

Myths have a special place in a discourse of resistance. It examines the predominating culture of oppression, its monologic forms of narration. It negates the interpellation of the subject by the state as intimately related to the state. It articulates dissent and offers to have a dialogue with the entrenched power formations. In a sensitive analysis of myths, Paul Ricoeur spoke in 1965 of the tension between universal civilization and national culture, between the involuntary mutual awareness and dependency of every people and the region made possible by civilization as well as the dogged persistence of defensive movements helping subject people carve out a bit of space on the earth's economic turf:

The developing world has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit, and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revendication before the colonialist's personality[...] (qtd. Timothy Brennan, Nation and Narration 46)

It must be understood however that the operations of myths should relate to man's aesthetic incursions. It must also allow him to answer some of the most fundamental inquisitions that relate to himself in the present: How should he deal with a stranger? What should be his reaction to those who look and act differently than him? How should humanity resist oppressive regimes and what again should be the process involved in art that generates for mankind the requisite impulse to forge a composite culture?

Though such and many other questions have been reflected upon through centuries of human existence and sound political fairly, they are really important. They become even more so for a post-modern writer. For an artist today it is important not only to relate his sense of beauty to his sense of truth but also to

present this truth in ways that are new. Art must also irritate social platitudes. It must voice the silences in human narration. This must be done in such a manner that a society's traditions are not completely overthrown. Above all art must continue to be a pleasurable experience.

In view of colonialism and the advent of imperialism in countries of the third world, the responsibilities of an artist increases manifold. He for example cannot be blind to the social particulars, to the fact that oppressions of his people has been worked not only through economic sabotage of their resources but also strengthened through a well organized denial of their culture and heritage. He can obviously wish to remain engrafted inside the parapet of his cultural past and deny recognizing the arrival of the white man or the offensive nosiness of the latter in his consciousness. But, he may still find it difficult to deny the reality of the 'other'.

In Africa, writers who have responded to imperialism have done so in many possible ways. To Achebe, a means of negotiating with the white man takes a simple route. He goes back to his culture and draws respite from the angularities of the present hour. Thiong'o deals with colonialism by aborting English and preferring to write in his Kenyan tongue. He is a Marxist. For him writing becomes a means of inducting the masses into his theoretical apparatus. Much before them, Tutola had embarked upon a pastoral recreation of his society's history.

Soyinka on the other hand does not simply adhere to his traditions. He goes back to his own roots. At the same time, he delectably selects for the aesthetic consumption of his readers, issues and expressions in his history that leads to a many sided vision of life. One of them is the expression of the ritual.

As a Yoruba, Soyinka seeks in the traditions of his country the fountain of his artistic vision. But, as has been said already, traditions in Soyinka do not mean a platonic escape to some remote past. Instead, the choice of it involves recognizing the need in man to continuously juggle opposites and negotiate his survival through unconquered experiences. Consequently, myths in Soyinka's dramaturgy not only help him retain the expressive vents of his culture but also become a means apprehending discourses that speak of other people and their manner of secreting their emotions, feelings etc. Most importantly, the framework of rituals in Soyinka's dramas expresses African people's own way of organizing dissent, appreciate schisms between the real and the ideal, relate themselves to their past and therefore understand their possible future through an artistic organization of their social particulars.

Soyinka's admission of ritual into the contours of his art is to suggest the umpteen relevance of this primitive mode to take course in the dilemmas of the modern man. Greek representational art is retributive. It allows a single individual to comprehend the mores of survival in increasingly powerful dimensions of the consequential. At the same time, his knowledge is a hindrance to his identification with the lot of the others. As a hero, he is removed in his wisdom and consciousness from the rest who merely witness him. He falls to his nemesis and in the end perishes with his sense of truth and wisdom. In European drama, action is redundant. The social conditions do not need modifications. Even when they are required, complete upheavals of the public configurations are not wanted. Such a universe is wholly foreclosed to newer possibilities.

Hamlet dies with his acquired wisdom in his heart and so does Lear, who being temporarily blanked away from his faithful daughter, Cordelia, learns to comprehend

the uncertainties of a hostile universe where power is only a limited bulwark against the grievances of fortune and the final consequences of fate which is well defined and scored before the actions really take wings. Hence, actions in a universe, whose laws are predetermined, do not support changes or evolutionary programmes. In the third world of which Soyinka is a part, revolutionary consequences are ingrained in the very milieu of the social and political crisis. Yet the possibility of knowledge is not a restriction against movement or action. In this case, the mythological prototypes become a model of perusal through which a vision of communal drama can be worked out.

This in the end interrogates, questions and decentres the emaciated paradigms of history—the economic plundering and loot carried out in the name of progress, the large scale rampaging of human rights and liberties and the overall dehumanization of the consequences of life and existence. Often, as Eliot has done before, myth becomes in the hands of Soyinka a formative pressure and a finer sense of being; the life cord of a new consciousness and the arbitrations in man's social and moral universe through myth are not merely for the purpose of contrast and comparison. It is also to suggest the courses or moves that man may take in his decision to live better and more fully. Ritual in this sense becomes the language of the masses, a universal idiom in which it is possible that the entire of the human and social community can take part and so participate, so that the consequences are large and metaphorical. Ritual becomes the organizing principle of a community drama. Its kinesis is to be fathomed in a celebrative moment of interaction between the artist, and the mass of men that follow him. At apparently critical moments in the history of a race, a society must base its opposition to social and political anomie by taking refuge in some rock solid base of truth and belief. Only through this measure can it overcome the crisis that impedes its progress. Critics have often pointed out that at

times, Soyinka's artistic representations depend for their subsistence on the play of opposites, such as what happens between the Professor and Murano, in the play The Road or in the Westernized conflicts between Simon Pilkings and Olunde, in Death and the King's Horseman, Igwezu in The Swamp Dwellers, Bero, in Madman and Specialists. At times, the dialogue between the two seems to be at cross purposes, least likely to succeed in communicating the possibility of converting words into meaningful patterns of suggestions. Conventionally, of course, this is true, and to anybody merely concentrating upon the matter of fact narrations, is bound to be confused.

But Soyinka's dramaturgy is deeply rooted in the traditions of ritual. It works its way through a concentrated belief in the power of the ordinary people to make sense of truth, beyond particular parameters. In the second chapter of this work, it was pointed out that the African artistic space had scope for dances and songs. But most importantly it was a communal affair.

The ancient farming communes of Africa organized most of their theatrical performances. They raised money for the costumes and awarded capable actors cash as well as kind. In the 'Lord of Misrule Festival' (Etherton 30), the actors would sit with the spectators and the latter could enter into 'role play' with the former. The interaction amongst the audience and the performers made it difficult to find out who was 'in role and who was actually a member of the village hierarchy' (Etherton 30). Even in the Kalankuwa theatre festival in Nigerian villages, effective organizational skills of the village community in organizing drama could be detected. Etherton also admits:

The ability of these young adults to form such a grass-roots organization that

mobilized cadres to raise money, collect costumes [...], probably exceeded the organizational capability, at a comparable level, of the professional theatre [...]. (31)

African theatre then must be looked not simply in Aristotelian terms. One cannot really look upon African drama and for that matter the theatre as Soyinka an artistic product apart from its social organization. Even when the aesthetics of particular performances are studied, it would be found out that Soyinka's dramas evolve from the particular African modes of perceiving and highlighting recent events and also the communal past. In the *Zambian Copperbelt* says Etherton; the presentation of Kalela dance was a "response to the process of urbanization, and an extension of the joking relationships which had previously existed between rival ethnic groups" (38). Dance was also a metaphor for the actual events in the society.

The Beni dance in East Africa for example acknowledged the fact of the white man. At the same time it mounted a satirical critique of colonialism. The performers used scraps of metal to comment on the colonial brass band. The dance also combined traditional gyrations with acrobatic embellishments.

Even the use of songs in African cultural life had its own significance. Prior to Soyinka, songs were related to the actual events in the history of a race. It metaphorically commented on the white man's intrusion into Africa for example and it made the common man conscious of his social position viz a viz the imperial intruder. Etherton refers to two studies on the traditional songs in Africa. One was by Charles Kiel; on songs by the Tiv people in central Nigeria. The study demonstrated how the texts of the songs were changed to comment on the recent crisis of the times. Another by Andrey Maisye, a Zambian broadcaster, playwright

and diplomat bore evidence of how forms in traditional songs were dislocated to comment on the white man's intrusion into Africa.

But, Soyinka also draws the content of his plays from Yoruba myths. From a structural perspective, such a mythical framework incorporates within it the drama of the egungun and also the theatre of ribaldry. The spirits of the ancestors materialize through masks. The ancestors question the living and offer their advice to the latter.

In doing so, they strengthen their bonds with the living community. The members of the living community placate the dead spirits through a two-way ceremony. They welcome the dead and satirize those who live.

In the occult or the magical part of the ceremony, the spirits of the ancestors or the gods enter into a masked celebrant and he becomes possessed. He also gets into a trance. But, in the secular part, the actor is either cheered or booed by the attendant spectators. In the secular part, the masquerader satirizes social anomalies. In and through his castigation, the community gets a chance to express their pent up emotions of anger and dislike.

Within this basic framework, Soyinka institutes certain variations. In the occult or magical part of the ceremony, he not only introduces the Yoruba's ideas about his gods. The character within his drama that enacts the role of Ogun, Soyinka's favorite god, shows the deity's nature for sacrifice. But the gods' death has moral connotations. Ogun dies so that humanity may survive. Moreover, Ogun's death is necessary today as it was before.

