

# **Analysing Action in Two Romantic Tragedies Using Greïmas' *Modèle Actancier***

**Adewale Nuraeni Tiamiyu**

*Dept. of European Languages & Integration Studies  
University of Lagos, Nigeria  
[atiamiyu@unilag.edu.ng](mailto:atiamiyu@unilag.edu.ng)*

## **Abstract**

*Previous studies on romanticism and comparative romanticism did not consider experimenting the action with Greïmas' model for Romantic plays, specifically in the tragedies of Hugo's *Hernani* and Goethe's *Faust*. This paper interprets the significance of romantic periods as presented in both plays through analysis of the action based on the dichotomy between the classics and the romantics. Unlike previous applications of Greïmas' theory of *Modèle actancier*, which were based on one perspective of action analysis, this study applies the theory in three different dimensions to examine the conflict between the classics and the romantics. It hypothesises that men grow classical in marriage while women often desire to retain their degree of romanticism in courtship. It concludes that night, dream, and imagination constitute romantic periods. The study recommends that men should maintain the romantic tempo of courtship in matrimony to minimise conflicts and reduce the rate of divorce.*

**Keywords:** *Action; Classics; Romantics; Modèle actancier; Comparative romanticism*

## **1. Introduction**

This study analyses the action in two romantic tragedies with the aid of Greïmas' *modèle actancier*, which is suitable for analysing two opposed elements or ideologies in any social system or literary context. While historians, political scientists, and sociologists may use this theory to analyse two social groups pursuing the same goal, a

literary critic will often need it for analysing conflict in any literary work. To be sure, a good play will contain a conflict that divides the characters into two groups: the protagonist group and the antagonist group. This is the situation in the French romantic tragedy *Hernani* (by Victor Hugo) and the German romantic tragedy *Faust* (by Wolfgang Goethe). In these two romantic tragedies, a group of characters wants to change the social system while the other group wants to preserve the tradition. This study is relevant, as it will examine the influence of Romanticism on contemporary society. Frank (2001:1) states that Romanticism has significant influence on the postmodern era. This study supports Frank's view that today's generation cannot understand itself without humanity retracing its steps to the dawn of the 19th Century, when the new era of civilisation began. Therefore, understanding two plays produced during the romantic period in history should shed more light on the social conflicts that always arise between idealists and realists. The only concept that ties the characters to the conflict is the action.

Every character in a play is interrelated through the action. Drama, invariably written to be staged, always presents a conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist. Mayer-Schaffer (2000: 5) defines a drama as "a story intended to be acted out on a stage." A drama can be a comedy (a play that arouses and/or has a successful conclusion) or a tragedy (a tragic play where the protagonist is disastrously overcome by the catastrophe). A romantic play ignores the classical rule of unity of place and time, that is, it is written in simple diction and its conflict presents the tussle of power between the classics (old generation) and the romantics (new generation). A romantic play depicts the principle of duality, as the play's denouement is neither logical nor illogical. The conflict is always inconclusive. The end of the play leaves an endless debate for readers and critics. Conflict is the central element of a drama, since it determines the action.

Myers-Schaffer (2000:34) observed that every drama contains a conflict. In the author's words: "At the center of a literary drama and its meaning is conflict. This conflict (the good guy versus the bad guy), the obstacles to overcome, the love to win, and so forth, will naturally affect the meaning of the play." How the conflict is analysed or criticised by the literary critic determines the interpretation of the dramatic texts. As already noted, the plays

*Hernani* and *Faust* are romantic tragedies. For clarity of concepts, I should like to distinguish between classical tragedies and romantic tragedies. Classical tragedies obey the rule of unity of time, place and action. According to Mayer-Shaffer (2000: 101), "Classical tragedies are those written by, about, or in the style and form of the ancient Greek and Romans." However, romantic tragedies "are those that are not classical and include many of the tragedies written in Elizabethan England." French Romantic tragedies such as Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, Vigny's *Chatterton*, Hugo's *Cromwell* and English tragedies of romance (Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*) depict the mentality of the new generation. The former tries to change or modify the system but the latter defends it based on experience and accumulated wisdom over a number of years.

As a literary movement Romanticism was identified more with the genre of poetry. Just as Realism was a movement of the novel genre, Classicism was associated more with drama, especially tragedy (e.g. Racine's *Phèdre* and Corneille's *Cid*). Corneille's *Cid* is often classified as a French classical tragedy although some scholars argue that it is a prototype of a romantic play owing to its tragic-comedic elements.

