

The writer in a Third World country has had to live with conceptual problems unknown in Europe and North America. He inhabits a world, buttressed on every side with a spectrum of issues coming either from the left or the right. And his art either falls in line with the defining epochal thought currents of his age or at moments goes beyond the normative to articulate a difference beyond the lines of the establishment. The generations of seminally deviant art forms as manifested in a Brecht or a Shaw traumatizes the formidable configurations of its age, and so risks the danger of being cut off from the presiding munificence of those who censure art or hold it barreled in the greater interests of power.

The writer in the West is to an extent free from the casualty faced by his contemporary in the less developed world and can with assurance take perambulations in the existing institution. The modern T.S.Eliot has, for example, pronounced himself as ‘‘classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion’’ (For Lancelot Andrews, ix) this despite his unambiguous scorn of the imperatives of modern temper that so often admonishes and strangulates the presiding deities of aesthetics and contorts it so as not to be recognizable at all

Jean Paul Sartre believes that the agenda of a writer should be to speak on public affairs, ‘‘not from the point of view of an abstract morality, but in the perspective of a precise goal which is the realization of socialist democracy’’ (What is Literature 214). In other words, the writer in Europe has this independence that he can make his choice from the ones already in existence and shape his work in accordance with them. In this way, he either belongs to the avant- grade or takes his position against it. Nevertheless, he needs not move beyond what is ‘there’.

The African writer on the other hand, cannot take anything for granted. He is not in a position to own up without drastic re-evaluation of the confabulation of artistic

and aesthetic descriptions in usual conduit. The acceptance presiding thought currents without sufficient reform inadvertently links dramatic and fictional narrative into another epoch of neo-colonialism. More importantly, the writer needs to answer the query, which is the most intriguing of all 'Should Africa develop its institutions similar to those in Europe?' If not, why?

Answers to these questions have never been easy and for the most part complicated by the existence in Africa of powerful imperial structures that have determined the consequences of its social and literary outputs. To succumb to the temptations of an African writer with his puerile considerations for the western audience is to be oblivious of the greater social demands of his art and to leave off the more important social criterion off the cuff. But the writer cannot still wish away the influences of the West, as if they were not there. To do it is to make art completely limited in its scope and vibes.

Writers were part of the educated elite, and there was no way they could escape these contradictions. For instance, they nearly all opted for European languages as the means of their creative output. Thus English, French, and Portuguese became the languages of the new African literature. But these languages were spoken by only about 5 per cent of the population. The African Prometheus had been sent to wrest power from the gods, but instead became a captive contented with warming himself at the ...reside of the gods. Otherwise he carried the[...] are in containers that were completely sealed and for which the majority had no key. For whom were they writing? (Thiong'o, Moving the Center 106-107)

One way of circumventing the European dissensions is to believe that the past of Africa, as it is conducive enough to ferment a new and virile social configuration.

The Guinean Camara Laye, for example, recreates the customary life of his nation as it was prior to the European infringement. In his L'Enfant Noir (1954), he creates a picture of Africa in a tone reminiscent of the pastoral. But the work was put down because it sentimentalized its subject. Chinua Achebe found it "a little too sweet" (The Role of a Writer in a New Nation 9). In Nigeria, Achebe himself produced his own fictionalized narrative patterns that eschewing the romanticized idealizations of an ideal age gave shape to a more complex and hybrid universe. Achebe sees the work of cultural revival as of significant importance in the life of an African artist:

Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse – to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complex of years of denigration and self-abasement (The Novelist 7).

It has been the purpose of Achebe himself to dissuade any oversimplifications of the African scene and though political commitment is a welcome step for the artist, Achebe feels that the past ought not to be presented, as if it were some "long, technicolour idyll" (The Novelist 6).

However, the most interesting variation on this theme of presentation is Ayi Kwei Armah's strange symbolic novel Two Thousand Seasons, (1973), which while avoiding the strange pitfalls of presenting the African scene through overt simplification, describes the golden age only in retrospections describing in simplistic jargon the confrontation between the predatory Arabs and the destroyers (Whites) of the African way. Armah solemnizes the historic past of Africa as one of beauty and grandeur and though he scoffs the offenders of its civilization, yet promises that the past can be recreated and called in to make away the dissensions and chiasmus that triggered European imperialism to the center stage of world politics.

Ours was the way of the creation. From the cycle of regeneration, we had not yet strayed on the exile road. (Two Thousand Seasons 2)

Irrespective of such profuse fantasies of word play, Armah's book still makes an aggressive and vitriolic reading and his novel becomes a means of castigating the West unremittingly. There is no desire to aim for a revolutionary dialectics that while confronting the West for its improper interference in the cultural paradigms of Africa, can still project an equal participation between the two ethos of civilization to supplement the compass of human liberty and progress:

We are not stunted in spirit, we are not Europeans, we are not Christians that we should invent fables a child would laugh at and harden our eyes to preach them daylight and deep night as truth .We are not warped in soul, we are not Arabs, we are not Muslims to fabricate a desert God chanting madness in the wilderness, and call our creature, creator. That is not our way. (Armah, Two Thousand Seasons 4-5)

Armah calls for the development of affirmative programmes and ideologies, though it is a difficult proposition. He is not in favor of limiting oneself to negative, anti-colonial feelings and the nearest that one comes to such a positive affirmation is in the description of a band of blacks escaping from slave-ship before it leaves Africa and takes to the systematic killings of the Whites.

Armah is specifically against the neo-colonial appropriation of the African cultural space and offers a creative response to the disease of slavish dependency on the West. Much of his response was, however, dictated by the social paradigms of his age: the barbarous and inhuman killing of the voices of independence and, especially, of Patrice Lumumba's who had advocated a self-reliant and independent

Africa. The involvement of America in the Congo Crisis (at a time of global interference in Cuba, Vietnam, and Nicaragua) is clear and Armah refused to accept lying down the anomalies of the West against what he saw as so much of African helplessness. He directed his efforts towards rescuing his motherland and also other dehumanized people around the world. To that extent his creative output was dictated by an enormity of disillusionment. Nonetheless, one finds in the works of Armah at this stage, a commitment to the question of the Blacks reincarnation from the White perfidy and the construction of a destiny independent of white sabotage. This polarized vision is central to the Manichean structure Why Are We Not So Blest (1972) and his fourth novel Two Thousand Seasons (1973).

Even in his earlier novel The Beautiful Ones, the protagonist is alone. He makes a personal commitment to resist a sickness of consumerism and greedy consumption that has infected neo-colonial Ghana. But the novel was attacked for its uncompromising castigation of the role of the neo-elite middle class as a neo-colonial accomplice and cohort. Its graphic descriptions become the image of a sweeping rot that has done the country wrong. But Armah's works also lambastes the economic and social dependency the elite of the country have succumbed to, under colonial rule.

It is only in the last two novels Two Thousand Seasons and the Healers that Armah replaces his emphasis from an intense characterization to the enactment of a communal philosophy. In a similar position, Soyinka's has had an epistemological break in the configurations of his thought. He detours any casual offensive to advocate a volcanic pinpointing of the enemies of mankind. Rather, the ruthless dictators and the imbecile middle class are straightaway targeted.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, is again the first East African novelist to have published

works, essays, and novels to discern the links that underlie the psychological, political and social parameters of any colonial regime and program of exploitation. Like his predecessor, Armah, he seeks to question the legitimacy or correctness of the empire.

In his important novel A Grain of Wheat published in 1967, the socio-political conflates of meaning are not as important as characterization, which the novelist is interested in. The novel for the most part plays with the guilt and dishonesty of the rulers who take the place left over by their colonial masters and who have made the Kenyan revolution a false and misguided attempt to initiate change in the country. Though the central irony of the play is the misapprehension by the community in honoring Mugo, who while being a Mau Mau activist, betrayed his own brethren Kihika to the enemies, the novel is non ambivalent in addressing the question that at the time of independence swept the intellectuals by and large- if the new social and political order would be taken over by men of dubious morals? The novel presents a fearsome picture of a national rot and it was Ngugi's purpose in his novel to make the people aware of what was taking place in his country.

Ngugi's fourth novel Petals of Blood, published in 1977, affects a still more caustic and vitriolic assessment of the neo-colonial regime and is itself red in teeth and claw. The writer also projects his disillusionment with the failure of the post independence government of Jomo Kenyatta. The novel has however been defined variously, one of which is that it is a political detective thriller revolving around the murder of three Kenyan Business tycoons, and the four likely suspects-Karega, the trade unionist, Wanja, the prostitute, and Munira, a teacher turned man of God. But in most of these novels, he allows his readers to connect with their traditional past and so break free from any remembrances of the colonial history.

Nugui 's now famous essay On the Abolition of the English Department, written in 1969, when he finally resigned from the department could be seen as efforts made to the same end: that of visualizing a glamorized past of the nation which, was an answer to the questions posed as of now.

Es'kia Mphahlele, another leading figure in modern African literature, is particularly preoccupied with the definitions of a pure African identity and with the politics of neo-colonial culture. But his concern was expressed in his essay, Education and the Search for Self: A Personal Essay, *Teacher's Journal* (1980:1-3). It stated that the West had assimilated the Africans on its terms, as a conquered people and not on their own principles. And the more he discovered that one part of the white world was ineluctably bound up with the other,⁶ I tend to think of Africa as a whole as my beat, my platform, my source of material, my audience (237). Mphahlele also emphasizes the point that the Nigerians should make their own choice of a cultural symbol and that the choice should not be frittered away.

His first novel The Wanderers (1972) has as its protagonist, Timi Tabne who like the author is disillusioned with the neo-elite of contemporary society and is also in self-imposed exile. The locale of the novel moves through a variety of places showing the central character's wandering and vagabond existence as he is increasingly fed up with the present circumstances of life.

Certain influences dictated the fissures of response to the outside world among the African writers writing after the 30's and the 40's and chief among those were the exposure of the African soldiers to the brutalities of war. These soldiers had been to Europe and had served the imperial army as "Carrier Corps", and also as actual soldiers in the battlefield.

Boro in Ngugi's Weep Not Child returns to his native village in Kenya's Gikuyu palpably agitated. He is disturbed mentally and emotionally at the treatment he had discovered as a black, by the white imperial masters. But his predicament is only a general one and illustrates the large-scale abuses of human and social African capital by those who had misused their political capacities to destroy an emergent democracy in the African homeland. He is no longer willing to take the position allotted to him by his masters and challenges the status quo. He questions his father Ngotho, whose association with his land is purely metaphysical. Boro asks his father about the feasibility of working for someone who had taken their ancestral land and had in fact made them hostage in their own soil.

How can you continue working for a man who has taken your own land? And then reiterating how can you go on serving him? (Weep Not Child 30)

Similarly in Armah's novel The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born, the writer captures the disgruntled psyche of the soldiers returning from the battlefield. The intention in such portrayals is to highlight the manner in which the traditional order has caved in and the community has also been broken into "so many shattered world and selves" (Beautiful Ones 66). The new social order is described symbolically and most glumly through animal imageries. Vultures and gulls project the insensitiveness of the new order.

In the novels written between the 30's and the 40's the one decisive factor common to all is the tangential break suffered by the African societies from an existing social order and the incursions made on the same by the arrogant white man who had left the nation bleeding profusely in utter disregard for all values.