The social parameters of life may have changed in Africa from the days of Ogun's first plunge into the transitional abyss. But, man's need to organize himself under duress, remains the same. Such an organization is even more required now.

Africa needs its own people to make sacrifices. It requires that the community as a whole face up to the plunder of colonialism and its aftermath- the neo-colonial sabotage of its traditions and culture. It must resist mental and psychological fragmentation from agencies and forces that are within it and beyond it.

An artist enlarges and gives presence to the social, political and economic determinants of his age. He magnifies the contours which needs an Ogunian sacrifice. Soyinka's achieves to do this. His community is a multiple one- Blacks and Whites together. Both interact at various possible levels. They speak up their minds and argue on their cultural and psychological make-ups. The Europeans of colonial Africa reproach the Blacks and even stoop to admit the natives after much deliberation. Soyinka lets them speak on Africa's cultural space. But he also gives the native a chance to talk. He gives an expression and force to their moral position. Soyinka's theatrical space generates for censored ethnicities the requisite agency for speech. It invites the unspoken voices of communities to have a place in social deliberations.

It has been often commented that the study of myths is linked to exercises within literary theory which seek to push the author away from the center of the text and to show him/her as the medium through which larger models speak; the text is a language the author never fully understands or organizes. In part this is so because myths have no point of origin that can be located in the figure of the author. Whilst in literary theory this has been the project since the advent of structuralism, within the study of mythology this notion of decentring goes back at least as far as Freud, who locates myths within the unconscious and thinks it "extremely probable that myths are distorted vestiges of the wish-fulfillment of whole nations - the age long dreams of young humanity" (Okpehwo, Myth in Africa 10). If we are to see

mythological literature in Africa as an inflection of dissent, then we are faced with the fundamental, and taxing, question of agency because myths have no authorial point of origin. Agency becomes problematical whenever we want to see phenomena within the sphere of decentring and dominant, residual and emergent narratives, whether within the sphere of revolution, of revolt, or of literary production. As Okpehwo says, "the premium placed on the unconscious by Freud and Jung removes myth-making from the sphere of creative awareness and skill" (Myth in Africa 13).

Soyinka use of myths must then be seen against the backdrop of colonialism. Myths for example bring to light the admirable qualities needed of a proper hero-courage, dedication and love of one's brethren. It reminds subjugated people that they should unite against those who rebuff their dignity.

But, myths in Soyinka also destabilize a linear engagement with group particularities. At times, it challenges the figure of the father, which then becomes coterminous with ambivalence, falling in league with the despicable Western attitudes of negation, intellectual hard headedness, and a disgruntled admission of emotion given simultaneity with unlawful passions. Prejudicial ratiocination is therefore so much of an offence, more so because it forcibly seeks to vindicate itself against an opposing claim to instinct which is an equally sure way to wisdom and knowledge. So when Morounke asks Isola as to why the latter was cursed by his father the young Isola can only exclaim that he does not know the reason: "Perhaps he doesn't know himself" (Camwood 95).

Isola shares a difficult empathy with his father. But, he admits his mother who is more humane, and sensible to his wants. The image of the mother here is of someone who bears the burden of sorrow and is also hardened by it- the same as the tortoise

whom he calls Moji, which is the name he calls his mother anyway. But his father is not the only one to oppose Isola's conjugality with Morounke. Even the family of Morounke is opposed to their daughter getting one with Isola. However, the narrative of the play moves between a narcissist social world and a private trajectory of love, memory, and dreams and the true spirit of wisdom and liberty would appear to be present in the latter.

Soyinka's aesthetic framework in Camwood also hinges on this contrast. Images of snails, and streams by thatched bamboo huts, where both Isola and Morounke can be together and where access is only spontaneous, play against the images of the adult world. In the platonic world of love there are no social hierarchies. Its language is more of silence than of blatant fists and guns.

MOROUNKE. Where are we going?

ISOLA. To the chapel[...]

MOROUNKE. Was...there...a rock? (98)

In negotiating the space between an African history constructed by a Western episteme and an ethnocentric vision, Soyinka makes no certainties of one over the other. The basis of identity lies in the convergence between tradition and an acknowledgement of the present. Tradition should shape the change of the future. It should stop a blind race towards a topsy-turvy modernity. The dramatist is also not in favor of retrieving the past. Instead, his dramatic oeuvre is concerned deeply with a lost present and a possible future.

Camwood on the Leaves impresses with the idea of love as a foreground to hate. A possible solution to betrayal and the strain of survival today is in a closely-knit world where the basic human emotions are honored and nurtured. If social rules are

important and must be retained, the interior space of the characters should also be given their due place. Conventions may be important. Yet, they ought not destroy individual freedoms. This is a place for oxymorons. It undermines Order and by implication, it's Rule: an altered perspective on the purity of truth reveals it's staged qualities-its nature as construct rather than an essence.

Ogun the fundamental agency of change and revolution is joined with Atunda, the rebellious slave of Obatala. Atunda breaks the unified godhead into a thousand fragments. He brings diversity and freedom into a cliché. Death in its simple form reconciles one to his misfortunes. But, the need to formulate exceptional beginnings is equal. It is essential to break the tedious play of disturbances and reconciliation-the mobius strip of linearity or cyclic movements.

Isola's furious act, the killing of his terrifying father is not an Oedipal refraction of his quest-the personal risk he takes is an outrage against a society that, embedded in futile norms, cannot see the malevolence also in a father. Isola's protest against what he takes as so much of evil takes place in unexpected ways. It dilutes the idea of outrage that may be accommodated in and through the dominating logic of the empire or the society. Isola's insurgency subverts the dominating narrative arguments of patriarchy- its fear, hegemony, and rebuff of difference. Soyinka's applications of the myth of the revolting son take his story beyond the semiotic construct of "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, Power and Knowledge 81). The analogy is not as Terry Goldie argues "that of a chess with clearly limited oppositional moves?" (POST-COLONIAL STUDIES READER 232). The contradiction is not simply between good or bad. The strategy of representation involves the bringing forth of an extraterrestrial dimension: a whole new space of

being and social objectives where fear is replaced not merely by *instinct and freedom, but with new creations.*

Isola's act establishes the margins and yet breaks the totalizing integration of the power center. The actual displacement he offers involves the articulation of new subjectivities, "of pleasures, of intensities, of relationships" (Min-ha, POST-COLONIAL READER 216). It moreover opens up the possibility of detecting the 'other' and locating oneself in the domain of things. Obviously, this involves an act of courage, a commitment towards a vision of truth constituted of a multiplex of parameters, *not one of which can be said to hold supremacy over the other.*

In Catherine Belsey's terms, the drama of transition lacks closure. But this lack, is something she calls indecisive and incomprehensive, standing for the dead end of subjectivity, where mimetic illusion is to be replaced by questions, ambiguity and aporia so that what we have at the end of it all is not perfection in social parlance, but a projection of tensions between conflicting ideas extending beyond the frame so that issues are left to be settled and finalized (Critical Practice 86).

As a result, it is always possible to come back to Soyinka's plays with a new incisiveness of approach, to understand the multiplexes of symbols and semantic jugglery that his dramas ultimately unfolds. In his own works, the final thrust of Sekoni or Eman, of Olunde, into the gulf brings the dramatic action to a halt, without achieving a sense that the bridge between the human and god, or old and new, now or gone, and future has been forged. In Soyinka's ritual hemisphere, uncertainties so presented carries with them the involvement of a paradox.

It is proper to suggest that in the Camwood and the Leaves, actions take place the at various points and interfaces, not the least in and through characterization wherein

Soyinka develops the rites of a new passage, where characters are not simply enmeshed in puerile and inconsequential social hierarchies.

Isola who kills his father is like any young child impassioned about his freedom. He practices what he is advised against. Erinjobi with his ruler is terror to him as much as the old man is to Morounke. When he raises his stick against them, the two children run away from him:

Morounke. I ran away. Your father frightened me, Isola. He is so terrible [...].

Isola. I ran away too [...](107).

The play's events hobble between the private world of Isola and that of his father. Soyinka describes us one world immediately counterpointed against the other. Isola's dreams are invaded by the nightmarish reminiscence of Erinjobi. Even subconsciously, Isola is attached to his fears. He awakes only to challenge his inhibitions or at most to dismiss them.

Erinjobi though disliked and killed by his own son flounders between a love for his household and a pledge to be usual in his chosen social rules and obligations. At the same time, he must not allow his name to be tarnished by one of his children. The knocking on his door by the Olumorins (family members of Marounke) at night on charges that Isola may have played loose with the modesty of the girl creates terror in his heart. Erinjobi fears that his honor was gone.

OLUMORIN. Where is your son? My daughter has disappeared.

MRS.OLUMORIN. [...] What has he done with my daughter?

ERINJOBİ. He has not left the house since [...] (109).

Later when the Olumorins charge Isola of disrespecting his father, Erinjobi defends his son.

ERINJOBI. Those who say so commit a sin against him...unless in the eyes of God his act of rebellion meant indeed that he stuck me (113).

If social pressures to conform to rules had been loose upon him, he might have let Isola be. But, his concept of religion clashes with that of his son. Isola is an egungun and Erinjobi finds his son's new religion hard to accept. The play's denouement may have been different if Isola had not been a pagan.