Scholars have defined and researched on Romanticism from different perspectives: chronological, historical, literary, revolutionary, political, and geographical. Clemens (2009) defines Romanticism thus:

A movement in the literature of virtually every country of Europe, the United States, and Latin America that lasted about 1750 to about 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 18<sup>th</sup>-century English and originally meant romancelike - that is, resembling the fanciful character of medieval romances.

The above definition is universal, as it captures all regions where the movement featured. Johnson (2004: 41) defines Romanticism 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's definition raised the concepts of imagination as well as the search for absolutes and emotion. In this study, Romanticism will be defined as individual, communal or generational continuously occurring unbridled sentiments that tend to seek freedom, change and innovations – formally expressed from 1750 to 1850 in Europe through political struggles, journalistic activities as well as literary and artistic creations. Nowadays, it is disseminated through various innovative, social and scientific activities.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Greïmas' *Modèle Actancier* (1986)**

*Modèle actancier* is a French phrase derived from the words *act*, *action*, *actor* and *active*. Greïmas, a French semiotician, preferred the term *actant*, which distinguishes a stage or film *actor* from an *actant* in a dramatic text. According to Pottorak (2007), this theory was developed from Tesnière's syntactic function of discourse from where Greïmas borrowed the notions of function and functional analysis, dynamic system and classification of actantial roles. According to Pottorak, Greïmas believed that one can describe the organisation of a particular micro-cosmos in two ways: (i) by using a limited number of constituent elements internally and (ii) by determining the characteristics of these elements, their functions and their possible reciprocal rapports. According to Greïmas, to describe the structure of narrative text by using actancial structure, one has to (i) engage the reduction of syntactic actants to their semantic status and (ii) unite all functions manifested in a corpus and attribute them to one semantic *actant* (Pottorak, 2007: 220).

*Modèle Actantiel*, otherwise known as *Schema Actancier*, accounts for the analysis of action in literary works such as plays, novel or dramatic poems. *Modèle Actantiel* reveals the roles that each character plays in a story. It can also be described as the interaction of forces of *Actants* that influence the behaviour of characters as well as act on their relations and their actions in a story. According to Greïmas, there are six major *actants*: *sujet*, *objet*, *adjuvant*, *opposant*, *destinateur* and *destinataire*. Subject (*sujet*): the hero, the protagonist or the major character who aims at achieving a goal that can be material like an antidote or conceptual like love.

Object (objet): what the hero pursues or tries to achieve, that is, their aim and objectives. Destinateur: the character(s), event(s) or object(s) that sensitise the subject to engage in action in order to obtain an object. Destinataire: the character, event or object that benefits from the object pursued by the subject. Adjuvant: the characters who will help the hero to obtain their object. They may also be hero's friends, favourable conditions or useful objects that facilitate the goal pursued. Opposant: the characters who are antagonists or enemies of the subject. An *opposant* may be interpreted not only as characters in the literary works but also as some events, actions of others, natural occurrences or objects that impede the realisation of the aim and objectives of the subject.

*Modèle actanciel* will help to show the dichotomy between the classical and the romantic in the two plays and examines the struggle between reason and sentiment, rationalism and sentimentalism, objectivism and subjectivism, as well as individualism and communism. *Modèle actanciel* will, thus, answer the following research questions: What is the significance of the Romantic period in the texts? What is the interpretation of the Romantic period in both texts?

### **3. Methodology: Greïmas' *Modèle Actanciel***

In this section, we explain how Greïmas' *Modèle Actanciel* can be deployed to examine the plot structure of the selected plays. This study specifically analyses the conflict in three ways, with the subject changed each time. The change of the cause of disagreement automatically affects the roles each character plays in both plays. This means action analysis varies according to the change in the protagonist and the antagonist based on the principles and philosophies of Classicism and Romanticism.

The meaning of Classicism in this study is broadened to depict philosophies of objectivism, socialism, paganism, conservatism and Antiquity. In France Classicism was rigid due to the influence of Louis XIV, who assembled writers to entertain the King and also conform to classical rules of Antiquity. French classical writers such as Moliere, Racine and Fontaine had to do the following to satisfy Louis XIV, emphasised the need to imitate the classical writers of Antiquity: (i) imitate famous writers of Antiquity, (ii) be objective in the conclusion of the play, for instance, only a

noble can be a hero and has to subject himself or herself to punishment when found guilty, (iii) conform to unity of time, place and decency, (iv) present children who are obedient to parents as well as subjects who are submissive to the king or else pay the price of insubordination, (vi) culture and moral values in the society have to be maintained in the plays; and (vii) tragic heroes have to submit to destiny, just as a sacrificial goat cannot escape the slaughtering during traditional Greek and Roman festivals. Therefore, being classic in the literary texts means preventing change and maintaining tradition as well as religious and moral values in the society, just as Don Gomes who claims parental superiority over Dona Sol in Hugo's *Hernani* and Valentine condemns his sisters for fornication in Goethe's *Faust*.