Obviously what was happening in the African habitat was having large repercussions in the writings and literary manifestoes of the period and to this consequence Fanon remarked in the Wretched of the Earth “the birth of national consciousness in Africa has a strictly contemporaneous connection with the African consciousness” (Fanon The Wretched of The Earth 199).

Appiah concomitantly states that the literature of the post World War II period can be defined as the “imaginative narration of a common cultural past that is crafted onto a shared tradition by the writer” (Critical Enquiry 17 349).

Apart from the onus of war, the other responsive factor contributory to the emergence of a new resistive literature among the upcoming writers of the period was the persistent failures of socialist enterprise in the governmental patterns of rule, its failure to convert its promised improvements to the common man. Consequently, the messianism of early leadership turned to Caeserism. The political spectrum of the nation was surely volatile and even volcanic, its fissures largely evident in the infighting between sections of people antipodes to each other. Achebe while reflecting on the political uncertainties of the new nation commented, “the political machine had been so abused that whichever way you pressed it, it produced the same results and another force had to come in ” (The Trouble With Nigeria, 10).

As Claude Wauthier explains, “decolonization did not modify the economic class structure except on one account, the new leadership took over the functioning of the system” (The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa 276). Every reactionary dictator even “adopted poses of liberalism, radicalism and Marxism” (ADO 158).

Moreover, a distinction needed to be made between the old power regime and the new. Archie Mafege in his book demarcates between the two concepts. He states that

while “colonialism implies an unmitigated imposition, neo-colonialism is a contractual relationship”(African Social Studies; A Radical Reader 402).

As a result, reform movements stagnated; the financial burdens and debts of the countries to the money lending organizations, the IMF and World Bank got severe and with these economic aberrations came the political ones of dictatorship. “One man one vote gave way to one party, even one man regimes in which one man, one election was more apposite.” (Shaw, Journal of Modern African Studies 197)

The pitfall of the new political and economic regime, its bankruptcy was more hazarded with its political mandarins compromising the interests of their country to the dictates of foreign rule.

In a detailed study of this phenomenon of African civilization, Neil Lazarus refers to the “messianic representation of the decolonizing process” (Resistance in Post-Colonial African Fiction 11) or the tendency to regard political independence or the tendency to conflate independence with freedom that he says was responsible for the deep sense of disappointment that followed the euphoria of independence.

Those who experienced individually the volcanic rise and upsurge of expectations and then its falling trajectory responded with bitterness and increasing pain to “a nationalism of mourning”¹ (Brennan, Salman Rusdie 3) seen at its most poignant in shift of balance in the works of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, from the high idealism of early years as in The River Between (1965) and Weep not, Child (1964). Even more problematic became the definitions of nation and nationality and as Mazrui laments⁴ “never again would it be possible to distinguish between a song of national patriotism and the anguished choke of Africa’s self-indictment”¹ (Ali, The Patriot as an Artist 89).

Naturally, the writers grew more and more voluble of what they saw as the undoing of the politicians and as Armah quotes the relationship between the new masters and the old exploiters was worth studying “in much the same way as the onchocera worm and its carrier fly responsible for river blindness are worth studying” (A Stream of Senegalese History, 1987). The incessant flow of Armah’s diatribes and disgusted metaphors became embarrassing to his fellow writers soon enough for them to comment that Armah’s The Beautiful Ones was a sickly enterprise and Awonoor similarly accused the former of a “despair more relentless than is warranted” (Two Decades of Armah Criticism, 1990).

Most of these novels were concerned with a discrepancy between “ a false rhetoric and what actually happened ” (Griffith, African and West Indian Writing between Two Cultures 37).

The sixth chapter of Armah’s The Beautiful Ones is intended to make the people of Ghana remember the life and consequences of a man –Kwame Nkrumah, they knew too well as the only individual who gave force, momentum and intensity to the movement against the colonial regimes of his days and had also lead the former Gold Coast to independence. Unlike the happy and self-aggrandizing bourgeois who sided with the colonial rule in its most oppressive days, Nkrumah was a man of the people whose inspirational rhetoric caught the imagination of the masses. “We were ready for big and beautiful things, the promise was so beautiful” (The Beautiful Ones 85). But as ill luck would have it Nkrumah toed the measure left off by his treacherous and imbecile countrymen. But, he was not the only one whom power corrupted.

Manna, another character in the novel who had been following with interest, excitement and hope the rise of Nkrumah was shocked when she came to know of the final nature of things. She finally loses a sense of herself and her surroundings.

This is the only possible recourse left to her to detour the complete frustration she would have realized had she been well. In the final pages of the book, she is shown wandering through the landscape bewildered and dismayed searching for the irretrievable, which in fact becomes a symbol of the loss of hope and the promise betrayed. The tragic sweep of events bemoans the guilty and the innocent alike.

But the petty bourgeois is instigated and criticized through the figuration of Joseph Koomson, “His Excellency Minister of Plenipotentiary, Hero of Socialist Labor” (Beautiful Ones 56). Koomson is the type of the one who exchanges communal prosperity for personal benefits. The mass media has puffed him up to an artificial greatness. He is also the type representative of those men who had bartered their country to foreign interests and as a socialist, leads his people into bold sacrifices. His hands were “fat, perfumed, soft with the ancestral softness of chiefs who had sold their people and were celestially happy with the fruits of the trade” (Beautiful Ones 131). The quagmire of his moral bankruptcy is increasingly clear from what he does as a party member, getting the “State Furniture Corporation” to furnish his home, sending his sister in law to study dress making in England at the cost of the state exchequer. The novel finally disowns all concocted and meaningless sloganeering in a mock pseudo lampoon:

WHO BORN FOOLS

SOCIALISM CHOP MAKE I CHOP

CONTREY BROKE (Beautiful Ones 106).

The novel ends with the coup d’ etat against the unjust rule of Nkrumah and the escape of Koomson through the latrine hole of the Man’s house. But this change is only an external accessory to the misrule of the times. Another replaces a regime of

hate until there is sameness. A large shuffling against the power mongers requires a greater force or momentum than individual possibilities would make discernible.

A Grain of Wheat by Ngugi is similarly about a lost promise, the surreptitious and faithless undoing of a possible future of plenty in food, security and financial well being, but above all the dignity of being alive in a free country, where justice is not at a premium, and corruption is punishable. But as the course of events in the plot shows, the reality of the Kenyan homeland, which it represented, was the opposite from this and as Ngugi stated later on in the Detained. The coming of independence was held with new expectations and possibilities and he himself remembered “the energy and the hope and the dreams and the confidence, after all, we were part of a continent emerging from a colonial era...into ...what? We never answered the question. It was evidently clear that imperialism was far from gone with its mere historical phase out ” (Thiong’o Detained. 63&142).

As Edward Lobb explains, colonialism was “ historically past, but psychologically present in any relationship between Africa and Europe” (World Literature Written in English 5).

It was the moral responsibility of the writer at this moment to stop whining and instead build up an alternative psychology of resistance to that sickness of subservience that arises from neo-colonial, psychological and ideological dependence on the West and its adverse effect on identity. Chidi Amuta, in The Theory of African Literature (1989), also favors building up a resistance against the following:

Entrenchment of colonial economic structures as road blocks to genuine development, against the tyranny and endless buffoonery of an insensitive

ruling class presiding over societies riven by class inequalities, against the hegemony of irrelevant ideas, and growing sophistication of the ideological tentacles of global imperialism. (7)

However says Johan Galtung, if the center is responsible for the cultural and emotional onslaught on the periphery i.e. Africa, the latter too have had a complicity in revalidating the center until the periphery becomes so dependent on the center that the former is forced to go in for innovations. However, the periphery and other far-flung areas of the world have become homogenous in so far as they have a preference for the “same bad movies, the same sloth machines, the same plastic atrocities” (Ricoeur, Civilization and National Cultures 276-277).

But when Fanon similarly expressed his disgust and apathy at the way the European ideas of culture and values were making inroads into the societies all over the world, he did not anticipate the extent to which the influence would be homogenous, and also make inroads into contemporary African society by the global commodization of values. But it is a matter of irony that the European cultural triumph in the main land of Africa did not take place as John Thomson predicted in his Reason and Enlightenment (A Grain of Wheat 47-50), but rather transpired towards a material base, having its ramifications in a money economy. Modernity, according to Appiah has turned every element of the real into a sign and the sign reads “for sale” (Is the Post in Post-Modernism 344).

Commenting on the complex process of rupture and continuity Bonnie Barthold observes that “it was as if Toffler’s concept of future shock had been multiplied geometrically and Western History from the pre-renaissance times to Apollo moon shots were telescoped into the life of a single person” (Barthold Black Time 5).

Moreover as Nurrudin Farah remarks "Africa was thus compelled into being guest in a century which belongs to Europe and the Western Hemisphere." (Sardines)

Coming down from shocking perspective of a religious retrenchment to a response of a different kind which pervaded the social and intellectual and cultural circles after the coming of the White missionary in the African mainland, one discovers in the works of Chinua Achebe and Elechi Amadi, a desire to dig back into one's roots, account for one's distance, stare them in the face as if to do them was to tell the ancestors that the connection was still was intact. But more than consistently reproducing claims of the African glamorized past, there also came an awareness of the complexity of the situation wherein the pure African religion was no longer to be discerned, the reason why Ngugi asks in 'The Tension Between National and International Culture': "Is there a recognized unity and uniformity in indigenous cultures on the one hand and a recognizable unity in metropolitan cultures on the other?" (Thiong'o, World Literature Written in English 3-9)

Indeed, so great was the stretch of change that it was simply impossible to discern faith in the traditional mores of the native society since it had been changed beyond recognition by those despairing of the same.

A simple way of illustrating this is the manner in which the Pilkings put on the dress of the traditional Egungun masquerades that to the constables' utter dismay calls upon death and more often than not stand for the same. It is this manner of disparaging antique native custom of the Blacks by the Whites that drive a wedge between man's perception of a past whose presence is only a matter of distant, formal memory and the incomprehensibility of the present hour, its social and moral fissures, discordant images of unsettling ratiocination that lacks a harmony with the invisible law of nature. But more than unsettling the balance and poise of a tradition,

the incursus of colonialism has meant the rupture of culture itself, so that the conflict between an objective western view of the world against the participatory African or oriental discourse is the beginning of a new context arising out of this relationship of conflict and hierarchy than the quality of expression itself. The culture of Africa before the incursion of the White man in the continent however will be defined in this context as in Marxian terms as the product of particular social and economic determinants. This is particularly relevant in the study of Soyinka's aesthetic focus, in answering the queries which pertain to his employment of art as a representative organization for the furtherance of making it known that it is a response to life and its changes and for the writer a manner of dissecting the categories which provides a dominant configuration to the profession of values. And so Raymond Williams says in Culture and Society:

Concentrated on the word are questions directly raised by great historical changes, which the changes in industry, democracy and class in their own way represent, and to which the changes in art are a closely related response (Culture and Society 10).

In doing so Soyinka ushers in a concentrated effort to delineate the economics of cultures which as a double bind situation transforms a political problematic into an existential one.

One of the foundations of African cultural ethos before the onslaught of colonialism was its social cohesiveness, community responsibility and inter family relationships. The user value of commodities, Neil Lazarus observes, is not replaced not so much by form of exchange values analyzed by the Marxists, as by "a sliding semiotic scale of Westernity" (Resistance in Post-Colonial African Fiction 85).