Isola and Erinjobi particular enterprises however not only catapult their unique tragic drives, but also bring their people with them. Isola's mother pleads with her husband. She wants Erinjobi to forgive Isola. She again pleads with her son to do what his father tells him to. But she fails to bring either son or the father to leave their mutual animosities spaced out.

MOJI. It is too great a trial, Lord... I have not the strength [...] punish me for my sins...but not this way [...] (91)

Songs in the play that describes the predicament of the African mother as she pleads with her son to listen to her may have particular relation to Moji. But, it also expresses the universal nature of motherhood that would even beg with their children for what is good for them.

Child I implore you [...]

Kneeling I implore you [...]

With bean cake I implore you [...]

Be appeased [...]. (122)

The songs in the play again are therefore not mere poetic embellishments, and it is possible to look at them as extending the moral, psychological and emotive universe of the *dramatis personae*. They build up the necessary audience response on how and in what terms it ought to accept the actors in the play. The play's opening song for example throws up pictures of Africa's cultural life -- of a mother mourning her child and grounding the Camwood dye and the father active, making bells of brass.

The next song reminds the audience, of fathers being equally active in public life and also looking after their children- something that Erinjobi is superficially adept at doing. But, even here, Erinjobi puts the care of his children to his wife. His metaphors even in his profession of love are those of prison houses and charnel chambers, of people kept in garrisons because they may challenge the authority if free.

ERINJOBİ. God is merciful. Go down to the children, wife. And lock the door.

Erinjobi's words are followed by silence and then by a song whose English rendering by the author is the following:

I delight in pounded yam like a man of the farm [...]
 My back support the child like a much blessed mother
 This child is to you-your own flesh and blood [...] (139).

Erinjobi, despite his certain qualities fails to respond to change. He stymies individual choices in matters of behavior, as his own world has no place for persona.

Its logic to the flux of experience is preordained and indissoluble. Erinjobi also fails to see reason in Africa's own wisdom, its strategies and norms of conduct that Isola pursues and evinces a fascination for- the rhythms of nature to which man must adapt his social and moral being.

[...] Eyes of the leopard, embers in the dark

Tail of the leopard, a swishing lariat [...]

If the male yam is scarce, we pound the soft tuber [...]

Cicatrix on the cheeks, just like the well-blazed route (140).

Both Isola and Marounke promote innovation and change. The new world they conceptualize is arrived after much sacrifice and bloodshed. It is articulated in a dynamics of conflict, whose resolutions are not apparently evident, since they need time to germinate and to be brought into general consciousness.

Soyinka views the artist through the analogy of Dionysos. It is the special prerogative of the artist to act as the mid-wife of illusion. He is besides a conjurer, an agent of release and control, a medium of primordial chaos, and an initiator, creating new forms of liberation. His system allows both the performer of the rite and the spectator a way out of the present morass. The true demand he makes upon his audience is through a participation in the rites of passage-a metaphoric change in his own consciousness, not sees such a metamorphosis as an unqualified attempt for jingoism.

Soyinka's illusions though have less to do with a reinforcement of actuality than with a definition of the same. They catapult Africa's cultural genres alongside their

European counterparts. Songs in Camwood for example not only throw images of Africa in perspective. They engage with the real world at multiple entry points. They may reinforce Africa's cultural mores. But an alternate perspective to what is of value to man is always known and considered.

Friends come in threesome

The first offered me a mat to sleep upon [...]

The third offered me his breast [...]

I accepted the breast offer [...]

[...] Small fronds may bring death to the thick fibre stalks

A grown man is killed by lackadaisical labor

Conspiracy in Ibadan brought war into town

The parrot makes nonsense of beautiful feathers (127-128)

Soyinka himself, at the introduction of his play The Bacchae, talks about his independent urge towards a new and unexpected organic territory, where man and nature become simultaneous. Man matches nature in all her moods. Violence is also important. Properly organized and directed, it becomes the embryonic progenitor of fertile and succulent happenings. There cannot be any comatose relenting of any artistic turbulence, and more so in a society where the forms of the theater, carries on with its impending dictum of change as a perennial event.

But the African writer is not asking for a new revivalism. As Ato Quayson has said, Soyinka looks upon the act of the artist "as an extension of the role of traditional creative potentialities. Thus a popular vocation is inferred, but related as directly as possible to a symbolic nexus in the indigenous domain" (Post Colonialism 88). This is true, not only for Nigeria, but the world over, where the manipulators of

governmental machinery have coerced societies, victimizing the citizens. In parts of the world the state engenders what could be fruitfully described a nervous condition of political and social existence. The apparatus of power constantly interrupts the form and direction of civil society resulting in fear, hatred and suspicion among the citizens and fellow human beings.

Literature extricates man from the totality of such crisis. It proposes a new order and grounds it in the common apprehensions of man; the defining bonds of his being that relate the present to an unseen future. The implications of this move are multicultural and poly-ethnic and so evenly universal.

Myth activates the masses. It offers a new liberating aesthetics. The final set of issues according to Quayson to be discussed with respect to the intersection of the literary and the political has to do with the basic question 'of how political themes in literature helps or forecloses the possibility of imagining a passage way beyond the nervous conditions engendered by the incoherencies of post-colonialism (Post Colonialism 93).

But to answer this basic question, it is imperative to turn back to the most banal interpretation of literature as a form of aesthetic product that generates a series of perspective alienations. These perspective alienations start from predominantly written and oral expressions and go to embrace various levels of characterization, patio-temporal co-ordinates, imaginary settings, generic codes and ethical inflections. This argument is close to what the formalists argued about literature of it being a series of defamiliarization effects. But a difference has to be noted. The formalist's notion of defamiliarization insists upon an understanding of literary history as embodied within the formal structures of literature itself. It is separated from its embodied social referent. The use of myth is an aggressive and heady mix of

tradition and individual talent. It brings to mind Eliot's employment of historical and community resources to generate the contours of his art, the simultaneity of the past with the present to comment on the crisis of modern man.

Yeats similarly built upon a system of values in an attempt to justify the dimensions of his art, which can be both a release as well as a social referent. In the case of Soyinka myth is used to spark off the movement towards a transition and reform, both at the political level as well as the basic dimensions of the human Diasporas.

Modern writers like Brecht used their dramas to construct a discourse aimed at social amelioration, in an idiom blurbs of revolutionary facetiousness, through a mystification, attempting to provoke tried principles of art. In Soyinka, there is no supercilious attempt to ignite minds as an addendum to the profitable play of the artistic metaphors. The continuum of art with the social referents it coheres is a naturally consistent one and so the dramas of Soyinka are rescued from the malicious play of promoting stringent social and hardcore political ideologies. The significance of this event in the life of an artist is manifold, not the least in rescuing tradition from the hostile battlegrounds of impunity which has left the past redundant for the present. Man needs the refreshing play of the past to shape the present.

For Soyinka, a writer arbitrates in the social and political disarray of his age with the imaginative gadgets he has with him. The intention is to juxtapose an order of human values that challenge the dominating social, economic and political system of misrule in Nigeria and other parts of the third world. But, the actor on stage is finally accountable to his people. It is the society who has chosen him to take lead in a communal adventure and he is part of a ritual of his community. He cannot take his decisions independent of his people. Infact, he needs them more and the community

follows suit through songs and dances to ensnare him into his act. But, his community is not only the people on stage. The audiences that observe him and interact with him in the true spirits of Nigerian and African theatre are to be also taken into his consideration.

Soyinka's use of myths not only make the theatrical spectators aware of their cultural past. It reminds them of their own role in the success or failure of social goals. The use of dances and songs are similarly not only for the purpose of light and humorous entertainment. They have reference to the present. It gives them an idea of how dissent and resentment against any form of inhuman regime can be expressed through social and artistic configurations.

Ultimately Soyinka promotes the larger mission of a representative art, one that pays its obeisance to each and every category of aspiration. Above all, there has to be a vision that shapes a new social order where a man, irrespective of the color of skin and geographical trappings belongs to the total human gathering. The use of tradition in Soyinka's plays fulfills the objectives that he himself underlined in his book Myth Literature and the African World.

In this book Soyinka has pointed out that the African world shares with other cultures, the value of complementarities and to ignore this basic fact is to falsify the reality. Moreover the use of myths represents through the artist, a summation of man's attempt to come to terms with the protean universe. It fulfils in the artist, a holistic aspiration towards an integrated matrix of man, technology and nature.

To Bakhtin however, the possible world of the epic has no function in so far as it is believed to act as a regenerative network of values. It cannot impede and decenter

the chaotic underpinnings of the present hour. Bakhtin's view in this regard deserves to be quoted as exemplifying a totally negative view of the epic.

There is no place in the epic world for any openendedness, indecision, and indeterminacy. There are no loopholes in it through which we glimpse the future; it suffices unto itself, neither supposing any continuation nor requiring it [...] Absolute conclusiveness and closedness is the outstanding feature of the temporally valorized epic past. (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 15-16)

It has to be remembered that when the colonizers came to establish their colonies, they hoisted their texts on the native people, reading the latter's and so assimilate the colonized in terms of its own cognitive codes. This was an accepted practice among them. Today, the project of a post-colonial and post-modern artist depends on investigating the European textual capture and containment and intervenes in such a manufactured dialectic.