In this study, Romanticism is assumed to promote the philosophies of subjectivism, individualism, Christianity, liberalism and historicism. Thus, a romantic personality has to behave like a 19th Century romantic writer or the literary characters depicted in most of their works. Being romantic, therefore, means being a sentimental personality who does whatever they feel, without considering social norms and moral values. A romantic personality will want to change the system by trying to live according to their dream. In Hugo's *Hernani* and Goethe's *Faust*, the new generation – lovers, adolescents, and women – in both plays constitute the romantic generation in their romantic period.

The Greimas model also shows that action can be analysed by changing the subject of the six actants based on the conflict between the classics and the romantics. The classics want to maintain the existing system while the romantics want to change this according to their dream, ambition or imagination. In *Hernani*, the model shows the classical-romantic conflict in three dichotomies: uncle-niece romanticism, king-subject romanticism, and individual-communal romanticism. This can be explained more clearly through classical-romantic interactions of Don Gomes-Dona Sol, Don Carlos-Hernani, and Hernani-Saragossa.

In *Faust*, the model equally shows the classical-romantic conflict in three dichotomies: mother-daughter romanticism, believer-religion romanticism, and individual-communal romanticism. This can also be specifically explained through classical-romantic interactions such as Gretchen's mother-Gretchen,

Faust and Gretchen-Catholicism, and Faust-Church. The similarity between the two plays is that they both present classical-romantic conflicts in the family setup and communal context. Only in *Hernani* does one discover the bone of contention in marriage: rivalry and vengeance. In *Faust*, the cause of conflict is the desire to catch up with the past by seeking the intervention of diabolical powers to do the impossible.

### 3.1. Level One: Analysis Using Greimas' Modèle Actanciel

Actant/plays	Hernani [ uncle-niece]	Faust [mother-daughter]
Destinateur	Love & libido	Love & Libido
Sujet	Dona Sol	Gretchen
Objet	Get married	Get married
Adjuvant	Hernani & adolescent period	Mephistopheles, Martha, Faust's wealth and nobility
Opposant	don Gomes & don Carlos; women status	Valentine & her mother
Destinataire	Hernani & herself	Faust and herself

Love and quest for sexual adventure on the part of genuine first-time lovers instigates them into action. Both dona Sol and Gretchen are adolescents who want to marry their secret lovers not accepted by their parents. In *Hernani*, dona Sol's desire is supported by Hernani as well as the lady's climax of romantic feelings during her adolescent period. She is opposed by her uncle who brought her up as a father and imposed himself as her future husband. What is romantic here is the fact that somebody who has to play the role of a father in marriage is also a suitor. If dona Sol succeeds, Hernani and herself will derive benefits from the union: realisation of impossible relations due to social constraints. Similarly, in *Faust*, Gretchen, whose mother is a pious Christian, does not tolerate premarital sex or allow her daughter to go out at night to mingle with the opposite sex. Valentine is also another obstacle to the romantic desire of the girl. Mephistopheles, Martha, Faust's wealth and nobility contribute

towards the realisation of Gretchen's dream of turning the love courtship to marriage.

On the second level, the model also applies to the two girl subjects; dona Sol and Gretchen.

### 3.2. Level Two: Analysis Using Greimas' Modèle Actanciel

Actant/plays	Hernani [king-subject]	Faust [religion-believer]
Destinateur	Love, adolescence & libido	Love, adolescence & libido
Sujet	Dona Sol – a heroine	Gretchen- a heroine
Objet	get married to her lover who is a bandit	get married to her secret unbeliever lover
Adjuvant	Hernani & adolescent period	Mephistopheles, Martha, Faust's wealth and nobility & adolescent period
Opposant	don Gomes' love for his niece & don Carlos' love for his subject; dona Sol's noble status	Valentine's anger over the pregnancy of Gretchen without marriage & her mother's holiness and strict upbringing
Destinataire	Hernani & dona Sol herself	Faust and Gretchen herself

Factors inciting both heroes include love, adolescence and quest for sex as an adventure. The two adolescents want to get married to men that their parents do not accept due to differences in social class and level of belief. Hernani supports dona Sol in this dream and their adolescent period makes them daring and desperate. Mephistopheles supports the secret relationship between Faust and Gretchen, so also does Martha, her neighbour. The wealth and experience of Faust also speak in his favour. Gomes' love for his niece, dona Sol, prevents him from releasing her to Hernani. Don Carlos, the King, is also an obstacle because of his love for dona Sol. Valentine's anger, which leads to his death in a duel with Faust, constitutes an obstacle towards realising the dream of marriage. Both lovers are beneficiaries of the action. The third level of analysis of action is now done.