Apart from the important novelists of Nigeria who expressed concern at the dependency of the Africans on the West, other third world writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez expressed a similar concern over the manner of intellectual colonization, fearing as Ngugi has said in his book Decolonizing the Mind, that the effect of this subjugation was like that of a colonial bomb –aimed “ to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, languages, in the environment and ultimately in themselves” (3).

The purpose of writers in this context was to parody the blind apemanship of the neo-colonial masters to their erstwhile superiors and therefore to make an ethical statement on the decadence of the mode of living which they adopted. The irony of its all, a character of Armah’s novel The Beautiful Ones, Man, says is, “of people being given power because they were good at shouting against the enslaving things of Europe, and of the same people using the same power for chasing after the same enslaving things ” (Beautiful Ones 149).

The importance of Fanon in the development of the African resistive discourse towards colonialism has been accepted always and more importantly, his propounding of a an alternative to the parasitic privileged segment of the society of Africa has had a great impact in generating a new approach to the tackling of the problems of the newly independent nation. Fanon’s contemptuous remarks on the neo-elites as being a hustler class with the mentality of pimps incapable of achievement, makes them synonymous with the European national bourgeoisie. The nouveau rich in Nigeria and Africa has followed the West in the latter’s linear decline through negation and decadence without having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention (Wretched of the Earth 140-154).

It has been the avowed enterprise of Soyinka that while instigating the puerile middle class for their inefficiency and lack of management in upholding the cultural homeland of Africa, he steers clear of many avoidable animosities. Not eager to reintroduce the ideas of racial disjunction between the blacks and the whites, the color divide between them, the stereotypes of approach in the handling of the issues of survival, the declaration of a black essence as distinct from that of the imperialists, and the objectivity of reason as the end of all human purpose, he speaks of the need for humanity to steal a march against all oppressors, together. Though with all certainty, the follies and foibles of mankind are made coeval for discussions, Soyinka allows his aesthetic project to propel into an unexpected voyeurism. His work defuses conventional straitjackets of defense or attack to propagate an imaginative, propitious beginning, beyond jerky spasms of all that known conflict and stagnation. But of course Fidel Castro, the Cuban revolutionary, illustrated the possibility of a revolution and the initiative taken at times by one single man to challenge the desperate regimes of the times.

Castro led his country single handedly to its victory against the corrupt calling of Batista. During one of his visits to Cuba where Soyinka had been to witness a traditional theatre performance, he was overwhelmed when he looked back upon the work done by Castro as a messianic hero. This was similar to the one done elsewhere, where freedom is an impending need and some culture hero taking the onus upon him to fulfill a communal requirement. In his own words:

I stood on a terrain that was severely and simultaneously tragic poetry and revolutionary will.... the moment of a mouthful of ashes of defeat has been repeated millions times in every corner of the world .It often ends, in real life, at the point of disintegration .My social temperament does not permit me to

accept this curtailment of the process, hence my adoption of Ogun, and the reason why I point to the continuing cycle of human experience using contemporary figures like Castro. (ADO 210)

But he states further down the line, that the possibility of generating a successful revolutionary response is never quick or taken for granted. There cannot be any easy answers against the opaque walls of mistrust, suspicion, hatred, ignominy and the like. The employment of rituals does not affirm a community's reconciliation with history. This history is again not the objective construction of the Maoists, or the Marxists. It is a preponderantly unique validation of truth and is to be discovered not by any naïve intuition but through the multiplicity of knowledge and the arts. It employs the vision and the mystic creativity of science and is not beyond any parallel even in Yoruba experience. No society says Soyinka can revert back to the form that it descended from.

What is required and is to be stressed is the accumulation of present experience with the knowledge of the past for the success and the goals of the future. Equally imperative for any society is a vitalization of human order. Soyinka's daring vision for human societies deprived of liberty and freedom is to put forward the concept of death as a modicum for a reassuring human endurance. Death in Soyinka's dramas is an ameliorating experience. It does not denote mere killing or for that matter an extra epochal analytical game. Soyinka's aesthetics is hence revolutionary in so far as it contains the idea of death as a communally determined manifesto and proposed alternative to the schema of the materialists who belie in categorization. This violence is procreative, just and the product of a rigorous culture of resistance. Soyinka's belief in the arena of proletarian construction is his acknowledgement that the commemoration of physical altercation is more than a linguistic ritual (Soyinka.

ADO 151). It incorporates a langue of meaningful clusters, a summation of the totality of experience, provided that an unambiguous, risk-committed clarity is ascribed and not left to seminarist quotational garrulosity.

Soyinka admires Ronald Berthas as a kind of an intellectual worker who having eschewed the bourgeoisie pretensions to social acts, exposes the mythology of the ruling classes, in short what lies beneath the geste. In trying to hammer out the modification of mores, Berthas points out to such social conundrums as professional wrestling, cinema stereotypes soaps, powders, detergents, Greta Garbo as the essential enemy, the bourgeoisie norm and expresses his hope that for the critic or the writer the impetus is not merely to undo the mask, but to account for in detail the manner of mystification that procreates the norm of a particular class as an universal code. What's more, the Leftist critics in their academic parlance have been taking over the linguistic usages of the Petit Bourgeoisie and this is possibly true of Barthes himself who has through his linguistic attempt at unmasking the reality construct of the present hour has only inadvertently cocooned him in other bourgeoisie parlance.

At the same time, the Nigerian playwright dilutes the bogey of accepted cultural components in preparation for the precious liberation of man. He attempts to deliver humanity from the superstitions of an intimidated will which cripples all feats, obscures self-apprehensions, and facilitates surrender to the alienating processes. Without pandering to the accepted social modes of any era Soyinka makes the theatre intelligible to all and sundry so that people can leave it with the comforting knowledge of having understood all that there is to know. The real issues of survival remain unexplored and indented however, but never leaving the vanguard of an unconscious intellect.

But it is a truth well nigh accepted even by the leftocrats of Nigeria that for a literature of revolution, the first necessity is of a language that is beyond categorization, schematization etc. Soyinka's own advocacy is for a language that incorporates the mystic hypnotism of music which is beyond any systemic marker, is interior and so is constantly provocative of a dialectics with the opposed world of objectivity, "which is action, development, motion."(Soyinka, ADO 171)

Power is hazardous. Power, says Soyinka, stands outside history. It reaches out constantly towards a new repletion, towards indeed an essentiality, a concept of the ideal. But, it is the proper prerogative of art and revolutionary art to define and contain power and in this sense, it ought to move apart from the standardized monologue of pure cause and effect as fathomed by the Leftocrats, to invite startling new truths to emerge from an erstwhile comatose society. This is why Foucault says while speaking of the liberty of man, 'liberation opens up new relationships of power, which have to be contained by the practices of liberty'(quoted by Minha, Post-Colonial Reader 216).

But there is also an osmosis involved in this strategy, the opposition to confront the misuse of power as was done by a Hitler or a Mussolini. The challenger to every communal malignancy is a representative man. He is the instigator; because, he has experienced the dualities of material instigation-the hypnotic tug of the flesh so to speak and has at the same time positioned his will to mount over the ever-present claim of the world to call forth a new revolutionary incursus.

Ato Quayson, in his book Post Colonialism: Theory Practice or Process, while speaking of Ben Okri, says that Okri's The Famished Road, and its sequel, Songs of Enchantment, seem on the surface to carry on "the process of defamiliarization to the furthest extreme."(Post-Colonialism 97)

However, the two novels fail at certain key moments. They fail also to involve the political so as to question the African reality. Defamiliarization takes place in The Famished Road at various levels. The first is at the level of the characterization of the central character.

Azaro, the Abiku child, traditionally trapped in an unending cycle of births and deaths and rebirths decides to interrupt this process. Azaro decides to stay with his parents on the Earth. But he maintains his contacts with the world of the spirits. So, he moves between two domains. Sometimes, he does not like this transition. So, Azaro, is as much a victim of his switching over, as are his readers, since the movement nearly always creates an uncertainty that a narrator has to negotiate to place his story to his listeners.

Azaro is again different from a normal folktale hero. He does not have any juju or magical assistance that the traditional hero had and also lacks any titanic heroic stature. His incursus into the esoteric world is not couched in terms of a quest for a new self-definition.

The rapid and unpredictable shifts between the two realms of the real world and the esoteric also contribute another aspect of defamiliarization says Quayson. The narrative is like a tissue of interruptions, with no promise of return to the precise moments in either realm when the interruption took place. In addition, the setting is itself defamiliarized in terms of what physicists describe as the anamorphic space. This is where the volume of any given space does not correlate to its spatial parameters. This anamorphic space also has implications for now time is viewed because there is a constant process of negotiation between real and anamorphic time.

Okri also defamiliarizes the anxiety-generating potential that would normally

have been aligned closely with grotesque spirit figures in the structure of the folklore. In 'The Famished Road', says Quayson, who sit uneasily between the real and the esoteric in this grotesquerie. This is for example the case of the various lunatics Azaro meets, one of whom has eyes that seem to be looking away, but are multiplied by the presence of flies that segregate around them. (Quayson, Post-Colonialism 98)

The critic however feels that Song of Enchantment is a completely unbalanced text in terms of its moral tone. Unlike the previous work of Okri, one is from the first never really in doubt that this is a study between good and evil. On the one hand, there is the character of the Black Tyger and on the other are Madame Koto and the Jackal. The crisis in the novel is generated once Madame Koto's car kills an abiku child. This child is again a friend of Azaro. But Madame Koto and her party of rich people insist that this child Ade must not be buried by anyone. Ade lies outside on the mercy of the weather, in a replay of Greek tragedy. The Black Tyger has now to fight with Madame Koto for the right to have a proper burial to the child. From the onset says Quayson,⁶ "we know exactly what is going to happen and nothing surprises us" (Post-Colonialism 100).

Moreover, the complexity of political equations is reduced to a form of politicized, metaphysical struggle between good and evil. This happens says Quayson because

Unlike in the Famished Road, Okri fails to defamiliarize the governing discourse of the political by which the political is viewed. He lapses too easily into binarisms without refocusing on a point beyond them. And this is in spite of saturating this novel with the structure of a folklore mode (Post-Colonialism 89).

For people to act responsibly, they must first have a certain level of understanding of the situation, which faces them. However, because colonialism and exposure to Western culture caused so many changes in African societies, people were thrust into new experiences, which they could not comprehend with the guidance of the old traditions. In Ken Saro-Wiwa's Forest of Flowers, when a young man becomes dumbfounded after bringing home a man who he thought was a woman, people explain transvestites in the following manner. "One man said it was spirit, another said fairy and another ghost" (73). Resorting to old superstitious explanations of events makes it very difficult to understand real life situations and from thence, act responsibly in them.

It would not do to dwell merely in the past or to draw nourishment from old traditions. New contexts and situations have to be tackled and this needs the incorporation and the recognition of newer modes of perception and negotiation. Hence Helen Tiffin says that Decolonization is " a process, not arrival [...] it has been the project of post-colonial writing to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds." (Post-Colonial Reader 95)

In the East however the traditional social organization was different and one finds this in the novels of Chinua Achebe whose Things fall Apart and the Arrow of God introduce its readers to a society where consensus is as important as authority; a kind of communalist democracy tempered by patriarchy. Here law and custom are decided by the community sitting together in harmony and cannot be imposed from outside. The confrontation generated in the breaking of tradition is evidently present in the case of the local chief who decides against becoming a "Warrant Chief" when selected by the authorities to do so because he the high priest of the God Ulu .His

decision not to choose temporal power is community decided.

Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief except Ulu.
(Arrow of God 215)

The confrontation brings disaster to the village and the colonialist's decision to bring modern administration to the village is the cause of its tensions, chaos and disharmony. At times this disharmony would be aggravated by the rivalries among the erstwhile well balanced factions to get the attention of their white masters, who would then tyrannize over others inland.

Soyinka on the other hand has become for the Nigerians a kind of political maverick. He proposes a concept of a hero who disowns the overriding discourse of his time and charts a new path instead. As a new progressive writer, Soyinka is not merely concerned with the questions of the writers of the 60's: "What had gone wrong? Why? How... How could the activists have allowed themselves to be so easily co-opted?" (Lazarus, Resistance 55)

The Dance of the Forests written at the moment of Nigeria's independence augments a positive visionary in search for that elusive wisdom which would release his nation and other oppressed human Diasporas from the throes of bondage "attempting a universal symbolic statement about all existence" (Booth, Writers and Politics in Nigeria 124). The projected experience calls for a self-apprehension and awareness beyond political knowledge, the way being through the parallel with Ogun who at a momentous period of the human history dared to cross the divide that separated the men from the gods. What is necessary to cross this divide then is courage and will, to look out searching for an elusive meaning to the paradigmatic confusions and contortions of life's experiences. Ogun the embodiment of this will is

the index of this metaphoric power. The artist who is also the representative writer of his generation carries with him this will and to this end his art is not merely pigeonhole surrender to conventional mimesis in the Aristotelian sense. Soyinka goes to comment perhaps with references to his own experiences

Only one who has undergone the experiences of disintegration, whose sprit has been tested and whose physic resources laid under stress by forces most inimical to individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of fusion between two contradictions (ADO).

As the play opens, the living sees on the stage three-town dwellers accompanied by two petitioners whom the audience figures out merely as petitioners and not more initially. The petitioners ask the town dwellers to divulge their crimes and it is only when the Forest Head Obabenaji teases admission out of the other two characters, do the audience know what is wrong. Of them Demoke, the servant of the God Ogun is responsible for the unfair killing and death of his apprentice Eremole. Rola is the notorious courtesan, Madame Tortoise, responsible for the death of two men. The stage directions at this point alternate with the activities of various other groups and the wandering deeper and deeper into the forest of the other six. While the celebrations in the play go wrong, the same has to be accounted for in the mischief and moral perfidy of the three town dwellers. These groups are now eager to drive out the petitioners and to reach their ends, they use a band of beaters, a masquerader with his acolyte, a diving elder Agboreko and finally an amazing lorry which bleaches out oil and smoke in copious quantities. The other groups are the non humans comprising of two gods Eshuoro and Ogun and all other forest spirits including Murete and Forest Head's own activist, Aroni, the lame one. It is Aroni who is infact organizing Forest head's 'Welcoming of the Dead,' which is intended as

the experience of self–apprehension and perhaps transition through the abyss, for the three town dwellers.

Eshuoro—the embodiment of revenge, the fear in men’s lives, inhabitant of three spaces like Ogun, is however in pursuit of Demoke, Ogun’s servant who has killed Eremole, Eshuoro’s servant but worse has defiled the sacred tree by carving a totem out of the same. Eshuoro is therefore not interested on self–apprehension and seeks immediate and vengeful justice for his cause. Ogun on the other hand wants to save Demoke and the conflict between the two gods which their separate motives and aspirations generate, represent for the Forest Head, the Supreme Being, the process of transition through the abyss. And the person who is increasingly concentrated upon is Demoke the artist, whose moral aberrations is the reason why there is crisis after all. Demoke, is however least bothered about conventional morals and his meditations on divine justice, revenge and the social and political order as mediums of awareness reveals the paradox at the heart of the same, their incompleteness in fulfilling the complete circle of knowledge without which, wisdom becomes a dumb horse, an ill begotten domain of cultural and political verbiage squandering without a cause and a result. This unfolding looseness in semantic desiderata in the taken for granted, metamorphosized in the dance, is infact, a parable of the need for a symphonic movement of the individual emotions amidst the moral chaos of social fragmentations to arrive at an unforeseen penetration into the mystery of truth.

It is in keeping with the symbolism of the dance that the stage is organized at this point to represent the simultaneity of spaces –those of the living, the dead and the unborn, conterminous with one another and beckoning the sturdy spirit to foray into the dangerous abyss – both for congratulatory knowledge at the end of exertions and also communal resuscitations.

Crime-guilt –confession –pardon-expiation which the three dwellers finally arrive at, says Etherton in his essay 'The Art Theatre'

May be a process for a morality but for Soyinka it stops short of full realization, the full awareness of being. Those who have the capacity for action, and the sensibility, which perceives the inner contradictions in all existence, especially, the creative artist, must go further. They must dare the fourth space, the luminous area of transition (Development of African Drama 263).

The performance space, that is the stage becomes the arena also for the moving in and out of identities, coagulating the past and the present, so to enable characters live simultaneity of lives. The continuous shifting of time zones, render men susceptible to their confessions of guilt and self-recognition. Aroni calls forth the past, and the scene changes imperceptibly to the oriental grandeur of Mata Kharibu's court. Even Demoke and Rola are in their past lives and yet they do not enact their previous experiences, for they are in that time when the guilt or the offence was undertaken. Rola's offence, for example is her vulgar sexual innuendos, her vain and capricious nature, and her introduction into the court of Mata Kharibu is effective in projecting the undiluted imperialistic aggressiveness of Kharibu himself, his greed in having what belongs to others. And when opposition to this war is arrived at in the form of a soldier who asks his comrades to revolt against the meaningless massacres of men for a trifle, the soldier is gifted by being sold into slavery at which moment he receives the monstrous invitation to throw Kharibu himself from his queen. The soldier goes for the negative since his antagonism towards her precludes such opportunism. The malevolent queen ignores the final pleading of the soldier's wife for his life and the wife dies pregnant. She commits

suicide.

Amidst this concentric gloom and spiritual anomie, where loyalties are unnatural, and perverseness rules, Eshuro and Ogun decide to fight it out and so transform a worldly animosity into the transcending domains of the spirit and yet remind of the humans “so closely have their habits grown on you” as the Forest Head. At this moment of transition, the stage directions describe the luminous space which is the vanguard of metaphysical and concurrent spiritual actions. These directions are of astounding results and provoke consciousness of that horizon beyond, that is only sublimely felt and can be noted down in complete.

The back –scene lights up gradually to reveal a dark, wet atmosphere, dripping moisture, and soft moist soil. A palm tree sways at a low angle, broken but still alive. Seemingly lightening– reduced stumps. Rooting wood all over the ground. First there is a total silence, emphasized by the sound of moisture dripping to the ground. (Dance 68)

The subsequent scenes those between the Forest Head and the petitioners insinuate to include even the petitioners in the crimes, which encrypt them:

Mulieru, I knew you
 In the days of pillaging, in the days
 Of sudden slaughter, and the parting
 In the days of the grand destroying
 And you were a part of the waste. (Dance 70)

The obvious impounding of this narrative is the escape, which it allows from the deadening oppositions and castrations between two antipodes-uncorrupted good and complete bad to produce an engagement of complete insusceptibility where the one

who is accusing is implicated for his misfortunes and what happens to him therefore is in unsuspecting legion to his own conduct. The Dead Man, Mulieru, is certainly not blameless and his delinquencies include also his effeminacy, his inability to live up to a challenge, at a moment when Madame tortoise offered him to overthrow the inordinate and hostile regime of Kharibu. In being honest to his personal whims, he scares away a greater social need and refusing to dislodge Kharibu, he shares in the perpetuation of plunder and fracas of which he is finally the victim:

What did he prove, from the first when
 Power at his grasp, he easily
 Surrendered his manhood. (Dance 71)

The dead man represents in the view of the dramatist, the limitations of political awareness. It is a position which the real protagonist in the play Demoke must get rid of, to change the future. The dead man meanders off to the jungle after this, serving the purpose, which he was to and to this effect he is not seen any further. But his movement away from the world of men is through the creative ritual of dance, permeating a transition into the space beyond life into the future, where all the resources of the earth are wantonly plundered by man, as the words and the masquerade convey; while the Figure in Red, symbolic of the horrendous coming times, plays with the Dead Woman's half child, followed by chaos, when nature turns against human wants becoming all red in tooth and claw.

The fissure between man and nature can be explained in the Yoruba world terms through contiguous simultaneity between the various levels of existence so that corruptibility in one sphere is ensconced in others, leading to a whole series of moral, and material perversions. The ants that join the masquerade at this hour exemplify

the repercussions in the world of the insects, which in turn is suggestive of the disorientations in human world. The ants, are in fact, suffering humanity.

Down the axis of the world, from
 The whirlwind to the frozen drifts
 We are the ever legion of the world
 Smitten, for –the ‘good to come’ (A Dance 78)

The ants, followed by the Triplets make a similar suggestion of moral disarray in the social and human order. The First Triplet is a manifestation of that good to come for which numberless human beings have been killed. But this future is grotesque. The Second triplet with only a huge drooling head is the greater cause, the mirage of all human expectations and therefore unequivocally false. The Third triplet is equally bloody and even more stands for posterity. All of them accompanied by the Figure Red get together to dance the Yoruba dance ‘ampe’ which has been explained by Oyin Ogunba in his book Movement of Transition in the following way:

The ‘ampe’ dance is a Yoruba children’s dance (‘ampe’ means ‘Do as I do, we are the same’) in which two children face each other, jump and make the same hand and feet movement uttering in unison the sound ‘pe pe pe pe pe pe shampe!’ and stretching corresponding feet to indicate perfect agreement. (92)

Soyinka’s use of traditional archetypes for the purposes of his drama make it certain that he wanted to eek out of a historical glamorization of the past. Beyond offering a vague romanticism of a pure Africanness, the dramatist sees a movement to a more creative future, requiring an impending transition from given conventional jostling. The future of Africa has to be saved-retrieved from opportunistic chaos exemplified in the frenzied tossing back and forth of the Half Child by the Triplets.

Both Ogun and Demoke- the Will and the artist should intervene to end this chaos. But as the Forest Head explains, a grave sacrifice is necessary to stop the distraught from gaining headway and the first man to stand for man's coming of age in peace has to be the artist, Demoke.

In league with the Forest Head's verdict, Demoke has to climb to the top of his totem, foregoing his fear of the heights, and in this strenuous venture, aided only through his will, the artist manifests his climatic organizational prowess –his conscious choice to act on people's behalf and his ability to see through his intentions coming of full age. Obviously, there cannot be anything more sedulous than to expect this progression without it ecstasy and hours of anxious and perilous expectancy-both natural for the beneficiaries and the audience for whom the act and the result of the performance is an invitation to an anthropomorphic space, a release from hackneyed moorings and desiderata of sorrow. Through Demoke's act of will mankind will see the other end of the tunnel –to use a cliché, and the way out of the rut is hardly through a barren intellectualism (the role and the natural history of the Dead Man) or a self –seeking cleverness of an Adenebi. Confrontation is an imperative in the fulfilment of social promise –Demoke confronts his fear, embracing the contradiction embodied in a man of action, conjoining creativity and destruction. Demoke's action comes full circle: first in carving a totem under the inspiration of Ogun; second by killing Oremole; third by saving the Half –Child and finally by returning the child to its mother.