The Strong Breed is a play based on the Yoruba ritual of oro sacrifice that is usually observed on the eve of the New Year. The community selects a man to carry all its evils over the past one year. He is then put to death to accomplish this mission. The story of the carrier is not unique to the Yoruba's alone. It has had its presence in Greece, Rome and even in the orient. But all communities agree that the act of expiation must be a chosen one and not imposed out of some mistake of fate or fortune. It should be self-willed, carry conviction into the heart of death and so embolden life. The one chosen in the play is Eman. But he is a stark outsider and when the girl Sunma asks him to leave the town to save himself from being chosen as the carrier, he shows his reluctance to do so. He reminds of Christ who had similarly refused to escape obligation for his society and instead decided to suffer.

Like Christ, Eman is lonely:

Those who have much to give fulfill themselves only in total loneliness. (The Strong Breed 125)

Prior to his coming to the village, he was asked by his own community to take on the role of a carrier, which his family had so splendidly performed in the past. Even his father had taken up the role. But, Eman had decided to escape before he was caught. He deserts his pregnant wife, Omae who dies bearing his child. He suffers from a violent conflict of desires- firstly, to give up his life for his people, and secondly to escape from the responsibilities, which such an act would bring unto him. But, if he wants to set an example for others to follow, he must know that his act would entail something beyond any boast.

Son, it is not the mouth of the boaster that says he belongs to the strong breed. It is the tongue that is red with pain and black with sorrow. It is the tongue that is red with pain and black with sorrow (Strong Breed 133).

But, he takes the suffering after all. As, Eldred D. Jones observes:

Towards the climax of the physical sacrifice, his body flinches, and he needs water. Eman's pathetic appeal to the girl who betrays him, parallels Christ's agonized cry, 'I thirst'. Eman's death like Christ's stuns the people in whose name it has been demanded, and leaves a remarkable impression on some unlikely minds (The Writing of Wole Soyinka 49).

Eman does not die as a willing victim. Had he wanted to die himself, his sacrifice would have been dignified. It would have brought rejuvenation to his onlookers. But it does not. However, his inability to move beyond the reach of his captors, bring

him in line with the tragic protagonists of Shakespeare's plays who had similarly ceased to act. In this connection, his fate would seem to be inevitable.

Soyinka's explanations in The Fourth Stage are worth noting:

It is true that to understand, to understand profoundly, is to be unnerved, to be deprived of the will to act. The truly overwhelming suffering of Sango, of Lear, of Oedipus, this suffering hones the psyche to a finely self-annihilating perceptiveness and renders further action futile, and above all, lacking in dignity. (Myth 154)

It has to be understood however, that Soyinka's pronouncements at this point have a deeper meaning than appears initially. Eman's tragic dilemma or the fact that he does not act is not because he anticipates a nebulous world in whose comparison he is insignificant and therefore requires a god to guide him. His inaction is the result of his dismay over a community that has given a murderous tinge to a ritual of sacrifice.

But the community who put Eman to death is equally the not actors. They are without any moral sense or any understanding of the true values of rituals. Their inaction is the result of ignorance than of an finely tuned psyche.

In this regard, it has also to be remembered that it is only in the corrupted practices of the 'Okugun' [carrier] that the latter is killed. As Derek Wright says in his essay, "Ritual Theater: A Universal Idiom" included in his book 'Wole Soyinka Revisited' "

In the original carrier rite the year's ills are projected, into the material object being carried, not violently alienated from the community [...] and the carrier is not slain. In Jaguna's perversion of the rite, however the protagonist is made

to suffer the scapegoat's defilement, mortification, and final immolation, which, in the carrier rite proper, are inflicted on the transported effigy. (24)

Eman's defilement and killing looks more repulsive on account of him being defined as the absolute negative in reference to which the positive qualities of the community are measured. But, the inordinate cruelty of the society is a testament of its own mechanical process of redefinition through dissociation. Sunma hates Ifada, a boy whom she cannot save and this is why Eman makes a provocative remark:

EMAN. It is almost as if you are forcing yourself to hate him. (117)

The imbecility of one leads to the cruelty of someone else. Those who define the outsider do so for their own gains. Defining the 'other' is society's own way of legitimizing its hierarchy. It is also a process, which allows for the exploitation of ritual. Violence brings procreation. But, its twisted execution is a reflection of social anomie.

The action of the play would then consist of a protest against social perversions. Soyinka puts up for ridicule all collective institutions, which derange from prizing man's independent choices. True liberation is not arrived at inadvertently and through gifts meant for a select few and Soyinka warns against facile achievements of the ideal.

The dramas of Soyinka present a corrupt society, brining images that speak of profligacy, dementia, and a whole circle of frauds. The imbalance of the age is not assignable to one particular class, the religious charlatans, but follows every channel the society knows of, Jero being only a representative of the umpteen rascals who do the rounds of communal life. Jero's victims include Amope, Chume's unsuspecting wife who owns money to Jero, Chume himself who ministers to Jero's position while

he himself invents the necessary dialectics of a practicable virtue centering on his quest for profits. Chume, like his master, is without any sacrosanct desires. He would readily alter his cross with that of his master and take the pains of being confronted by the daughters of discord. His move to get the better of his wife insinuates the dramatic narrative to bind the dramatis personae with the audience in a common denominator of coordinates, provoking a multilateral, exponential frequency of undiscovered sights. The play offers a catharsis. But unlike in the Greek plays where the characters figure out some unknown spiritual dynamics at the heart of existence, in this play of Soyinka, the realization is both individual and social. It is also one of puzzlement. The comic poise inherent in this discovery proposes an alternative viewpoint. It offers a high ground to look upon the pseudo gods who have no more miracles to them than to know the hour of their escape from their debtors. Humanity is still ubiquitous in its ignorance. Like the ambitious minister, it looks upon the disappearance of Jero as a divine choice. Metaphysics is reduced to what is fortuitous. All that is transcendental is stated as the product of adroitness, foresight, and manipulation, cunningly organized. Soyinka's implication confronts the abeyant logic of the ordinary people that artificially foster greatness to those who least deserve it. Real greatness, by implication is hard earned. It requires moral courage, a requirement that the denizens of power today are least capable of supplying. The institution of myth offers an alternative parameter in this respect. It projects the gaps and the divide that exist between the real and the visionary.

Death and the King's Horseman, the other play where the concept of the carrier emerges in its most complete form, operates on the antique ceremonies of cleansing and purgation traditionally observed in the farming communities worldwide. Elesin Oba selected by his community men to accompany his King on the latter's way to heaven remains unqualified to perform his high office. He continuously

hankers after his worldly memories and reminiscences. His perambulations are more of this world than that of the after. Despite the imputations from his lesser human coordinates, who continuously propel him onto his transcendental dance, his wayward steps do not fall into the sequence of a rhythm, easily, unflappably and inoffensively. His protestations of virtue, friendship and true honor seem mere casualties, phonological summations, all sound and no sense: they have less reality for him, the reason why he is offended when his praise singers comment upon his word 'honor';

The world I know is good.

The world I know is bounty

Of hives after bees have swarmed.

No goodness teems with such open hands

Even in the dream of deities (Death 156)

Elesin's dream of voluptuousness, his eager awaiting for the woman of the streets, his celebration of their beauty and youth all in the same ambit of his proposed deathly trance provokes an offensive tension- the world is very much a part of what Elesin is proposing to give up and yet the other world have not yielded its secrets to him.

Not even Ogun with the finest hoe he ever

Forged at the anvil could have shaped

That rise of buttocks, not though he had

Her eyes were newly laid eggs glowing in the dark

Her skin. . . (Death 159).

Even when the leading women in the chorus proclaim that the lady Elesin wants is somebody else's, they decide to surrender the same woman to their hero, hoping

that he would, in his ritual co-inhabitation, deliver his seeds for posterity. But looked apart as an event in itself, beyond its mythological significance, Elesin's desire speaks volumes about the deep carnal desires he felt within himself while leaving away. But the parables of Soyinka's text extend the moral hemisphere of drama beyond the topical good or bad. It assumes so to speak the substance of a new democracy, when Amusa the officer on duty comes to meet the errand of his superiors who would not admit of the suicide of the chieftain. The possibility of a composite dialogue involving oppositions is held in motion once the accompanying chorus comment on Amusa's sense of duty. Amusa is rebuked for having the audacity to interrupt and question rituals, the Africans have been carrying over since ages past, the incidents in the story being modeled on an actual historical event.

In January 1945, a month after the death of the Oyo king, or Alafin, his horseman, called Elesin, was to join his royal master by committing suicide but was prevented from fulfilling his duty by the British District Officer, Capt J.A. MacKenzie, whereupon Elesin's son Murana, a trader living in Ghana, returned home and took the unprecedented step of dying in his father's place. Soyinka has taken this episode to put forward his own visions of a human culture that would include diverse human gatherings.

The play hints at a possible dialogue. Implied herein is the need of recognizing the democratic institutions of man. It seeks to recharge heritage. At the same time it desires to plummet the inflexibilities of the colonial temper that only looks upon non-whites as pagan, boorish, uncouth and so non-feasible in the respectable world. One should be cautious however in limiting the ritualistic performance of death to the confrontations between the colonizer and the colonized. Mere confrontation between two world values does not trigger off the trajectory of sacrifice. The white

man in Nigeria has nothing to do with the fulfillment of this tradition. It was a part of the country's sense of being even before the British landed there, very much a part of the society's consciousness, symbolizing the ageless wisdom enshrined in the Ifa religion.

Soyinka's action lies in building around this conventional practise, an ethic of death as supreme challenge to stasis, metamorphosized in the continuous building up of tangential components of possible action between the two set of actors, Elesin and the chorus. Death is released from a mere glum acceptance to an incisive instrument, fertilizing the fetus of life.