### 3.3. Level Three: Analysis Using Greimas' Modèle Actanciel

Actant/plays	<i>Hernani</i> [community-individual]	<i>Faust</i> [community-individual]
Destinateur	Vengeance, quest for freedom, romantic instinct	Quest to catch up with the past & frustration
Sujet	Hernani	Faust
Objet	Change the system of monarchy	Want to change the religious society
Adjuvant	Adolescent period, dona Sol & rebels in Saragossa	Mephistopheles, transformation to an adolescent, witches
Opposant	Gomes & Carlos; Hernani's loss of noble status	Temporary state of youthfulness
Destinataire	Hernani, dona Sol & new generation	Gretchen & Mephistopheles

Vengeance, quest for freedom, and romantic instinct incite Hernani to engage in changing the system of monarchy headed by don Carlos. The quest to catch up with the lost past and the frustration after acquiring knowledge without wealth push Faust to pursue change in a society dominated by strong Catholicism. In *Hernani*, the adolescent period, dona Sol and rebels in Saragossa help the subject to realise his dream. In *Faust*, the devil, Mephistopheles, witches and the adolescent status attained by Faust through magic facilitate his relationship with the teenager Gretchen. In *Hernani*, don Gomes and don Carlos are obstacles to realisation of the romantic dream.

### 4. Analysis of Action in Victor Hugo's *Hernani* Using Modèle Actanciel

Greimas' *Modèle Actanciel* proposes six *actants* (character classification based on action in the play) for action analysis. These are *Destinateur*, *Sujet*, *Objet*, *Opposant*, *Adjuvant* and *Destinataire*. First, we analyse *Hernani* at three levels of application. Each level is based on the conflict between the classics and romantics, i.e. the rule defenders versus the rule breakers.

#### 4.1. Action Analysis between Don Gomes and Dona Sol

Action in the tragic play *Hernani* can be analysed based on the conflict between Dona Sol and her uncle, Don Gomes. Dona Sol's uncle represents the classical generation, as he believes that a woman has no say on her marriage. She has to accept her parents' choice of partner, since the classics believe love does not matter in marriage but the noble status of the future husband, his achievements, family background and his being a gentleman (*un hôte homme*). However, Dona Sol has a contrary opinion. She believes she can marry anyone she loves irrespective of his social status, hence her choice of a rebel leader of unknown identity. This is a prototype of the romantic hero in 19th Century Literature.

The *destinateur* of the play comprises true love for Hernani, the adolescent period, quest for adventure and search for freedom of choice of husband. These sensitise Dona Sol to struggle against her uncle-lover who prevents her from marrying Hernani because he himself loves her dearly. It is only true love that can help a woman withstand the pressure from her uncle, the King of Spain. Being a teenager, she is dynamic and ready to satisfy her dream by marrying a lover of her own age group. Dona Sol's quest for freedom from a society that will not allow her to express her wish without constraint is another reason why she pursues her object of marrying Hernani. Regarding *sujet*, Dona Sol is the subject here. The *objet* is realisation of the dream of marrying a rebel leader who is believed to be a commoner. The *adjuvant* comprises the adolescent period, dream, imagination, night and nature. For the *opposant* it is Don Gomes, Don Carlos, the custom of marriage, parental influence of the bride, 16th Century Spain and the death of Dona Sol's parents, all of which are the factors that militate against the realisation of her dream. Don Gomes poses as the main obstacle, since he is a lover and an uncle who has to play the role of parents in marriage. He cannot afford to marry out his future wife to another man. Don Carlos uses his status as an absolute king to destroy the romantic love that exists between two adolescents. The *destinataire* are Hernani, Dona Sol and the younger generation. Hernani and Dona Sol will be happy to live together after marriage. They both try to run away but this plan is blocked by Don Carlos, who sends soldiers to arrest Hernani. They had to commit suicide to escape a rigid society that does not accommodate new dreams that can lead to change in society.

#### **4.2. Action Analysis between Don Carlos and Hernani**

The conflict between Don Carlos and Hernani represents the battle between the nobles (the government) and the rebels. Don Carlos is the King of Spain who holds the government and serves as the custodian of the classical generation. Hernani is the leader of the new generation of romantics who is dissatisfied with the system. The action is woven around this dichotomy.

*Destinataire:* Hatred, Hernani's loss of status of nobility, rivalry among three suitors (Carlos, Gomes and Hernani) and love for Dona Sol are among the factors that incite the hero to pursue his goal. *Sujet:* The protagonist is Hernani. *Objet:* Hernani wants to avenge the death of his father by killing the King, regain his noble status unconsciously, eliminate his rival and realise his marriage to Dona Sol.