The artists' hubristic daring, committed for others is the prototype for all future creative voyeurism. It holds forth in its ambit the seed for all future human and moral enterprise. Thus the scope of an extraterrestrial dimension in art is unhinged and beckons man to a way beyond all known deductions. From this perspective, the point

of transition is really the connecting point between two realms, each with its own mode of discourse-the mystical corresponding to the poetical or the mythopoetic speech, and the mundane corresponding to the prosaic.

It is beyond any simple gesture that the plays of Soyinka, and The Dance of the Forests show that he was suggesting a moral order way outside the present incubus. The incursus of polyphonic voices creates an exponential architecture for the drama. But the viewpoint of the writer is extremely clear. The play of symbols, of Demoke's totem, for example is to be viewed from multifarious perspectives involving the ecstatically imaginative voyeurism of the artist- his personal mission, his challenge of expected roles etc.

Madman and the Specialists extends the personal, and the topical of the play has been transformed and transcended beyond all cynicism and despair, which the play apparently promotes and to this end the Madman is provocatively assimilative and desultory. The central significance of the Madman is in its stringent attack on the emissaries of war, on the war lords whose purposive act of violence unleashes both mental and as well as harrowing physical violence on the dignity and stability of human civilization. But its social commentary is also an undoing of the assumptions of religion and its manipulations of human sentiments, these best exemplified in and through the example of Bero, the Old Man's son who brings his harangued father back to the village and is himself transformed through the arrogant and hostile mechanics of war from one whose medicinal powers was for cure, to one whose powers were used in abusing humans. But, it was his father who ironically offered him the first instalment of human meat.

Afterwards I said why not? What is one flesh from another? So I tried again, just to be sure of myself. It was the first steps to power you understand. Power

in its purest sense. The end of inhibitions. The conquest of the weakness of your too human flesh with all its sentiment. (Madman 36)

At another hour when Bero is tempted by his old father to kill the latter in a pervasive exercise of power and the former hesitates, the old man keeps on arguing that there is no point in his son's indeterminacy as because the slide to increasingly greater violence is natural and consequential upon the first act .It is beyond any conscious effort and therefore beyond control.

Once you begin there is no stopping .You say, ah, this is the last step, the highest step, but there is always one more step For those who want to step beyond, there is always one further step. (Madman 49).

Moreover as he tells his son, his death at the latter's hands is essential to cut off the last vestige of humanity left in the complete rout of humanism and the proclaiming of violence.

OLD MAN. I am the last proof of the human in you .The last shadow [...] How does one prove he was never born of a man? Of course you could kill me (Madman 49).

Bero eventually does what now becomes only an act of identification, killing his father, foregoing issues of parricide in the triumphant claiming of a complete dastardness. Yet his act is not confined to undo merely, the ancient repositories of honor. The Old Man's parody of operating the Cripple, is only provocative at this point and distracts Bero's attention from saving his shop which contains the sacred cures of mother earth, collected over so much labor by Iya Agba and Iya Mate, mates of his sister Si Bero.

The stage directions at this point are precise and codify the conflict of motives between a strenuously arid, inhuman and desiccating power play and the other, which is beyond self, motivated by desires, which are resuscitating, addressing fertility.

(She [Iya Agba] raises the pot [of glowing charcoals] suddenly to throw the embers into the store .Bero steps out at that moment, gun in hand bearing down on Iya Agba] (Madman 76).

As has been pointed out in the Critical Scene of this work, Bero is not completely evil. He experiences a conflict within himself. If he kills his father, he cannot save his house, which stores rare medicinal plants from the earth mothers. But, if saves his house, the killing of his father has to be postponed. It may be recalled here that Bero had at least socially forfeited his role as a medicine man after going to war and had only wanted power for himself.

When at this point the Old Man parodies his son's former self by parodying to lay open the cripple amidst the fracas so produced, in ironic conflation of Bero's former role as a doctor and, his present negative role and an army intelligence supervisor: the specialist, the stage directions are again specific:

[They heave him [the Cripple] on the table and hold him down while the Old Man rips the shirt open to bare the Cripple's chest, Bero rushes in and takes the scene, raises his pistol and aims at the Old Man] (Madman 77)

The later sections of the play dramatize the inevitable result that the play to this point raises, the death of the Old Man at the hands of his son. The Old man takes the place of the cripple in the operating table with the exception that at this moment the man's role-playing has been superseded by reality.

But, it may be asked who in the play is the real cripple- the imaginary person whom the Old Man operates or Bero himself. The Old Man's play-acting, of cutting the cripple open has a metaphorical significance in the play. Bero who is truly mentally wedged needs a new life and the Old Man can give him one.

It is not difficult to recollect at this point the character of another old man in an English play, Marlow's Dr Faustus. The old man here is not only a physical presence. He instigates Dr. Faustus to give up his quest for unredeemed power and embrace god instead. But, as in Soyinka's play, Dr. Faustus in Marlow's work must go against the old man to be completely reclaimed by the devil. From a psychological viewpoint, the presences of old men in Soyinka and Marlow act as the last straw of defense against the inhumanity of Faustus and Bero.

At this moment of distraction, Iya Agba sets fire to the herbs because, as she feels, the secret knowledge of fertility would be twisted out of all recognition at Bero's hands, an analysis she does correctly since Bero collects the poisonous herbs, which his sister Si Bero accidentally got into the shop.

BERO. Just now I came through that room of herbs, I saw something, I recognized.

OLD MAN. Something to sap the mind or destroy it altogether (Madman 61).

As the Old Man asks his son, the herbs, can both be a harbinger of life or end life altogether and in the latter case it becomes monstrous to live a life of living death, which in fact happens in the case of the mendicants who reflect the sensibility of the dramatist at its most complex and as Etherton says " manifests his resources as a playwright" (Performance 252).

The mendicants are the victims of war. Their mutilations are both physical and mental. Aafaa suffers from chorea or St Vitus's dance. The Blindman and the Cripple has no other name. Goyi has an iron rod contraption in place of spine. Each of these people is dominated by a distinct trait or personality –Aafaa's nervous neurosis gathered during the war keeps him most voluble. Cripple is a dreamer and still hopes that better times will come. He co-operates with the Old Man's son Bero, who he believes will help him walk again. The Blind man, the most aesthetic of the four knows what the Old man is driving at. Goyi the least intelligent of them all is also the most mutilated.

Each of these men is again not consumed by complete evil or good. While they appreciate the Old Man, for having taught them an active need to venture beyond what is easily acceptable, they fail to go beyond the dictates of Bero who represents the morally culpable or disgusting. AFAA encapsulates their dichotomy: "We may be on opposites of the camp, but I like to see a man stand up for himself" (Madman 271). Then when the Old Man shows them a cigarette only half eaten and throws that to the ground, they scramble for the same showing that though they love dignity, they cannot shun the inherent delinquencies of their nature. They are trapped within the social system that has harmed them and put them down.

The visit of the First Lady at the Rehabilitation Center who gazes at the mutilated young men reveals another level of paradox. Expressed in and through unspoken gestures between two hemispheres of men, the false verbiage of those who sympathize, comes up for comeuppance. The mendicants, ploys of an unjust social order, are the making of these politicians, games in a flurry of unspeakable ambitions. War and violence and the levels of turpitude are intricately compounded when the political machinery comes up with an exhibitionary arrogance not accountable to

gracious humanism, but to the perverse exercise of sexual potency through the figuration of the First Lady whose complacency is precisely her technical vibrancy in doing an act, least to the furtherance of an equitable sympathy. The purpose of her visit scalded in this posturing is again evenly mapped in the song the mendicants sing "The Song on the Visit of the First Lady to the Home for the De-balled" (Madman 270) in memory of the sweet times, the final word adducing to the lady, rather than the mendicants.

Yet, the play also attacks the organized religions and in Soyinka's own substantiation of the same in his Myth, Literature and the African World, the interrelationships between religion and economics is significant in putting into perspective the prize of material benefits, which is the ambition of both and to this extent religion becomes an economic performance, related to the possession of material advantages.

Economics and power have always played a large part in championing the new deities of human history. The struggle for authority in early human society with the prize of material advantages, social prestige and the establishment of an elite has been nowhere so intensely marked as in the function of religion, perpetuating itself in repressive orthodoxies.

This is almost the realization that Aafaa arrives at, at the end of the play. His attack is on the priesthood; and is expressed in the form of a parody of the Gospel according to St John

In the beginning was the Priesthood, and the Priesthood was one. Then came schism by a parcel of schismatic ticks in the One Body of the Priesthood, the political priesthood went right, the spiritual priesthood went left, or vice versa.

(Madman 289).

But this schisms makes no difference as far as dominating the garrulity of the ordinary innocent people were concerned and the attempt was driven to put man under a more severe subjugation so as to make him retreat further and further into himself. This is the moment for the priesthood, the system to assert itself AS something else .In the re-emergence of belief as something new there is paradoxically the unending and unchanging domination of man by man.

As the word representing God – has further resonance's .In Norse mythology, As, was the name for many of the Norse gods, such as Thor or Odin, who inhabited Asgard, the home of the gods. It comes form the Icelandic word 'ass ' meaning a god. But it's been obviously the interchangeability of specific gods under the title"as" that has appealed to Soyinka. And in suggesting that it is possible to interchange forms and identities, Soyinka is holding up for scorn mankind's subversive attempts to forge a divinity for himself so that others down the line can be controlled and even manipulated –fall into a categorization which is delimiting the self and controverting the essence of liberation and freedom. In a way religion is a constructive dialectics, but negatively so, since it forges not a unity of Diasporas but becomes a yardstick for disconcerting and dissonancy. This is the reason why the Old Man tells the mendicants that they are the cysts of a system

And are part of the material for re-formulating the mind of a man into the necessity of the moment's political As, the moments scientific As, metaphysic As, sociologic As, economic, recreative ethical As [...] (Madman 287)

The adverb 'as' resonates the noun 'ass' and so a word that by itself lack invectiveness is shaped up to acquire it. 'Ass' is a blunt word for fools.

What is castigated here is the easy vulnerability of man to systems, his assimilation into forms and dialectics of configurations so that they become the scapegoats for experiments and are even practiced upon to gain absolute control over their minds. In turn man turns to be quite ignorant of the social manifestations under which he is placed and in the event that he hankers under the umpteen burden of callousness, he becomes the instrument in the hands of political mandarins eager to amputate and disconcert his human enterprise. Man is an ass or so the resonance of the word seems to suggest if he ignores what goes under his nose in the name of discourse of which he is a part.

The paradox lies in the doctrine of 'As' seeming to be the new religion of the Old Man and his patients when in fact it is the construct of men like Bero himself. The mendicants and the Old Man live their religion through contradictions and role play, the same that in another European dramatist of note Samuel Beckett makes his characters Vladimir and Estragon do, in parodying the noble and heightened respectability of social norms, underneath which is revealed a whole cosmos of moral and spiritual perfidy, which rather than assuring and reassuring man, unhinges him, appearing inadequate to the dealing of his existential self.

What can be the solution to the incapacities of humanity? Soyinka's critics have often held this apparent negative in his dramas as antithetical to the hopes for a better future for man. But the way out is in the attitude of Old Man himself who instigates his son to take his life and so makes self-sacrifice on behalf of the mendicants: a following through of self awareness. The Old Man executes the understanding, which he gives the mendicants, substantial. Bero is consequently defiled; cheated of that earth bound goodness which he sought to bend to his will. The mendicants mock at him chanting

Bio ti wa

As Was-Is –Now.