At the same time, Soyinka's myth of the king's horseman, set against the gripping metaphors of colonialism implies a new creative drive. The fourth stage, which Soyinka mentions in his Cambridge Lectures, has now an actual material factor-the white man, whose presence in the drama has to be taken into consideration before Olunde could decide to be one with the transitional abyss.

Through his sacrifice, Olunde initiates a growing understanding of the real components of a significant African culture. The colonizers such as Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings decry the ritual of the Olunde's as "criminal offence" (166). It is a mere excuse "for making a noise" (167). But, even then they are not sure. They are not been able to categorize:

PILKINGS. [...] They always find an excuse for making a noise...(Thoughtfully) Even so...

The issue is not so much about whites and blacks as about the fatuity of their serene ignorance and desecration of African wisdom. While the Europeans remains ensconced in their hauteur, Olunde makes it clear that the African who has been in

the West can still find his succulence in the values of his country- not to revert back to primitivism- which by the way never existed at all, except in the memories of the whites themselves.

Olunde's daring proves that the colonizers are myopic, and their promotion of a sense of decency is mere showdown, a facile attempt to hide what may not be tolerated at all: the devastation of war and the meaningless killing of men .The tendency to live in compartments, suffocated and made even more arid by the disorienting intellect is a negation of life. Reason is paranoia deprived of Imagination. Mrs. Pilkings calls the ball, a therapy in the British style, and the preservation of sanity in the midst of chaos, though she has no defense to what Olunde says against the interfering tendency of the white man, his unpleasant hauteur to describe what he can make the least sense of.

Olunde has known and absorbed the duality of experience. He has been to England and observed its people and their customs. He had loved their courage. But he was born an African and understood that while the African would admit alien people and concepts in their cosmos, the whites would deride and loath what they do not understand. Naturally, he found no hardship in identifying with his people when he came back. And his vision of human future smacks of no local enterprise. It is plural. The physical effect of death is negligible in a ritual involving the community together. Beyond its narrow physical entitlements, Olunde's sacrifice gathers the community in a common root: that of tradition as an affirmative against the foul disorganization advocated in colonialism. The pertaining trust is not for a black consciousness, nor is the intention to deflate colonialism commensurate with white bashing:

The bane of themes of this genre is that they are no sooner employed creatively than they acquire the facile tag of clash of cultures a prejudicial label which, quite apart from its frequent misapplication, presupposes a potential equality in every even situation of the alien contained in the human vehicle which is Elesin and the universe of the Yoruba mind –the world of the living, dead and the unborn, and the numinous passage which links all -transition.

(Author's Note to Death 6)

As Olunde says definitively rather than gratuitously, it is important for Mrs. Pilkings to understand that knowledge or wisdom is a common denominator of humanity. It is accessible to all. It is neither ingenious nor expedient. It is not to be pondered in the casuistry of odious and vulgar cultural manipulations such as the Pilkings make with the dress of the Egungun. In a certain way it is there for all, except that it requires fullness of vision to know where to find it and in what way. The route has to be through an acknowledgement of catastrophe, such as the Captain on the English Vessel carried out by destroying himself to allow others to live after him. It was an affirmative commentary on life. It went beyond a private quest.

Elesin quotes his own psychological delinquencies, his lust for the flesh and other worldly inducements when he fails to die. He lambastes at the end the white man who captures him and holds him captive. It is not good enough to believe therefore that Elesin is merely a prevaricator. His faults are only human. The simultaneity in the dramatist's presentation of the successful man, with the one who has failed, is Soyinka's way of commenting on the inadequacies of human will that fails occasionally to get the better of situations. Soyinka's argument is neither of defeat nor of panic. The cosmos of being has its spasms, its interruptions. The journey to a vagrant experience is never easy. *It requires a balance of opposites and is hard*

earned. With Elesin betraying his effeminacies, the people whom he leaves behind have to suffer. A deadly play of negatives now binds the entire race. It is a further warning against novice expectations from life. But the sweep towards a positive life is equally mesmerizing.

In terms of dramaturgy, Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman is seminally important for other reasons. Primary among these, is the play's congruity with the European play, The Conquest of Mexico by Antonin Artaud. Artaud, the originator of the 'Theatre of Cruelty' wrote his Conquest during the months of March-April, 1950, and in it he posed the question of colonization.

The play revives in a brutal and implacable way,

[...] the ever active fatuousness of Europe. It permits her idea of her own superiority to be deflated. It also corrects the false conceptions, which the Occident has somehow formed concerning Paganism and certain natural religions. (Theatre of Cruelty 70)

The play, moreover, shows the virtues inherent in traditionally pagan societies, its profound moral harmony, illuminating the difference between unjust material civilizations as in Europe with its organic counterpart in Aztec monarchy. In this conflict of values, the protagonist enforces volcanic eruptions of concepts and dialogues unheard of before, while the other characters bear within themselves the most opposed ideas. This mental conflict is described to the audience in an objective pictorial fashion. There is also the crowd with its different categories of men and women.

Images, movements, dances, rites, fragmented melodies and the sudden turns of dialogues are carefully recorded and described in words. Artaud also introduces his

opening act with warning signs, describing cities, monuments, countryside, etc through lightning to reveal their sharp edges, incorporating a secret lyricism, corresponding to the inspiration of poetry overflowing with whispers and suggestions.

In Soyinka's play, moreover, there is festivity, colors, sounds and music adding to the overall abundance of spirit and gaiety. Elesin's expected act is a communal affair. They are to connect him and those whom he represents, to the forces beyond man's control and rational assessment. But at his personal level, revolt is as much as it was in the case of Montezuma. He is divided as if in two.

In Artaud's play, this aesthetics of conflict is suggested in and through dialogue and lighting: some part of Montezuma's body being shown in half lights, and other in dazzling colors, and many heads coming out of his dress. In Soyinka's play, the evocation of mental and physical aberrations is through sounds and movements of the chorus. Characters who accompany him on his voyage as the King's horseman are influenced by what he does. In Scene One, as the stage directions shows, Elesin executes a brief, half-taunting dance. The Drummer moves in and draws a rhythm out of his steps. Next Elesin dances towards the market place as he chants the story of the Not-I-bird. His voice changes dexterously. He mimics his characters. He also performs like one born to represent the actions and movements of others. In the process, he infects his retinue with his energy and humor. As an actor in the tragic space, Elesin intervenes with his shout, gestures and body maneuvers to create a pure theatrical language, indicative of his own restlessness and the quantum of complex impulses that determine his motives and passions at this point. Even the words that he uses along with his chorus of woman following him, convey an incantation, and a

true magical range of symbols that disorganize and pulverize appearances. This is according to the anarchistic principle of all genuine poetry.

Soyinka, like Artaud, introduces in theatre elements of psychoanalysis – one that affects a patient's cure by making him assume the external and apparent attitudes. In this respect, the language produced by Soyinka is not a plain structure of symbols that passes from one system in one head to another system in a different individual. The interesting moment in the theater of Soyinka and Artaud occurs when one is physiologically touched and one's system is deranged and must reform to cope with the surprise. This is what both Soyinka and Artaud want to say.

There are moments in the play when the unexpected happens-Elesin's failure to die; Olunde's decision to take the place of his father; and finally the Pilkings' betrayal of complex moral and psychological issues in their actions and dances. What emerges from people's unusual behavior is the inadequacy of rules in setting a prototype for human conduct or their inability to restrict man to a certain set of actions.

In terms of costumes the Europeans and Africans have different make-ups. Throughout the play, Elesin is resplendently dressed. His sash is of bright red alari cloth- a kind of mysterious dress, which still denotes life, vigor and potency. The white colonizers, on the other hand, either wear their European uniform, or even take up the dress of the African pagan cultures – Egungun costumes, which belong to the dead. To Amusa, the Egungun dress is equivalent to death. To the Pilkings, it is merely a piece of cloth like any other.

With the setting of his drama, Soyinka also took absolute liberty. Instead of designing his stage setting with elaborate framework, he allowed the action of the

drama to take place as is where is. Elesin moves across the market place while the Europeans are cloistered in their clubs and offices. Africans have their traditional musical instruments—drums, group voices and songs of woman. The colonizers have their gramophones. To the Africans, there is no difference between inspiring Elesin to take up the challenge and actually performing it. The colored man is actually a part of the action of the community. The Pilkings look it as separate from them. The method involved here is to be found in the epic theatre of Brecht.

Brecht used the method of alienation to educate his audience about the shortcomings of any event, rule, party, individual and he described his incidents as a reporter with honesty and sincerity. Emotional detachment from the actions of the actors was an essential instrument in his hands and for the audience who needed to be conveyed about the truth of a story.

With the colonizers, detachment is built in the very nature of their analogy. They are naturally detached. But such alienations are not conducive to their education.

They argue fruitlessly about the Egungun dress and the ritual suicide, which Elesin is to undergo. Their humor about the African's pagan culture is a mere intellectual jugglery and is based on no sound principles of moral realization. It really boomerangs upon them. The African's participation in the ordeal of the hero is a spiritual act. It involves their deeper being. It is finally liberating.

But the drama also hints of a secret osmosis. The risk of a stolid rationalism being influenced by the anarchistic morality of poetry unhinges a large-scale derangement of values. The unconscious is always round the twilight zone. Man can cross boundaries. There is nothing like a strict divide for him when the subconscious is reached.