*Adjuvant:* The hero is helped by the followings: (i) Dona Sol, who receives him at night and expresses her sincere love for him, (ii) Don Gomes, who connives with him to stage a coup against the king in order to eliminate one rival before the other one; (iii) Don Carlos, who withdraws later from the quest to marry

Dona Sol and conducts marriage for the young people without permission from Don Gomes, the uncle; (iv) Hernani's love for Dona Sol makes him to continue struggling in freedom through his rebels who hide in the forest and on the hills; (v) rivalry among three suitors has helped the hero to maintain the romantic tempo of his quest. *Opposant:* Nobles, romantic love between Hernani and Dona Sol, Don Gomes, Don Carlos as well as the principle of duality.

*Destinataire:* Those to benefit from the *objet* are as follows: (i) Don Carlos (ii) Don Gomes (iii) absolute monarchy and (iv) the rigid classical system. Don Carlos, being a rival who holds the entire kingdom, exploits his position to attack Hernani and abduct Dona Sol from her uncle's castle. Don Gomes is Dona Sol's uncle in whose house she lives like a daughter. This makes it difficult for Hernani to have access to her, so he has to sneak into the castle to see her. The system of absolute monarchy prevents any romantic agent from being free to express his romantic ideas coming from dreams, imaginations

and quest for freedom. How can a king's subject fight him over a woman? This was impossible in 18th Century Spain.

#### **4.3. Action Analysis between Saragossa and Hernani**

Victor Hugo presents Hernani as a commoner who wants to fight for himself and his generation. He has to lead the rebels against the King of Spain, Don Carlos. Spain of the 16th Century, as depicted in the play, was a rigid classical system where people were expected to remain in their place. At that time, birth determined people's social peak, even as kings were gods and citizens were meant to serve the noble, while women had no rights but duties. Only the clergy, the nobles, and the royals had rights and privileges.

*Destinateur*: Quest for freedom, realisation of dream, romantic instinct, and philosophy of individualism are factors pushing the protagonist into action.

*Sujet*: The protagonist here is Hernani.

*Objet*: He wants to change the system towards his romantic philosophy. *Adjuvant*: Among the factors that contribute to his mission are love, rebellion and adolescence, as well as the female protagonist, Dona Sol.

*Opposant*: The obstacles he encounters include Dona Sol, Don Gomes, soldiers of the king and Hernani's loss of his noble status from Don Aragon to a bandit.

*Destinataire*: The action of the protagonist will positively affect he himself, Dona Sol and his rebellious generation. Don Gomes and Don Carlos will be negatively affected by the success of the *sujet*. The rival suitors will lose their grip on power and their influence on the new generation. Don Carlos has to defend his monarchy and Don Gomes, his dukedom and parenthood.

#### **5. Analysis of Action in Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust* Using Modèle Actanciel**

The action in Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust* can also be analysed using Actancial model (*Modèle actanciel*). The analysis is also based on the classics-romantics conflict in three perspectives using the six actants of Greimas to explain the interactions of the characters around the action.

### **5.1. Action Analysis between Gretchen's Mother and Gretchen**

The action existing between Gretchen and her mother always occurs between parents and their children. The parents are custodians of the old generation, moral values and tradition. The children symbolise the new generation, who have a different ideology and mentality as well as aspirations. They are not aware of the past experiences of their parents or the religious laws or the customs and tradition of the land. In fact, they are the romantic agents negotiating with the existing norm or order to break or modify it. The *destinateur* pushes a subject (*sujet*) into action to attain an object (*objet*) that the *destinataire* will benefit from. The subject (*sujet*) is supported by the *adjuvant* and opposed by the *opposant*. In this perspective, the action is based on Gretchen's (a child) attempt to break the system of her mother (a parent). The *destinateur* comprises maturity, *adomania*<sup>1</sup>, quest for love, adventure, poverty and loss of her younger sister, whom she used to care for. All these factors sensitise Gretchen (*sujet*) to easily accept the love proposal and advances of Faust. She abandons all her religious upbringing and the pious life she maintained from childhood to adolescence. The *destinataire* of Gretchen's object (*objet*) include herself, Faust, the new generation, Mephistopheles and the witches. Certain factors constitute the *adjuvant*, such as Faust, Gretchen's friend Martha and Mephistopheles. The *opposant* includes Gretchen's mother, her brother Valentine, the Church and the inhabitants of the village, who make jest of her pregnancy and call her a hypocrite.