And the final stage direction:(*The song stops in mid-word and the light snaps out simultaneously*). (Madman 293).

Madman and Specialists strikes some parallel with Absurd Drama. The absence of chronological sequence, melodramatic surprise, the loss of homogeneity of individual characters that change their natures in the front of our own eyes, broken dialogues, and syntax determine its characteristics. Characters in the story, the mendicants to begin with are involved among themselves. They take part in a range of incidents and events. But none of these mobilize the emotions of the audience sufficiently. As individuals and personalities, their acts can at best be described as whimsical and maverick. They stoop for alms, play dice to exchange each other's hands and limbs. They speak using auxiliaries. They even take up the role of the accused, feigning conviction. Next, they presume to judge and kill others and do so on the point of the gun. But, they draw their power from those around them-terrorizing those who may oppose them.

AAFAA. His hands make the motion of half drawing out a gun...He gives another inspection all round, smiles broadly and turns to others[...].
(Madman 227)

Infact, the mendicants in Soyinka's should be perfect actors, much as Stanislavsky believed. They ought to employ their bodies fully. Their hand eye co-ordination should be also superb. Obviously, the actor playing the role of AAFAA has to observe his surroundings. At the same time, he also has to grow oblivious of it, or at least pretend to. In this case, the audience would question themselves about who they are and what they really possess?

The process endangers a flow of communication between the actors and the audience. It also breaks down the proscenium barrier between the men on stage and those outside it.

The actions of some of the characters are symbolic. Their social and cultural world is identified from what they do. Bero is contemptuous of his neighbors. He cuts AAFAA across his face. On entering his village after the war, he looks around with disgust. Si Bero appreciates the return of her brother. When she sees him, Si Bero shouts and runs towards him. Later, she pours palm wine before the doorsteps to signify his homecoming and her own belief in her cultured ancestry. Bero however steps back portending the basic schism between him and the social world to which he comes back. Part one of the play also points to the audience's need to keep close vigil upon all the players and to be cautious against casual expectations.

The Priest enters, hails them from a distance. He observes nothing of Bero's [...] or the fact that he has moved casually away from the patronizing arm [...] (Madman 248).

SI BERO. *(laughing)*. You know for a moment I nearly believed you.

BERO. Oh? *(Turns and looks at her pityingly)*...

Pause. *They look each other in the face. Her laughter dies slowly (Madman 251).*

This silence, as usual in Soyinka's Madman indicates a moment of unease. It impregnates drastic consequences. Even in Part two, the reader is brought across pauses and gaps in speech. At times, these silences are followed by obscene gestures that suggest a breakdown of socially acceptable norms in communications.

GOYI. He turns his rear and gestures obscenely (Madman 258).

The interesting moment in the play also occurs, when in fact it presents a series of ideations. The mendicants are on one side, signifying a torture of consciousness and chaos of norms. There is the Old Man and SI BERO, who inhabit old worlds. BERO is the ultimate materialist and yet, there is no release of life in his ostensible show of disgust for the past. But, the past has somehow corrupted the present and so all that is past need not be acceptable.

A critical advantage in dramatizing such actions is the flexibility it offers to the dramatist in cutting short his stage machinery to the least amount. The actors must perform all that happens on the stage. In the play, they dance, sing, snatch each other's goods, smile dexterously and slyly, playact, get violent, eat wolfishly and sometimes even do not respond to some queries from their fellows. They render communication extremely vulnerable to logic and common sense and yet the mendicants with the Old Man and SI BERO make meaning out of their meaninglessness. Ultimately, they tease the audience for their novice expectations.

Opera Wonyosi performed at the University of Ife's convocation on 16 th of December 1977, takes its title from the craze of the Nigerian elites at the time to buy laces known Winyosi. The new play is modelled on two European plays: Brecht's 'The Three Penny Opera' (1928) and John Gay's 'The Beggar's Opera'. The play by Soyinka is ironic and lampoons the ambitions of the Nigerian rich ruling classes at a period of great national economic crisis that would spend huge sums of money (1000 Pounds) to make a fashion statement.

Neither of Soyinka's models was intended to unshuffle the whole social structure of their days and to this end both these plays were conciliatory. Gays's satire for example was not directed against the aristocracy, but against individuals, aiming at personal reform.

When Brecht came to write his own version of Gay's play he attempted a class analysis of the late bourgeoisie, indicting capitalism. But Brecht still remained popular with those classes, which he held up for scorn.

Another reason for Gay's popularity as a playwright was his sarcastic underplaying of the Italian Opera. The Opera from Italy, pompously used a high falutin language to make its mark felt among the fashionable audience of the days. At the same time, it provoked a whole spectrum of lachrymose melodramatic effusions. In place of such a language, Gay employed words and sounds that had common use, were familiar and had popular ballad tunes. Brecht's music was similarly a reason for his play's abiding popularity and to this end mention must be made of Kurt Weil. Weil composed the music for Brecht's opera using the tunes and melodies of folk songs. There was ample use of jazz and popular music. Brecht on his part chose the acerbic words to convey his disgust over the predominating social and moral lacunas of his age. Soyinka adopts the opening song of Brecht's opera entitled "Mack the Knife" (Opera) and like Brecht; he has selected the words that would give his song a local and temporal meaning. In the European original, the chief of the Beggars is Peachum. In the work of the Nigerian, the man's name is Chief Anikura. Opposed to the Chief is a big time robber. Gay called him Captain Macheath. Soyinka named him Mackie.

But such conformities apart, Soyinka is less concerned than Brecht to define the evils of Capitalism. Brecht has shown that state Capitalism is itself a crime. Soyinka, on the other hand is interested in showing that crimes and criminals need not be the products of capitalism only. In his own land, there were ample number of political and social higher ups, whose greed and culpability was a matter of personal choice. What is most disturbing is the fading of animosities and divides between segments of

society whose interests are joined in looting the resources of the people. It is a universal chaos. Darkness abides. Murder is common. And the Law of the land is cahoots in the machinations of the rich and the powerful. The political power head is disgustingly opportunistic.

Boky, Boky the Coky, no less- and if you think that's mere boasting, ask him how many daughters presented their credentials when he advertised for his long-lost daughter from Indochina. He confirmed the claims of the one and married the others. (Opera 305)

As has been said already, Soyinka works his way thorough the association of words. "Boky" pronounces like "Coky". The interchangeability of linguistic ciphers is proof of an imbalanced social norm giving art the necessary liberty to exploit the same for its purposes.

Chief Anikura is less a magician than a conman in getting money from people. The ancient Moses had the God by his side. Anikura has no one. Not only because his vocation demands no partners but also because, may be he manages to get them off soon enough for them to know his secrets. He is in fine a hardened man of business and makes profit, the scientific way- even out of the frustrations of other men. But, his dispositions are finally limited. The topical reference in the play by De Madam in conversation with Anikura, to the Life President, is an indication of the nature of foreign aid in developing countries.

DE MADAM. That was the first trip when Gadafy promised him 20 million dollars. He got converted on the spot. Then he went back last week to ask for contribution for his coming coronation and the Arab man told him to go home.

So he changed back to Christianity. (Opera 310)

Anikura's begging technique depends on the categorization of five different types of misery people are most likely to believe-Cheerful Cripple, Victim of Road Traffic, War Casualty, Tapsy- Psychotic, Victim of modern industry etc. But, Soyinka is not satirizing the beggars as such, but the system which infact produces the beggars. The song Dee- Jay presents, of laborers singing has two different stories to tell: the physical health of the laborers without the intervention of cement fumes and another with it. But it also focuses on two different types of greed- the knowing one of the business tycoon and the unconscious one of the laborers. The first part of the song presents a common perception of men at work:

A laborer's life is a healthy one

It's fresh air from dawn till the sun goes down

Clean exercise; see how those muscles bulge

Power beyond you my bookish don (Opera 311)

But, it is the second part that is disturbing.

I know now it's true-life is a wheeze

The proof's in my lungs when I sneeze

Well, my chest is congested

But the port's decongested (Opera 311)

Soyinka, like Brecht wanted the song to be directly addressed to the audience. So, he did not present it naturalistically. Instead, he meant the play to stop at the point of the song and present it as a 'number' in a pop concert.

The second song is sung by the characters of the play once it is known that Polly,

the daughter of Anikura and De Madam have vanished with Macheath. The social turbulence of the times, its moral culpability is indicated in the choice made by the younger men and women who choose to marry. Prior to the oil boom in Nigeria, plays told the stories of parents who would want their daughters to marry rich old men when the daughters would want to get engaged with some poor young men they loved. But, the daughters of today, as Soyinka presents them choose someone who is enormously wealthy, because it they who escape the law. Power enfeebles morality. Love screeches powerless to money.

Rather than spend all the nights with her love

She's planting the seeds of a brass-khaki class

And taking the salute of the Army as they pass [...] (Opera 316).

(Obscene gesture by Anikura on 'Salute')

The song is rounded off by the sounds and physical gestures of 'ngh', and projects the vulgarity underlying many social protestations. Soyinka's presentation of emperor Boky adds a new touch to the satire of the play. Boky is a buffoon. His farce is physical. He is a military man. He knows the French history and raises his hat in salute every time he speaks about France. But, he lacks a perceptive awareness of it or of his own people and what they need him fighting for. He wants his country to emulate France and South Africa in furthering a new insurrection. He behaves like a sergeant –major. Then he addresses his men as if he were standing outside his society and commenting on himself with brutal frankness. Finally he asks his men to enact a change, joins the choir, exudes confidence and energy at the prospect and then dances to the tune of the military rhythm: "Lagosian lynch-mob rallying rhythm" (Opera 336).

The emperor finally struts out of the stage, leaving Tiger Brown open mouthed,

while the emperors' underdogs; the common soldiers leave fiendishly, except those whom the brutal drill of Boky have demented and who leave with groans and tears. The next installment of horror is arrived at in the play when the characters in the stage sing "Who killed Nio-Niga?" (Opera 336) Soyinka based his song on an original: "Who killed Cock Robin?" a syncopated marching song. The song implicates all sections of the society in the charge of Niga's murder. But when Anikura addresses the same people to take responsibility in solving the case of Niga's murder, all those who had characterized the song goes about their business. The stage direction describes it thus.

'Bigger' puffs his cigar smugly 'Army' salutes, 'Police' drills, 'Doc' sheathes his stethoscope. (Opera 343)

Finally, the chorus turns its criticism to the audience in the theatre for its indifference towards the bloodshed, crime, and murder that goes under their nose.

Poor Nio-Niga is a-rotting on the Route A2
 And a stream of cars passing-including you
 And a long stream of the cars of the New Republic. (Opera 344)

The juxtaposition of cars, stream and rotting bodies are Eliotic. Images of machines are interrupted with a sly remark from the author. The audience is designated a place with those who are responsible for the troubles in Nigeria.

The comic and ludicrous propensity of the nation is also blurred in the mock-heroic assembly gathered in Scene 5 in the stable with Polly as the Chairperson and all other thugs of the society as its important members. The members throw cold water at each other. They change their chairs whimsically. They are also dispensing

crooks and hoodlums and politics is a way for them to stay in one form of trade or another. Polly finally advises them to put on the Wonyosi to detour detection by the Law. But most importantly, wearing the blue lace would make astute business sense. It would impress partners and from then they would make millions in business. Finally, they must join a multinational corporation to cap their success and get even more financially secure.

POLLY...in three months...higher than you all ever made in three years of robbing and smuggling and killing and pimping (Opera 350).