The stage direction in Scene Two expounds this:

Pilkings suddenly begins to hum the tango to which they were dancing before.

Starts to execute a few practice steps. Lights fade. (Death 173)

Soyinka's aesthetics then works out its meaning through movements and gestures. He uses words. But their value is as important as is the immanency of dance, rhythm, scene and action. At times, there are minimalist dialogues and scenes.

But what remains is intensely animated and can be engaged in all situations. The dramatist conveys Elesin's trance like state –

He listens to the drums. He seems again to be falling into a state of semi hypnosis. (Death 181)

Soyinka's uses lights brilliantly to convey Elesin's gradual lapse into semiconscious:

ELESIN *dances on completely in a trance. Lights fade slowly on the scene* (186).

But his dance is solemn and has regal qualities. Yet, there is also stiffness in him. His accompanying chorus has greater fluidity. The dance continues. The drummers play their songs. Then, Olunde hears them shift to a different style and composition. Before that the first rhythm is cut off. It is only after a silence that a new beat grows, slow and resonant. The quality of calm is in fact denotative of extreme possibilities.

Soyinka sets in contrary terms the dance of the Europeans. Their dance has an organized movement. It is more about couples interacting with one another and their desperate attempts to be recognized by the Royalty, despite their costumes. Soyinka

shows them in constant lights. He wishes to highlight the choices the dancers make in selecting their partners.

In scene 4, when Olunde and Mrs. Pilkings are talking, it hints at a much-desired break from a monotonous crescendo. But with him confronting his father, there is an unexpected quiet. A disruptive force, lethal in its ramifications is at the point of breaking free. The stage direction has it all:

Olunde stares above his head into the distance...Jane screams...(Death 202).

The quality of calm is uneasy when Elesin is put in the prison and his recent bride has her eyes perpetually bent on the ground. The wordless gestures between the two actors spell their ignominy and their disastrous entrapment. It is now a filthy and powerless life for them:

Pilkings now in a police officer's uniform enters noiselessly, observes them a while. Then he coughs ostentatiously [...] (Death 203).

Elesin finally ends his life. But the women who sing their dirge at the death of Olunde continue unmoved by the sudden event. Elesin's act now becomes a personal choice. Olunde's is a communal enterprise. Elesin's death is unexpected as it is sudden. It moves no one. The play ends with a complete blackout on the stage. It would be time before new things can happen again.

The Bacchae of Euripides, is an uniformly inspirational play in terms of its revocation of the carrier myth that it contains and displays. The terms of treatment are however of Soyinka's. The writer takes his inspiration from the Greek original involving the myth of King Pentheus who accepts a gruesome death at the hands of his own mother, when she fails to recognize her own son in a state of frenzy. He also

weaves diverse geographical locales and incorporates the mythical patterns of nations other than those of Nigeria –Greece and even the far-flung Orient. Orisis, Prometheus and Zagreus see off the defunct, replacing it with a newer source of abundance and fruitfulness.

The occasion is also the time when the Old Year is laid to rest and the New Year welcomed through a ceremony of ritual dance and frenzy. The killing of the king is made inevitable when he discredits the godhead of Dionysus and replaces the bloodless worship of the said deity with more violence than would become of a celebration-the annual flogging to death of an old slave. This outrage, according to the dynamics of the play is expiated only when the king symbolizing evil, unwinds violence unto himself. The death of Pentheus is a symbolic summation of his regime's collective desecrations and outrages about to receive an equally violent purgation. (Soyinka The Bacchae 252- 264)

Traditional myths have been however metamorphosized. In the play they comment, de-center, pulverize and even provoke an exponential application of cultural know-how and its ramifications to material facts. Derek Wright in his discussion of Soyinka's plays has commented that the death of the king may be seen as a wished for symbolism (Wole Soyinka Revisited 64). The moral logic of the ritual has been thus subsumed in the greater logic of revolution. The finale suggests, writes the critic the idea of endlessly repeated, alternating cycles of joy and horror, and is inconsistent with the messianic notion of final transformations. To this argument one may add the vision of the playwright himself who believed that the play of the Greek master Euripides is far too rounded a rite to of the communal psyche to allow the idea of a next installment 27(Soyinka, Bacchae, xi).

E.Seannanu says that while adapting the play of Euripides, Soyinka made certain modifications on the original to suit the particular requirements of his dramatic foci. These involve three major areas of modification i) the nature of Pentheus' reign ii) the redefinition of the role of Dionysus's reign and iii) the transformation of the end of the play from the throes of lamentation to a muted celebration, including a sudden recognition or epiphany (Critical Studies 108).

The above transformation brought by the writer intends to connect the oppressed man to his primordial roots. Man must suffer and fundamentally question the necessity of making a very personal estimate of the nature of evil. He must interrogate his circumstantial place in the universe too.

The Soyinkan method of telling people about what is admissible and what is not is by an oblique way of reference. Its use of myth eschews conventional hankerings. The setting of the plays is suggestive of this gestation. In the dramatic elaboration of the movement of transition, the carrier does not accept his death willingly. Hence his death is not regenerative. The slave dies because he is merely a burden to the ruler.

The Soyinkan hero chooses his end knowingly. His death is morally and spiritually expedient. At the political level, it also makes a king responsive for the welfare of his people. But when he sends his people instead, he loses the right to govern. He has to be replaced. Tradition guides a people in this choice. It augments a people's awareness of what is and what should ideally be.

Soyinka adopted the title of his own play, The Bacchae of Euripides from a Greek source. He has borrowed part of his own title from the Greek original, translated by (Arrowsmith and Murray). But, he also culled resources from his own passion poem

(Idanre) about the Yoruba god Ogun, whom Soyinka then calls the "elder brother of Dionysos" (The Bacchae xiv 28).

The external framework of the Nigerian's work is Greek. But, it includes Africa's own wisdom. These particularly involve the spirits of various Yoruba gods behind the mask of Euripides' (and Nietzsche's) Dionysus. In and through Esu, who is a god and also a familiar trickster, Dionysus manipulates his human worshipers and his nemesis Pentheus toward a sacrificial rite of revenge. At the same time, Dionysus manifests the dual characteristics of Ogun and Obatala-action and serenity, since he first appears: "Relaxed, as becomes divine self-assurance but equally tensed as if for action, an arrow drawn in readiness for flight" (Bacchae 1).

Soyinka's achievement lay in changing the structure of the original Greek play. To the single chorus in the Greek source, the black playwright adds a second chorus of slaves. This community of slaves is first seen at work in the play's opening stages. Thereafter, it becomes a chorus of Dionysus' worshipers. They also represent the related community of the dead, according to Soyinka's initial stage directions. The background is "lined by the bodies of crucified slaves mostly in the skeletal stage" (Bacchae 1). In the foreground dim figures of slaves (the eventual chorus) labor upon a threshing-floor against the palace wall, in a "cloud of chaff...[with the] smell and sweat of harvest" (Bacchae 1).

At this point of time Dionysus comes out from the tomb of his mother, Semele. He speaks of revenge. His arrival involves a dual space of becoming, in Kristeva's sense of the abject, semiotic, maternal chora. The threshing-floor with its chaff cloud reflects the historical origin of Greek theatre's Dionysian orchestra which is the threshing-floor of the agora (market place). But Soyinka juxtaposes the original ritual space of his added chorus against the Apollonian palace of Pentheus and the

abject bodies of dead slaves, left as semiotic warnings against rebellion. Soyinka includes Euripides' mythic setting for the start of *The Bacchae*: the choral space of Semele's tomb, representing her cosmic abjection. (She was consumed by lightning when her lover Zeus appeared to her in divine form, although this story of her death, and of her son's divinity, was not believed by most of her human family.)

It is out of this maternal chora that Dionysus first appears. He then returns to Thebes as the spirit of revolution and familial revenge. But as has been said before, Soyinka introduces a maternal order juxtaposed against the social order and rule of the father. He also puts in an added emphasis on the consequences of political struggle. The introduction of the additional layers of death and abjection--through the scenic chora of crucified and laboring slaves, as well as Semele's tomb prove this. In this way he reshapes the high drama of gods and mythic heroes to remind the audience of the mundane suffering of the lower classes.

In the opening scenes of Soyinka's play one sees the influence of both Artaud and Brecht techniques. This is expressed through a specific African sense of flexible ritual space (which Artaud also desired) and the gestic performance of colonial slave labor (à la Brecht). In and through these combinations of images and spaces, characters and mythical figures, Soyinka also comments on the political and the administrative machinery of any rule, which by the way needs continuous revamping for its proper functioning.

In devising the architectural plan for his theatre, Soyinka accepted the influence of Julia Kristeva. Kristeva was a Bulgarian immigrant in Paris. She worked out Plato's ancient Greek philosophy of the chora (theatrical space) in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis. According to her the theatrical space is also the area or the domain of the maternal chora. Somehow, because of an individual's participation in his

social and politically organized world, this domain of preverbal language and emotion within literature, culture, and the mind is not able to express itself. The symbolic order of the father dominates it. Nonetheless, its presence in individuals cannot be denied. It is this maternal space that provides the foundation for man's conscious exercise. At the same time, it subverts and disrupts man's rational foundation in uncanny ways. Kristeva based her revision of Plato's myth on Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage": the human infant's loss of preverbal symbiosis and "semiotic motility" with the (m)Other, as mirror of ego identity, through the intervention of the paternal symbolic, the Name and No of the Father (Revolution 25-26, 46-47).