### **5.2 Action Analysis between Religious Supremacy and Faust**

The dichotomisation of characters into religion and Faust corresponds with the categories of the nobles and the rebels. 15th Century Germany the Church was so powerful that it determined people's lifestyle. Therefore, Faust stands for the rebels against the religious and moral values established by the Church. He moves with his supporters to weaken the system of religion. The *destinataire* pushes the subject (*sujet*) into action in order to obtain an object (*objet*) that will benefit the *destinataire*. Solitude, boredom, monotonous existence, consciousness of vanity of life and knowledge as an endless search constitute the factors that incite Faust into

---

<sup>1</sup> A new word coined from adolescence and the suffix (-mania) which means restlessness in adolescence.

engaging in the action of weakening religion's influence over people, modifying religious supremacy and negotiating sex before marriage (called fornication) and fulfilling his quest for love and wealth at all cost .

Faust is aided by Mephistopheles, the witches and Gretchen, who dance to his tune. He is also assisted by his sentiment, instinct and fatal love for his aspirations. However, certain factors prevent him from attaining his goal, such as the death of Gretchen's mother and that of Valentine, the infanticide of Gretchen and her death in prison, the short life span as a young man as well as rigidity of the inhabitants of the community towards his strange behaviour.

### **5.3. Action Analysis between Community and Faust**

Every individual has a unique personality that can help in transforming the society. There is always some kind of negotiation between what society offers and what the individual offers. Faust is the *sujet* (subject) of this action. His *destinateur* include (1) the desire to make up for the lost past (2) frustration caused by poverty (3) quest for freedom and adventure and (4) past monotonous living as a researcher. These factors are responsible for the stimuli that instigate him into action. The beneficiary of the object, i.e. the *destinataire*, include (1) he himself (2) Gretchen (3) the new generation of adolescents and (4) Helen of Troy. One can see here that Faust is a superman who wants to realise almost all his dreams. The *adjuvant* of the subject who aids him to realise his object are Mephistopheles, the witches, Gretchen, passion for enjoyment and his love for materialism. The *opposant* that militates against the realisation of Faust's object include the Church, Gretchen's mother, valentine and inhabitants of the community.

### **6. Comparative Analysis of Action in the Tragedies**

The action in Hugo's *Hernani* and Goethe's *Faust* can be compared as shown in the table below. The action involves the tradition custodians called the classics and the change agents called the romantics. There are the classics versus the romantics, i.e. parents versus children. There are nobles versus rebels. Finally, there is the distinction between the community and the individual.

<b>Classics / Romantics</b>	<b>Hernani</b>	<b>Faust</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Parents /Children	Don Gomes / Dona Sol	mother / Gretchen	Uncle/Niece & Mother/daughter
Nobles / Rebels	Don Carlos /Hernani	Church /Faust	King/subject & Christianity/believer
Community /individual	Saragossa /Hernani	Community / Faust	System/political change agent & System/ religious change agent

### **6.1. Classics versus Romantics: Parents versus Children**

Parents constitute the classical system, as they are custodians of traditional beliefs, religious practices, and moral values. They defend these classical principles against their children, who always criticise them with new arguments. The former are rigid and resist any form of change while the latter are dynamic and want change at all cost. Parents constitute the classics because in the classical period they had influence over choice of marital partner for their children. However, in the Romantic period, writers such as Hugo, Musset, and Goethe depict characters who ignore the influence of parents over their desires. Marriage is no longer based on economic status, social class, compatible ideology or parental religious group or race.

In *Hernani*, Don Gomes represents the parents because he is the uncle who brought Dona Sol up. The girl loves her uncle as a daughter would love her father, whereas Gomes loves his niece as a lover. This leads to a conflict between the uncle-lover and niece-daughter. She prefers an early twenties lover, Hernani, to her 62-year-old uncle, Don Domes. In *Faust*, Gretchen's mother stands for parents who instill discipline, Christian religious etiquette, and moral values. She advises her daughter and rebukes her for wrongdoing. Gretchen, an adolescent who abandons her religious upbringing for the adventure of love, falls in love with Faust, engages in premarital sex and gets pregnant, unlike an ideal Christian woman of the 16th Century.

### **6.2. Classics versus Romantics: Nobles versus Rebels**

The nobles constitute the classics while the rebels represent the romantics. The nobles want to hold on to the principles of *vraisemblance* and *bienseance* while the rebels want to jettison these archaic practices. The former hold power and wealth and maintain law and order for the continuity of their classical existence. The latter, on the contrary, struggle against this oppression in order to better their lives by escaping the bondage. In *Hernani*, Don Carlos, the King of Spain, represents the nobles. Hernani, the head of the rebels, struggles to liberate the subjects of the monarchy. As a romantic hero, Hernani fights for the freedom of the masses. In *Faust*, the Church constitutes the nobles. The Church in 16th Century Germany, as depicted in the 19th Century Romantic play, was a place where women were nuns and could not preach. Moreover, Christians abstained from fornication, premarital sex, and abortion or infanticide, etc. However, Gretchen commits matricide and infanticide. She mistakenly poisons her mother and deliberately kills her out-of-wedlock baby. Both Faust and Gretchen are rebels against the supremacy of Christianity. Both lovers escape Hell and enter Paradise since they repented. Through the characters, Goethe shows that one can hardly exist without committing a crime or sin.