Polly's announcement pleases all who sing "She's a jolly good fellow" (Opera 354) and as they are about to end, the board confronts Tiger Brown, the police commissioner. Polly reasons with Tiger as to why she became a tough woman of business. Soon enough the stage is overwhelmed with a chorus from woman singers led by De Madam. The chorus also enacts the "attack trade", (Opera 356) while Brown's men feign to be shot and dying. The stage directions read thus:

The Women march over them, stop to empty their pockets, take off their watches and carry on business throughout the chorus. Curtains close and lights come on in the auditorium with the Women offering those wares among the audience along the aisles (Opera 355).

The audience must take a part of the loot. After all, it was their silence that had helped the men in uniform to ransack the nation. The act of the chorus would thus be legitimate. At times, Soyinka's virtuoso as a speaker of lucid prose is similar to the use made of it by such an English man of letters as Swift who employed his satiric and intellectual skills to lay

human pretensions bare. In Swift, one also finds a comic misapplication of learned ideas as referred to by D.W. Jefferson, an arrangement of concrete detail against a intellectual pattern, as also an ability to argue through images. "But Swift never also lost his power of charging concrete details with a particular intensity, of using them to give an unexpected force and nuance to an argument " (Pelican Guide IV 200).

Likewise the manner in which Soyinka organizes the concrete details of his work to build up a pattern of thought, marshalling squads of particulars into a menacing pattern of monstrosity, such as is seen in Mack's song "It's the Easy Life for Me" (Opera 378) and the Chorus's addition to the same gives Soyinka's satiric thrusts in his play, an Augustan spirit and force of suavity.

Pregnant mother wedged with elbow

[...]. Insolence from clerks lolling on the table [...]

Well the rich can telephone for a cure

While for an aspirin the poor must long endure [...]. (Opera 378)

One of the important aims of Soyinka in his dramas is to allow his audiences participate in the process of its enactment. Soyinka's dramas have always been audience oriented and it is the audience, which boos, appreciates or even judges the character's theatrical performances. What the audience looks for and judges are the finer points of leaps, turns, controls, and general spatial domination. Soyinka's theatrical performances have no place for weak actors and soon they are banished to the group sessions-⁵"which demonstrates the importance given to individual technical mastery" (ADO 193).

Soyinka has drawn this physical element in theatre from the traditional "oje ogwu" (ADO 193) event in Southeast Nigeria. But, the element of satire, of actually turning the tables against those who have been morally, spiritually, and

psychologically culpable, as also the demonstration of the events in which they have been detected has been a part taken by him from the tradition of the "okumpa" (ADO 193) event, where male performers would put on female costumes and then be accompanied by song and dance to the theme of their indecision of suitors for marriage. But regardless of the sources, the dual elements in Soyinka dramas explain that for him the purpose of drama has been both audience delectation and the imparting of moral principles. It is because the purpose of much of Soyinka's political theatre involves sycophants, aggressors, community pretenders, dictators and social goons that they leave out the heroic recitative. But, mostly characters who enact these political blockheads, dictators and the like speak of foreign influences, put on alien costumes, remain isolated from the audience and do not emerge as one among them as it happens in praise chants in ritual theatre.

Soyinka employs musical instruments from various corners of the globe. He involves audience in his plays. At the same time, he appropriates the creative office of a poet to insinuate his hearing public about the glitches in society. Soyinka understood that poetry requires lesser time to be assimilated by the public and it does not need elaborate stage apparatus to be comprehensible. Soyinka's poems have repercussions beyond particular events and address themselves to a larger audience. Most of the songs found in the plays are either self-seeking addresses or comments in general. One is reminded of the utterance by the sick patient who comes to witness the execution of the criminals during the coronation of Boky. Though sick and unwell, he joins the merry crowd to witness the execution of prison detainees and bays for their blood. He however dies without realizing any possibility of his wish being fulfilled and to this extent he takes on the role of a hardened criminal himself without having the power to commit the crime. But, it is Dee – Jay who acts as the linking chord among all the characters in the play. He allows all characters he

interviews to condemn themselves out of their own mouths. But everyone who appears to witness the execution of Mack adopts suitable public poses. Polly is in tears. De Madam threatens to take her home. The whores of the city have all converted to CSU's (Christian Scripture Union) and appear before Mack to sing "Just a closer walk with thee" (Opera). But even Dee - Jay is happy that he is not going to the gallows. He gives a religious significance to his life- to be washed off his sins with the blood of Christ- the blood that must be of Mack. His incredible joy at this gives his character a comic turn. Instead of leaving off for a repenting life, he dances off stage with Sukie- the condemned harlot of Mack. Mack is however saved when the emperor's courier arrives. Anikura adds his final words to the events of the play and his address to the audience is to remind them that power is the unique desire of all worldly men. But, it is also a warning at the same time of the detachment required to judge reality. Objective reason, not emotion, finds Anikura should be the criterion of decisions in the external world.

The mainstay of the play is not pure objectivity. If the play concedes or addresses anything, it is man's passion for power. In this process, Soyinka's play reaches the point of true theatre. It projects his taste for crime, erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter and even his cannibalism. But, the orientation is through the means of an inward dialogue-gestures, voices, hand and bodily expressions that create the magnetism of the unfamiliar, and yet the wanted. The irony here is rather anarchic. There is also no wish that the political exploitation of the dictators should continue. Soyinka's poetry, which is on the other hand extremely emblematic, suggests a need for the audience to focus on a two way process to recovery: at the individual level and at the level of the society. Soyinka's theatre does this by involving both the actors and the spectators in the process of dramatic enactment. The result of such blurring of divides epitomizes the thin line

between reality and the fictional. But, it is also interpretative and resists the technological, psychological and emotive streamlining of the world into convenient quarters.

Yet, if the play does not employ masks, it is to signify that none of the characters should be approached with reverence as in the case of a ritual theatre.

The play is a proof of the continuity of oppression, of the coercion of humanity in the name of orthodoxy, in addition to discipline. It shows a country in total disarray. All who wants to gain materially much follow the same principle of plunder. Rules are meant to be broken and even when they are there, they do not mean to control the men of power. In this abominable hierarchy, the common men have to accept the gauntlet of sorrow, while the big wigs can play with the roost. Opera Wonyosi presents a jamboree of social misrule in a humorous vein.

Soyinka's play, From Zia with Love presents a stark, bad world of military rule. Prison cells, detained people, tin cans for latrines, half lights, and suspicious stains on walls, etc., make the stage. The descriptions are graphic. Certain sections in the play need only gestures. Guffaws, derisive laughter, the audible sucking and expelling of air, change of seats and songs, etc dislocate the minutes of the theatre. The play also shows a Cabinet under a Commander. It meets its momentary crisis with cries of alarm. The situation arises due to the exasperation of the Commander who thinks he will explode if the Director of his National Security Programme continues to describe to him the social evils in his country, which by the way are less important than containing subversion. But, it is nonetheless contained by the humorous intervention of Number 2, who calms the Commander down.

An aspect of the play is its use of flashbacks. The play cuts short the need for a large number of people. The use of a large set with variations is also made redundant. This is evident when the Commander describes how the Military took over the reins of the government from the corrupt politicians and how this shift of power was in fact celebrated by the common people who took to the streets. But, the descriptions of the Professors, who merely occupy their seats without teaching, give a realistic and concrete detail to the play. They bring the narrative to the present. The mock-heroic pitch is raised, when the Commander finally decides to explode and his internal exasperation is made out by the sound of a loud explosion effected by the Sergeant Major with an inflated paper bag.

Indeed, the play works wonders through sounds. But most of these are not spoken words. The sounds of men slapping each other, prisoners salivating noisily, prolonged guffaws produce overall sadism. Loudspeakers denote the expressive use of propaganda by the military to turn a rude nation to its schemes. But, screams give the play an even more sinister look. Soyinka uses lights brilliantly. An easy example of it is his use of a cacophony of sounds to tell a crowd while lights mark an isolated man who cannot move or speak but can only smile or express his intent. The use of lights in this case is similar to its use by Milton who described the fallen angels enmeshed in hellish fire. The notes of Soyinka are epic in this case. It celebrates human defiance-man's indomitable will and desire to express himself even under limitations.

The collective voices of prisoners as they see someone paddle through the hyacinths are expressive of this mood. It instigates their collective sorrow, pride and rise to hopes.

The play gathers its strength from the fact that it is a cue from an actual event. The incidents in the story bear a relation with what happened in Nigeria in 1984 under the military rule of Buhari and Idiagbon. The dramatist relates as an investigative journalist would do, events in the actual story and he gives his incidents a real universal appearance by limiting his stage apparatus and infact giving it a general look. Except for a brief mention of "Agbada" (From Zia With Love 124), a kind of cloth worn by a Yoruba, the play has no topical reference to any particular costume. The eastern motifs in the furnishings of Sebe obviously link him to an oriental conduit of materials. But, the reference here is sparsely given and do not indicate any particular trade for its owner. The detail may very well be missed without an astute observation of the stage furnishings.

The speaker in the story has no mediatory role as in a Brecht's play. He does not narrate incidents to elicit a viewpoint amongst his audience. Soyinka or whosoever speaks here does so as one among equals in a military rule, one close to official discussions and even the most secret conferences. The audience knows the truth and must decide what they are to do with it.

WING COMMANDER. I said to Zia-why not send us a fraternal gift of a thousand bags of fertilizer. Of course, he agreed. The rest was easy-special Presidential consignment. Privileged cargo, no question, no inspection. The generals took care of their end. Easy. I was supposed to do the same with ours (From Zia 132).

The self-praising song from both SEBE and the Commander is an open challenge to law. It is made sinister by the fact that it binds the lawbreaker and the preserver of it. In itself, it tells a complete story of diplomatic sabotage, the whole process of cunning involved in hoodwinking detection and punishment. All the self-respecting

nations of the world are aware of the arms and drug trafficking taking place under their nose. But they choose to ignore it again for diplomatic reasons and for the exercise of power.

The famous Scotland Yard

Its record yet unmarred

Did smell a rat in a diplomatic bag

A crack team did they field

Round the strong room barred and sealed

But the pouch... ..

Had sailed through stone and brick [...] (From Zia 137) .

Soyinka pinpoints the offenders of humanity. He scoffs his own nation for its disregard of law. He blasts America too.

MIGUEL. Those damned hypocrites know where the stuff is traded.... The Americans turn a blind eye to the mujahedin in Afghanistan because they are fighting Communist rule[...] (From Zia 138) .

But if politics is blamed for the misery of nations, so are religion mandarins who twist the principle of virtue and put it to use for the hardened criminals. Ultimately, the nexus between lawmakers, military, criminals and the religious heads of institutions bleed a country to death.

The play presents a number of men on stage. All of them are dressed uniquely. Some have put on gas masks, others, goggles. A few are with "Tyson crew-cuts" while the rest gyrate in rap motions (From Zia 160). They suggest the various

careers- mischief, cunning, forgery, godlessness, loitering, and superstition etc- that work to plunder a country. The chorus at this point puts things into a perspective. It tells the audience to be prepared for bitter times ahead. The Wing Commander justifies the army's new measures as legalizing economic and financial operations in the country. It is to be a novel initiative aimed at punishing the wrong doers also.

CHORUS: I got you in a trap (From Zia 162).

WING COMMANDER. Every offender shall be guilty as charged

Laundering of earnings from drug operations

Shall incur something worse [...] (From Zia 162).