But, a return to the order of the mother does not imply an Oedipal desire. There is no implication by Kristeva that the individual would return to the mother body through patricidal rebellion. At the same time, the presence of a suppressed instinct in people bears the potential for violent rebirth:

In 'artistic' practices the semiotic--the precondition of the symbolic--is revealed as that which also destroys the symbolic ...[as] the semiotic chora within the signifying device of language (Revolution 50).

When Soyinka wrote his play he adopted the ideas of Kristeva. He opened his Bacchae in his own way- through the creation of a new space, which is the totality of an African and European theatrical space and ritual, of slave death and labor, along with the tomb of Semele, the mother, signifying her death and prior labor. He also shows describes the return of Dionysus to Thebes. Dionysus will destroy the world of rules as denoted by Pentheus. He will also ensure the return of humanity to the roots of its moral and psychological being. He will, thorough his actions, call back the deeper conscious, which must be recognized and allowed to play its part in the

construction of the ego and the material world. But, the will, the crux of the force in man is the true instigator of this creative power. Without the will, the repository is blank. But, there are also some more changes that the Nigerian brings to his own play. So for example, he does not place the orchestra as a circle for the Bacchic chorus, placed between heroic characters and audience (as in Nietzsche's nostalgic vision).

Soyinka recenters the revolutionary chora in chthonic stage space. He shows its semiotic motility between the background line of slave skeletons on crosses, the foreground threshing-floor of slave labor, and the tomb of Semele out of which the dithyrambic (twice-born) Dionysus emerges to begin the play.

The crossing of boundaries and specified identities prove that for the individual, an act of living is sometimes a torturous negotiation between diverse horizons exclusive to one another to infact creating a new definition of being and becoming. Ultimately, an act of courage that dissolves specifications, leads to the effacement of all norms and meanings. Conventional markers and hierarchies are left redundant. The most striking example of this deluge of the signifier is in dancing, singing, and poetic animality that inundate the symbolic order completely to erase all meaning(Revolution. 79)

Obviously, Soyinka's use of dance and songs for his plays are different from its present day picnic manifestations. His particular strategy of the carnival draws from François Rabelais, a French writer during the Renaissance. Like Rabelais, the Nigerian re –discovers in his carnivalesque, evidences of folk humor, joy and ecstasy that submerges and so dissolves“all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men ... and of the prohibitions of usual life”(Rabelais 15).

The intention is to extend the narrow sense of life as Bakhtin said (Rabelais 177). At the same time it would undermine the hegemony of any ideology that seeks to have the final word about the world.

But dances and songs are not the only mechanism with a dramatist eager to disturb the status quo of the present rule. There can be a convergence and infact a deluge of visual, acoustic, and olfactory signifiers (including the smell of the harvest) as one observes in the opening scenes of Soyinka's The Bacchae.

In due course, an incorporation of assorted signifiers disrupts the Olympian and Christian symbolic orders--to release the colonized chora of the mother (goddess), through her son's sacrificial revenge and the play's choral dancing, singing and bacchic animality. In Kristeva's terms: "art takes from ritual space what theology conceals: trans-symbolic jousance, the irruption of the motility threatening the unity of the social realm and the subject" (Revolution 80). But, Soyinka's ability to recast the original Greek play in African light also serves to highlight the fragmentation and the moral and emotional vacuity, which depresses a post-modern as he negotiates his present existence.

Soyinka's achievement in his Bacchae therefore goes beyond the altered tragicomic ending that he proposes at the end of his play. Rather, he explains the post-modern notion of split subjectivity through his interracial theories-primarily his Yoruba myths that narrate how the Yoruba gods decided to challenge their psychic fragmentation and lacking being by willing to participate in a journey involving the most destructive opposition to their holistic being.

Soyinka traces the "origin of Yoruba tragedy" in the mysteries of the gods

(*orisas*) Ogun and Obatala (Myth 140). But, he also uses the Yoruba genesis myth of Orisa-nla. (*orisas*) Ogun and Obatala (Myth 140). But, he also uses the Yoruba genesis myth of Orisa-nla.

“Once, there was only the solitary being, the primogenitor of god and man, attended only by his slave, Atunda. However, the slave rebelled. For reasons best known to himself he rolled a huge boulder on to the god as he tended his garden on a hillside, sent him hurtling into the abyss in a thousand and one fragments”. (Myth 27)

Soyinka himself analyzes this cosmic myth in terms of individual psychology: “the experience of birth and the disintegration of consciousness in death”--which he then relates to ritual and “the god's tragic drama,” especially that of Ogun. (Myth, 28)

In Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, the infant at the age of 6 to 18 months experiences a traumatic loss of its symbiotic oneness with the mother's body. This leads to a substitute illusion of its own whole ego in the mirror of the (m)Other's eyes and desires. Yet, the infant also experiences its uncoordinated body and unfocused libido as fantasies of a fragmented body contradicting the illusory wholeness of ego or of lost maternal oneness.

Soyinka's version of Yoruba genesis, regarding ritual theatre and tragic violence, might thus inform the common postmodern notion of split subjectivity. The subject in postmodern art and life is split by the desires of the Other, while rebelling against such desires--in others and in oneself--to create the illusory mask of an independent ego. In the Yoruba myth, the primal Being of Orisa-nla reflects the lost oneness of infant-mother symbiosis in psychoanalytic theory and the loss of, yet lure to recover.

a shared, communal identity or an ideal, whole ego in the postmodern. According to the myth, the primal oneness of Orisa-nla shatters due to the rebellious spirit of the slave, Atunda (or, in other versions of the myth, the trickster god Esu.)

In the parallel Lacanian parable, the infant experiences both the joyful wholeness and terrifying fragmentation of itself in the mirror of the (m) Other's desire, setting the stage for split subjectivity throughout life. This imaginary contradiction, covering the Real abjection of the child's initial alienation in lacking being, is reconfigured as separation from the mother's body by the symbolic order of language and law, the Name and No of the Father. As the rebelling ego becomes further alienated from its (m)Other and mirror image, it gains a momentary ecstasy of separate wholeness. But through words and prohibitions, it also experiences a terrifying fragmentation--as if Atunda smashed his own image in the mirror of Oneness, in smashing the primal god Orisa-nla. Thus, both humans and gods in Yoruba mythology, like the ego and the Other in Lacanian theory, are lacking being. As Soyinka puts it: "The shard of original Oneness which contained the creative flint appears to have passed into the being of Ogun," as did other shards into other orisas (Myth 28).

Soyinka favors Ogun because it was this god who decided to overcome his sense of loss by first plunging headlong into the transitional abyss. Ogun also created the necessary bridge for the other deities to follow. "With an instrument which he had forged from the ore of mountain-wombs, Ogun cleared the primordial jungle, plunged through the abyss and called on the others [the various orisas] to follow" (Myth 28-29).

Although the other deities did follow, Soyinka says: "Only Ogun experienced the process of being literally torn asunder in cosmic winds or rescuing himself from the

precarious edge of total dissolution by harnessing the untouched part of himself, the will" (Myth 30).

Post-modern theories with its material explanations to man's moral and psychological impasse may find it hard to admit Soyinka's cosmic theatre. But there is, in current performance, a parallel yearning for communal wholeness as a ritual effect, especially through the theatrical lure of ego identification with the alienated hero onstage or onscreen.

This desire in people to assume a new identity is most evident in the popular theatre of film and television. Here the audience relates itself with the hero on stage because he shows them what they can become. Man would like to collectively imitate because at heart he is still afraid and fearful of the future. It is also possible that humanity retains within it a blurred memory of a dimly recognizable past, which he seeks to control and define through a deliberate plan at structuralism and rules. We may be "condemned," as Jameson puts it, to perceive past and future--or, more intimately, our dead and unborn relatives--through the cultural pastiche of pop imagery and stereotypes. But the dead and the unborn still exist, at least as unconscious relations, shards of memories and dreams at the edges of our present living world (Certeau, The Writing of History 4-5)

Sometimes they affect us more directly, crossing the abyss of lacking being in the Real--like Soyinka's heroic orisas and ritual actors--to appear through the imaginary and symbolic theatre of pop imagery and stereotypes.

Thus, all human beings are tragically flawed, suffering from acute mental and psychological breakdowns. But this problem of modern man is not recognized, let alone solved. He lives alienated and seeks creative unification with his community.

The will to pass through violent fragmentation and rebirth, which Soyinka describes as the essence of Ogun and the spirit of tragic theatre, can also be related to Lacan's version of the Freudian erotic and death drives as being one drive toward the suffering and joy of ecstatic jouissance.

At times, this desire for a new identity is dissolved in the crisis of indecisions. This is a dilemma of the present age, something the Nigerians recognized much early in the anarchy of Esu who misguided humans in their steadfast aim for perfection in actions. Esu not only misguided Ogun, intoxicating the latter with palm wine (a thing Ogun liked himself, and therefore taking advantage of his weakness), he is also responsible for the malformation of human beings- Esu misguided the creator, Obatala, when the latter was "molding human beings," Obatala, says Soyinka, drank too much palm wine. "His craftsman's fingers slipped badly and he moulded cripples, albinos and the blind." (Myth 15)

It is possible to explain Obatala's myth from a post-modern view. To clarify matters, the myth of Obatala not only explains the imperfections of the drunken god but also man's own lapses as he continues to exist in society. Man as he lives today is shaped psychologically by the desires of the 'other'. In and through the 'other' who culls his broken image, he seeks to discover himself. His ego fails to reciprocate his true identity and self. It slips on the subject's face, in the theatre of everyday life, like the disabled body slipping in Obatala's creative, yet drunken fingers--as the postmodern subject is formed, yet misconceived by others whose views and desires still determine the actor's identity.

