy Blas, as a protagonist, represents romantic cultural ideology which means anyone could get married to his or her desired lover irrespective of religious, cultural, ethnical, racial or economic differences. The question Victor Hugo is asking through the character, Ruy Blas, is that: Why can't a commoner get married to a queen? The female character in *Ruy Blas* from the noble class also questions the classical cultural ideology which restrains a princess or a queen from marrying a person she passionately loves regardless of class. She is attracted at first by the nobility of Ruy Blas when he impersonates another noble character in the text. Regardless, she continues her love adventure despite realising the true identity of Ruy Blas, a commoner.

(g) Adolescence: Most adolescents who love sincerely for the first time are romantic personalities. Their emotions and sentiments usually dictate the way they reason, talk, behave, and relate to themselves and their parents. According to the *American Psychology Association*, (2000:5), "no adolescent can be fully understood outside the context of his family, neighbourhood, school, workplace, or community or without considering such factors as gender, race, sexual orientation, disability or chronic illness, and religious beliefs". In Isola's novel, Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ are both adolescents who love each other sincerely and are ready to break all moral values, cultural norms, and established etiquette before marriage. This explains why Àjàní impregnates Àṣàkẹ́.

The question of the importance of virginity in marriage in the Yorùbá cultural milieu is raised by the Nigerian novelist. The same situation occurs in Shakespeare's play. Romeo and Juliet are both adolescents who have a common ideology, passion, sentiment, and experience. Although Romeo has been dating Roseline, he abandons her for Juliet because she is the lady of her dreams. In Victor Hugo's play, both the Queen and Ruy Blas are adolescents who do not care about the classical system that constitutes a seeming obstacle to their romantic love. The three literary works depict adolescence as an agent of change. The romantic partners in the three texts either question or confront the established values of the preceding generations.

(h) Adultery: This is the type of love that exists between a married woman and another man besides her husband or between a married man and another woman besides his wife. This can be likened to what occurs between two adolescents who are experiencing love for the first time. What makes adolescents commit to fornication is the fact that their love is secret, and they are not free from parental monitoring or opposing views. From the three texts studied, adultery does not exist because the romantic partners are officially in a courtship. Romeo and Juliet, for example, secretly get married, which implies or legitimises their conjugal intimacy. This explains the reason why they go the extra mile to defend their secret marriage to the extent of committing suicide. To them, they are free to have sexual intercourse since they are religiously married. But, to their parents who are not aware of their secret marriage, it is tantamount to fornication. In Isola's novel, Àjàní impregnates Àṣàkẹ́ without the consent of her father. This implies nothing but fornication. In the case of Victor Hugo's play, there is no opportunity for romantic lovers to express or experience illicit sexual intercourse. Nowadays, both adultery and fornication have become a norm among romantic lovers in modern society.

Conclusion

The study has examined the literary movement of Romanticism in three different centuries, countries, and cultures. The study discussed factors leading to romantic love such as age difference, parental philosophy, parental ambition, religious belief, social class, cultural ideology, adolescence, and adultery. The researchers discovered that all three texts examined present the same age group, that is; all the romantic lovers in the three works are adolescents. The study showed that there is no parental influence or ambition in Hugo's *Ruy Blas* whereas both Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Akínwùmí Ìṣọ̀lá's *Ó Le Kú* depict parental influence and ambition. Although the specific difference between the duo is that while Juliet's father, Capulet imposes a husband on his daughter, Juliet; Àṣàkẹ́'s father, Baba Kékeré prioritizes university education before marriage. However, both authors observe class balance by depicting the romantic lovers in the same social class: Àjàní and Àṣàkẹ́ are in the lower class while Romeo and Juliet are in the upper class. However, Hugo offsets the balance by depicting the love relationship between the Queen in the higher class and Ruy Blas in the lower class. The latter has to impersonate Don Cesar to enjoy an upper-class experience for a while. There is no explicit case of adultery in the three texts. However, the probability of having premarital sex is higher in both *Ruy Blas* and *Romeo and Juliet*. This is because Hugo presents lovers who live together in the same palace for a while and Shakespeare depicts lovers who are secretly married and can do what a married couple does.

The *romantic context* in the three texts goes thus: *Romeo and Juliet* (inter-family dispute), *Ruy Blas* (different social status), and *Ó Le Kú* (different educational status). The *romantic lovers* finally react to their contexts in these ways: *Romeo and Juliet* (both partners commit suicide), *Ruy Blas* (one partner commits suicide), and *Ó Le Kú* (one partner drinks poison and falls terribly and psychologically sick). Finally, one can conclude that Shakespeare, Ruy Blas, and Ìṣòlá are three romantic writers of different centuries, geographical spaces, cultures, and situations. This implies that Romanticism existed before the romantic period and continues in different forms.

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