Immediately afterwards, the stage presents a skimpily dressed figure playing a saxophone. Female dancers doing a "shinamanic" dance to the tune of "Zombie" and follow him (From Zia 164).

This man is the Chief Kalakuta priest. Soldiers in uniform had burnt his commune style home on trumped-up charges (of illegally possessing foreign currency). They also killed his mother by throwing her from her two-storied building. The judicial enquiry into the death of the poor woman puts the murder to "unknown soldiers" (From Zia 164).

The wing commander gives his own description to the death of the old woman. It was an accident he said. The soldiers will not apologize because they are not expected to. This official version to a much-publicized death expresses the real intent of men in power- their audacity to deny men dignity and infact treat public as they like. The issue is now left for the audience to decide. It is their discretion that will save them from future plunder and harassment.

It must be noted out here that for Soyinka, the effect of placing the morbid and fractured reality of human lives on stage has a better purpose than inaugurating a new ethic about any post colonial markers. But, he is equally determined to put the economic 'under erasure' to see the economic factor, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, as being responsible for so much of West speak on colonialism and the end of it (Marxism 103). But the critic recognizes that a epistemic violence is at work here. The insidious trajectory of pompous claims on discrete cultures is in fact another way of disclaiming the importance of other regions of the globe, other than Europe in the development of cultures and the affirmation of human capital. This is a new form of elitism, countered by the modus operandi of a people's voice who go beyond the establishment to articulate the possibility of looking at systems as so many determinants meant for the undoing of democracy.

Soyinka recognizes the suppressed voices at multifarious levels and provokes them to question the way things are. Using the native traditions of Africa, the writer subverts the climate of oppression fostered by the power mongers that are, reassures even in their aesthetic operations that hope still survives. But he questions the writers who have not been able to challenge the oppressors of human liberty or those who have hijacked the moral vision of the writers per se. The failure of politicians to live up to the mandate of decolonization has forced writers into political activism, and this was, for Soyinka, an unfortunate compromise because the wisdom of art--its unique reflection on experience and events, could be located neither in superficial concerns nor metaphysical abstractions but in a profound engagement with the ever-present reality that transcended the quotidian. In his brief differentiation between superficial cultural concerns and deep reality, Soyinka's operative premise was that if things had worked out as they were supposed to, if decolonization had fulfilled its mandate, then writers would have been left alone to secure the authority of the

mandate. then writers would have been left alone to secure the authority of the things had worked out as they were supposed to, if decolonization had fulfilled its mandate, then writers would have been left alone to secure the authority of the aesthetic as a mode of cognition outside the domain of banal social events.

For Soyinka, the central principle of art itself is essentially moral and universal. But in hours of crisis such as humanity is going through now, any celebration of beauty for itself, becomes meaningless and so impoverished. As a political writer, Soyinka disembowels the directive of going back to the past. Instead, he looks forward to pulverizing the enemy head on. Such an attack becomes mandatory as his play A Scourge of Hyacinths shows.

The play evokes images of glum coercion- of men undergoing trial and being convicted- waiting for an inevitable end-progressively eliminated and their human rights made null and void- men turned to the most oppressive states of existence. Soyinka's use of the imagery of scaffoldings, sounds of heavy keys and the irregular beat of heavy boots create the particular terror associated with concentration camps, death penalties and so on. But these sounds also powerfully unfold a complete set of acoustic experiences that needs no gestures. A new space is created and this is a space beyond the application of any lights. The issue for the dramatist- for all that he suggests is the rot and corruption in public life, the body politic of a nation stinking with the slime of ill manufactured money, ill dispensed and so made guttersnipe for all the violent concoctions it is culled from. The wall surrounding the prison, where Detiba, Emuke, and Miguel Domingo are kept up, is Soyinka's fragmentation between innocence and experience: beyond the prison wall and into the streets of the Nation, life begets manipulation, remains topsy-turvy and is yet consignable to variations: inside. such possibilities are weaned away:

MIGUEL: I have seen this wall from a distance [...] Maybe I even waved to someone standing against the bars of that very window. [...] In all those pleasure rides, I never thought I would be looking outwards from this side. The thought never crossed my mind [...] (A Scourge 186)

Miguel had always looked at the prison from the outside and in most cases other people would do the same. But, non-acceptance of social and political issues does not mean they are absent. Knowing others is also a way to safeguard individual freedom.

DETIBA. I agree. It's like football. Or any other game. No one changes rules in the middle of the game. Just imagine, halfway through a football game, the referee says the rules have changed...In a mere game it is bad enough, how much more in a matter of life and death (A Scourge 189).

The possibility of an expected salubriousness in the end of things to come is not weaned away. The characters, especially the mother of Miguel responds to whatever is an inevitable loss with the gusto that the seaweeds will let her have a way out through the crisis of the present. Mythical remembrances are human and a part of man's culture of resistance. But in this play of Soyinka, they nourish a foregone dream: of retrieving the rights of men as free individuals - those that have been the victim of an ill nurtured connivance between the money begetters and the military junta, a result of the oil boom in Nigeria in the 1970's. The play negates so much talk of perfidious globalization as the result of the economic sabotage of a country. It is the greed of its internal manipulators that is consigned to be the reason for a country's malaise. At times, it is the crass demonic dictatorship that is behind a nation's ills and, as it happened with Nigeria- the loss and ignominy of democracy.

The Mother's pride over the name of the Domingo's over which she appeals her son is a call back for him to return to a traditional normative of courage and determination-aspects of life and memories dismantled in the mire and perfidious corruptibility of the present times.

MIGUEL. How many Sundays have I risen early just to watch you don your white robes and blue sash, your face motionless as you lit one candle after another in your private shrine, almost trance-like to the boathouse... Yet when you return from it all, it's as if you bring back with you the flesh of that greeting-Salaam Aleikum. A real peace descends on the house, a rare texture of peace you could touch with your hands [...] (A Scourge 201).

MIGUEL. It is not your goddess who has pronounced a threat on my life.... but men of studded boots, of whips and batons and guns and mind-numbing propaganda. Why! Even Sango armed with his thunder and lightning would hesitate to take on a sub-machine gun. (A Scourge 201).

It is the precision and organization of inhuman violence that is hideous to Miguel; different from the symbols of a base life with its exercise of power for the sake of it, the private universe of humanity cocoons its relief and a call back to myth in Soyinka's play affronts the malevolence of a society ensconced in rules and the play of uncertain divides. The women remain metaphorically desecrated in this exercise and in confronting her with the realities of another existence, Miguel shows the paramount disgust forced on innocence: the betrayal of honesty. Miguel is no more the son the Mother thinks him to be, not only because he is placed in impossible positions wherein any display of courage becomes annihilating, but rather to the all negative fear which the military regime imposes: the routing of democratic

institutions and the invidious strangulation of the basic human expectations in this process. Miguel's expected flight from his country is curtailed. With no possible routes for his escape, he decides to go back to the island his mother visits to attain his solace and freedom. The physical journey is a metaphor for a mental relapse. Civilization remains a hazard. But it cannot be wished away. Miguel's boat is caught in the hyacinths. Unable to move, he decides to retreat from his possible benediction. The images concocted in the play induce aridity. It proposes a different faith to reclaim tradition and beyond that an ability and strength of mind to work out one's way through possible hiccups. Miguel lacks this strength. He is a revolutionary. But his actions are all seemingly rational. Like his oppressors, he looks to solutions by the rules and so is finally defeated. His capture and trial have no public resonance. He is not the hero of the people. Instead the Mother is. Her wish for Miguel to respond to his crisis with force of character is a desirable one- one that is affable to all those who suffer from coercion and a vital immobility of will. A way has to be forged amidst this crisis-the alienation of the African self from itself, its moral and material dispossessions and spiritual angst, the seizure of the native soul and soil. Miguel must go back to his home, retrieve its values and finally attain knowledge of him. This is not however synonymous with retrieving a black essence.

Frantz Fanon in his famous book Black Skin White Masks conjugates this freedom and assertion with time, such that man is not the slave of past, any past. This is precisely how he framed the question of alienation and disalienation faced by the subject of racist culture in the Conclusion of his book:

The problem considered here is one of time (temporality). Those black people and white people will be disalienated who refuse to let themselves sealed in the materialized Tower of the Past. For many black persons, in other ways,

disalienation will come into being through their refusal to accept the present as definitive (Black Skin 226)

Fanon concludes finally: “ I want the world to recognize with me the open door of every consciousness” (Black Skin 232).

It is this freedom as Carl Marx called it “ the space of human development” (Grundrisse 708) and not the desire for the recovery of substantive virtues. Soyinka’s proposed vision is to recognize the present world order strewn with prohibitions. If colonialism had been a geographical ordering with its obdurate system of compartments, the present world affairs with our own people turning against us is the same motionless manicheistic order (The Wretched of the Earth 37-38,51) and the discourse of the most anti-colonial dramas today is the recognition of this enemy within- the state being only an apparatus of blotched violence. If the defining quality of apartheid had been that it kept things as they are, the problem of the present, the essentialism that is often advocated as an answer to the partisan obduracy of the past is equally damning. It claims that the past is supreme and there need not be any recognition of the present multiplicities, and this obviously is unacceptable.

If an ontology of divided human kinds has always been a constitutive but acknowledged feature of Western modernity as a recent political commenter Charles Mill says, the world it fashioned, and its philosophical discourse, then according to Mills the universalizing pretensions of Western philosophy must be exposed. We must perform a “relativizing” operation upon what are purportedly “ the problems of philosophy” or the predicaments of the human existence. We must reveal these putative universals as “ problems for particular groups”(Blackness Visible 9-10). So,

one should relativize the counterfeit universal. At the same time, one needs to honor Western metaphysics for its liberal ontologies. Yet the question framed by

Soyinka is far from this simple. The question Soyinka would have asked all would have been something Fanon might have too: With what critical weapons shall we address native questions of brutality and injustice, questions relating to the internal ordering of our society with its absurd divisions? How do we really come to terms with our own people going against us? Unlike theorists who make predictably linear statements on the fact of race being a real entity, Soyinka like Fanon would say that the artifact of race must not be permitted to provide the final vocabulary for our self-understanding and moral reasoning. Hence, all the principal texts of the proper Post Moderns speak with horror and fury and, indeed, sorrow that notwithstanding the baneful singularity with which the fact of race has reoriented itself in the world, it need not occupy the entire place it has come to.

According to Fanon in his book A Dying Colonialism, the ultimate virtue of revolution, the goal of historical action, is not the conquest of power, but the resurrection of repressed questions and the disclosures of "unexpressed values" [109]. In his approving depictions of such transformations, such a renewal of openness to untried possibilities, may be discerned what he meant by true decolonization. For Soyinka, too, it seems the issue of decolonization is not synonymous with anti-colonialism. It is not a matter of moral litigation, restitution and distributive justice, between them and us. It is instead in its moment of decolonization or rather post apartheid, first and foremost, a resumption of interrupted history. This resumption should not be likened to going back to some original purities and essences before the Fall, but the interrupted dramas, above all, a

resumption of our dialogue with one another and with us. At this moment, decolonization reaches beyond any puerile ambitions of engaging itself with the questions of white supremacy, in a word with the white man. True decolonization, the post apartheid, is signaled by the return of the inward eye upon the native and universal injuries of human existence. We may, of course, want to reject specific substantive features and ideals of standard (Western) ethics.