### **6.3. Classics versus Romantics: Community versus Individual**

In 1830, the classics and the romantics engaged in physical battles in theatres during the staging of Hugo's *Hernani*, a play that the classics considered non-aesthetic for having broken many classical rules. In this study, Classicism is a philosophy of reasoning and rules while Romanticism is a philosophy of sentiments and quest for freedom. Thus, a classic is anybody or group of people that emphasises logic or reasoning, defends an existing system, is reluctant to change and preserves the culture, moral values and tradition. A Romantic is anyone or a group of people who struggles for freedom, dreams of change, lives according to personal desire, dreams and imagination and who does not care for the consequence of their actions on the society provided it soothes them.

Every community stands for classical or neoclassical values against which an individual has to struggle from childhood. Thus, an individual who tries to change the community by expressing



romantic dreams and imaginations will be seen as a romantic personality.

*Hernani* is set in Saragossa of the 16th Century. It was a community where an uncle could marry his niece, where citizens were expected to obey the law, where children were required to accept parental decisions and where individual were expected to respect the customs and religious practices of society. Hernani and Dona Sol are two young individuals who struggle against the community. Hernani struggles for political change while Dona Sol revolts against parental supremacy over marriage. In *Faust*, the 16th Century community of Germany presented in the 19th Century play of *Faust* is a society where Catholicism and Protestantism influenced the people's way of life. However, Faust challenges religious supremacy, holiness and modesty. He dances to the tune of the devil and expresses his freedom through irrational behaviour and irreligious practices.

## **7. Observations and Concluding Remarks**

As has been shown, the dichotomy of classics versus romantics is represented in *Hernani* by uncle versus niece and, in *Faust*, by mother versus daughter. The bone of contention in *Hernani* is marriage and in *Faust* it is premarital sex. Since nobles benefit in any corrupt government while the masses suffer, this always results in revolts and crises as more and more insurgents emerge to change the system. The dichotomy of classics versus romantics in this perspective shows king versus subject in *Hernani* and the Clergy versus Christian believers in *Faust*. The conflict in the former is caused by the absolute monarchy of Don Carlos and the fight of three suitors over a lady who is in love with a bandit. The conflict in *Faust* is built around Christian believers who want to serve God and the devil at the same time.

This intergeneric comparative textual analysis involves the action as depicted in the two tragic plays and it has been established that romantic periods mean the following.

Night, dream and imagination are romantic periods. This is because everybody can express freedom through their dreams and imagination. Romantics celebrate nights as it provides a refuge for socially unaccepted behaviour. *Hernani* and *Faust* visit their lovers at nights. The romantics express their dreams and interpret their

imaginations into actions that are antisocial, immoral and irreligious. This means that the romantic period is nighttime, dream and imagination. This is because no societal rules can impede these three concepts. Another romantic period is adolescence. This is because most writers started as adolescents and they created romantic heroes who are adolescents. Victor Hugo started at 15 when he won a literary prize for his poem and fell in love with Adèle Foucher at 19. Goethe was in love at 16 with Katheben Shönkopf in Leipzig. He published *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* when he was 25 in 1774. Faust and Hernani are young men of around 21 and Gretchen and Dona Sol are teenagers. Courtship can also be considered as another Romantic period. Most romantic lovers hardly get married or never live long after marriage. Romeo and Juliet, Dona Sol and Hernani, Faust and Gretchen are adolescents who end up not living together as married couples. The heroes are in the early twenties and the heroines are teenagers. Most of them die after a short courtship or immediately after a secret marriage. Finally, the rebellious/or revolutionary period is also a romantic period. This supports Crawford's (2013) argument. One can do anything irrational during a rebellious period or during a revolution or war. Most people hardly obey rules during the following romantic periods: (1) *courtship period*, between Hernani and Dona Sol as well as between Faust and Gretchen; (2) *adolescent period*, when a young man and a lady want to engage in adventure, as is the case with Hernani/Dona Sol and Faust/Gretchen; (3) *period of revolution*, when some rebels try to change the existing system, such as Hernani and with his rebels against Saragossa and Faust against 16th Century Germany.

Like the romantics of the 19th Century who condemned classical rules and promoted the philosophy of individualism, young lovers tend to break many religious and moral rules irrespective of their upbringing. Hernani becomes a bandit despite his noble status, Dona Sol abandons her noble status to fall in love with a bandit, Faust becomes a young man to revolt and Gretchen falls pregnant despite her upbringing as a pious Christian girl. One can now understand that *adomania* is what occurs in both the courtship period and adolescent periods. The study has proved that quest for freedom, adventure, satisfaction of desire and romantic space (nature such as forest, hills, mountains and valleys) and the romantic period (night, dream and imagination) are factors that aid expression of the romantic instinct.

## References

- Ackroyd, P. (2016). The Romantics- Eternity, BBC Documentary, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=livQ21kz101,02/09/2017>.
- Baumann, B. & Oberle, B. (1985). *Deutsche Literatur in Epochen*, Munchen: Max Hueber Verlag, 117- 136.
- Castex, P.G., Surer, P. & Becker, G. (1974). *Histoire de la littérature française*, Paris: Hachette.
- Choffray, E. (2016). Fiche de lecture: Hernani de Victor Hugo. (Retrieved on 23 August, 2016. (Inédit)
- Clemens, R. J. (2009). *Romanticism*, Redmond, W A: Microsoft Corporation.
- Crawford, J. (2013). *Gothic Fiction and the Invention of Terrorism*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Flax, N. M. (1987). 'Goethe and Romanticism', D. J. McMillan (ed.) *Approaches to Teaching Goethe's Faust*, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 40-47.
- Frank, M. B. (2001). *German Romantic Painting Redefined, Nazarene tradition and the narratives of Romanticism*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Furst, L. R. (1968). 'Romanticism in Historical Perspective', *Comparative Literature Studies* Vol. 5, No. 2, 115-143, Pennsylvania: State University Press.
- Haberhern, M. A (1987). 'The Romantic Revolution', D. J. McMillan (Ed.) *Approaches to Teaching Goethe's Faust*, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 101-107.
- Johnson, M. A. (2004). *Literary Works of Art and Human Experience*, University of Lagos Inaugural Lecture, Lagos: University of Lagos Press.
- Kelly, G. (1989). *English Fiction of Romantic Period 1789-1830*, London: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Kuo, A. T. (2012). A Comparative Study of Jack Kerovac & Ernest Hemingway as Representatives of their Respective Generations, Thesis, University of Oslo.
- Lagarde A. et Michard, L. (1969). *XIXème Siècle: les Grands auteurs français de programme V*, Paris: Bordas.
- Lombardi, M. (2015). *Romanticism in two Musical Repertories: A Comparison of the Music of Federic Chopin and the rock Nirvana*, Australia: The University of Western Australia.

- Morrison, R. (2017). *Romanticism*, Vol. 23, No.3, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1817-2017, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Myers-Shaffer, C. (2000). *The Principles of Literature: A Guide for Readers and Writers*, New York: Barron's Educational Series Inc.
- Nersessian, A. (2018). 'Romantic Ecocriticism', *Literature Compass*, Vol. 4, No. 170, 5-10.
- Perez, T. M. (2015). 'Romanticism', Gustavo A. Becquer and Edgar A. Poev (eds.) *A Comparative Analysis*, San Cristobal de la Laguna: Universidad de la Laguna.
- Peyre, H. M. (1979). *Qu'est-ce que le romantisme* (1st Edition. 1971), Paris: Presse Universitaire de France.
- Pottorak, E. (2007). 'Application of Schemas Actanciel in Teaching of Foreign Languages', *Synergies Pologne*, Poland: Université de Silesie, n04, 219-227.
- Timothy-Asobele, S. J. (2003). *Essays in World Theatre*, Lagos: Promocomms Ltd.
- Ubersfeld, A. (2012). 'Victor Hugo crée Ruy Blas, au Théâtre de la Renaissance à Paris', le 8 novembre 1838" dans *Ruy Blas de Victor Hugo mise en scène, dossier pédagogique*, Théâtre National Populaire, Paris: Villeurbane, 16-18.
- Vaillant, A. (2015). 'Pornographie ou obscénité?', dans *Romantisme*, Armand Colin (ed.) Vol. 4, No. 170, 5-10. (<https://www.cairn.info/revue-romantisme-2015-1-page-8.htm>)
- Vallins, D., Oishi, K. & S. Perry (2013). *Coleridge, Romanticism and the Orient: Cultural Negotiation*, London: Bloomsbury.
- Zhang, L. (2016). *Revue des modèles narratifs de Greimas à partir des contes fantastiques chinois*, China/France: Université de Wuhan et de Clermont-Auvergne.