Crete. It beats on the walls of Thebes, bringing vengeance on all who deny my holy origin and call my mother—slut” (*Bacchae* 2).

Dionysus's sacrifice will have far reaching changes. It will not only rid the country of Pentheus, thus releasing it from its cult of rational hedonism and obscurantism. But, Dionysus would return his diasporic postcolonial cult of *Bacchae* to their mythic motherland and unborn fate. The play also highlights the actions of the old man Tiresias who insists on symbolic flogging and reprimands the floggers for not doing what he has instructed them to do.

TIRE. Blind, stupid, bloody brutes! Can you see how you've covered me [...]? Can't you bastards ever tell the difference between ritual and reality...? Symbolic flogging that is what I keep trying to drum into your thick heads”.
(*Bacchae* 9)

Tiresias knows that it is important to suffer to understand life better. His words to his slaves show that he is aware of the illusions created by an artist who wants to bring together elements of the real, imaginary and symbolic through his craft. But, Tiresias' words are equally directed to his theatrical audience as much as they are for those who directly listen to him.

Nonetheless, Tiresias chooses his role as scapegoat out of his political, social and individual compulsions. After all, it is not only the King who is incomplete. Tiresias himself lacks a complete self. His initial impulse is to save Kadmos Thebes from a real revolution by taking the slave's place as scapegoat:

[...] the situation is touch and go. If one more slave had been killed at the cleansing rites, or sacrificed to that insatiable altar of nation-building[...]

(Bacchae 11)

But next, Tiresias admits that he wanted the real experience of pain: I have longed to know what flesh is made of. What suffering is.

Feel the taste of blood instead of merely foreseeing it. Taste the ecstasy of rejuvenation after long organizing its ritual (Bacchae 12).

Dionysus promises Tiresias "Thebes will have its full sacrifice." In saying so, Dionysus telescopes the audiences' expectations to the future events in the play. Subsequently in the play, the chorus of the Bacchae and the slaves converge on the stage. The slave leader turns into a rock star in "the emotional color and temperature of a European pop scene."(Bacchae 16) More specifically, he has "the lilt and energy of the black hot gospellers." (Bacchae 17) He and the chorus both become "physically possessed ...as would be seen in a teenage pop audience " (Bacchae 18),

It is the credit of Soyinka that he is able to join the ancient to the postmodern, and the European to the African chora of revolutionary ecstasy. But his play also enacts an extra scene of Dionysian violence, which foreshadows the ultimate, offstage sparagmos of Pentheus. It shows how a chorus of women and slaves rush at their leader and tear his clothes. Then "a sudden human wave engulfs him and he is completely submerged under screaming, 'possessed' lungs and bodies " (Bacchae 19).

In and through this ecstatic musical scene of self-release, Soyinka offers his audience a prior, symbolic and imaginary experience to apply during the play's final Ogunian sacrifice, kept offstage as in Euripides' original--to make that mortal

offering Real, through the spectators' own imaginations, participating communally, as another chorus. But, Tiresias also reminds the audience of its difficulty to recognize the truth as it is.

Human ignorance and sorrow is the result of man's deviation from the real. It is a paradox of nature that man resists his way to life and sustenance and rather would like to continue with an ill begotten pogrom of subterfuge and this is why Tiresias says of the King "If you held out the mirror of longing to him, he will utterly fail to recognize his own image or else he'll smash the mirror in anger"(Bacchae 24).

The grammatical shift in this sentence spoken by Tiresias, from subjunctive to future tense, shows through an aesthetic convergence of tenses that Tiresias is not just hoping for a possible event. Instead, he expects something real to happen. But the King must nevertheless go back to his emotional, and communal fourth stage and be born again.

Pentheus does this. His desire to observe the Dionysian revelers really proves his rational and calculative lapse for he cannot observe the community unless he becomes one with them. Pentheus come round to be absorbed in the Dionysian cult when his will to see is transmuted into an eruption of his own psychic drives. Pentheus thus not only becomes the spectator but also the actor of his own psychological dissolution.

But before his actual dismemberment, Pentheus enacts a similar event in the "music-hall" scene of Kadmos' farcical castration (Bacchae 25). Here he demonstrates before the blind Tiresias his new invention: a telescopic thyrsus as walking stick. But his boast is proved false. The stick collapses. Kadmos falls to the ground. Pentheus tries to straighten it out. Nonetheless, it breaks again. Then Tiresias

tells him to put it back in his trousers (Bacchae 26).

This comical scene in a proper Brechtian manner prepares the audience for Pentheus' final ordeal. According to Lacanian psychoanalyst Bruce Fink-

The pervert seems to be cognizant, at some level, of the fact that there is always some jouissance related to the enunciation of the moral law. The neurotic would prefer not to see it, since it strikes him or her as indecent, obscene. (190)

Soyinka's Bacchae therefore creates in the audience a greater awareness of the complex set of issues that determine the enunciation of jouissance and its theatrical representation on stage. Concurrently, his use of additional choral violence onstage stimulates in his audience, an Artaudian drive for what is cruel and unpalatable. But, Pentheus's own cruelty and sadisms also promote in them a Brechtian alienation towards the King.

There is a double twist in Soyinka's entendres here. He is conscious of his audience and what they morally prefer. He also understands that each spectator would ethically loath to view the obscene on stage and yet voyeuristically seek more of the Bacchic rites offstage.

Pentheus' catharsis is reached when in his supreme ego, he seeks to hoist himself upon his Bacchic revelers and fails in his quest. He warns his subjects from speaking the name of Dionysus. But Soyinka's stage spectacle shows Dionysus at this point in the play. He is bonded in chains and also surrounded by soldiers. Nonetheless, he defies Pentheus' command himself. Dionysus will lure the adamant King subsequently by putting on a serene Apollonian mask. But, before that to happen,

there follows on stage a large number of tableaux belonging to Dionysus and his men. The stage direction reads:

There is a dead freeze of several moments (Bacchae 39).

This semiotic freeze renders to the play, a Brechtian objectivity. It interrupts its momentum and makes its spectators, the audience and Pentheus expect more of the same. At the same time, the tableaux shows glimpses of miscellaneous histories ranging from ancient Greece to tribal Africa to New Testament Palestine, thus involving the 'postmodern lures of cinematic and televisual voyeurism' (Pizzato, Soyinka's Bacchae).

Subsequently, a reporter of the King discloses to him that the revelers have already cut open their chains. Pentheus who is already curious by now is excited ever more when Dionysus reacts:

Will you reduce it all to a court / of inquiry? A fact-finding commission such as /One might set up to decide the cause /of a revolt in your salt-mines, or a slave uprising?" (Bacchae 41)

Dionysus's charge would seem to resonate more against regimes of hatred today. Nonetheless, his particular, mission that of expressing dissent over the obscurantist Pentheus is an example of how social and political movements against oppressive rulers can be manifested-through an aesthetic, involving dance, rituals and songs.

The play's later part relates to Pentheus' physical and psychological dismemberment by Agave, his own mother. Pentheus would be unmasked of his ego by his own mother and therefore reach the endpoint of signification and imaginary desire in his physical dissolution and death drive. Yet it would also incorporate him

to eternal life prior to human life and its signifying chains. And so Verhaeghe explains

The Real of the organism functions as cause, in that ...it contains a primordial loss, which precedes the loss in the chain of signifiers. Which loss? Eternal life, is paradoxically lost at the moment of birth, i.e. birth as a sexed being" (Subject and Body 99).

The un-born in the chain of signifiers, traced within the patient's mind through psychoanalytic interpretation, parallels the Real point of loss within the patient's organism—the primordial loss of eternal life in the birth of an individual sexed being. But the subjective destitution of the Lacanian cure also parallels the dissolution of ego identity at death, at the climax of the body's death-drive jouissance.

Although Lacanian theory, as a basis for various postmodern theories of subjectivity, does not involve any definite realms of existence beyond human life (and challenges the metaphysics of the Cartesian ego); it does render a cyclical model of life and death, within the mind and human organism, similar in some ways to Yoruba cosmology and to Soyinka's theory of ritual theatre.

Soyinka's Pentheus becomes like Oedipus in being the victim of the forces he tries to control and his mother Agave releases him to new life and being and this is what Dionysus explains to Agave:

Agave, open your mothering arms--/Take him. Mother him. Smother him with joy (Euripides Bacchae 199, lines. 973-74)

Pentheus will experience the smothering jousance of the pre-Oedipal mother, as he travels from neurotic despotism (against the cult), through perverse voyeurism (in the pine tree), to the psychotic terror of overwhelming, disintegrating symbiosis within the chora (when his mother and the other Bacchae tear him apart). But like Ogun crossing the transitional abyss between worlds, and like Soyinka's ritual actor sacrificed for the communal audience, Agave will give birth to a new Pentheus, through this dismemberment--turning the tragedy into a divine comedy for those who, at least partly, believe.

But Soyinka also dramatizes this inevitable involvement of leadership with sacrificial death. The leader has a social duty to perform. It is mandatory on his part to ensure social renewal. He does this by first recognizing the advent of a new God. Next, he explains to his onlookers the importance of the said deity in resuscitating dilapidated souls. As an ideal leader, he has been long in waiting for the coming of a political breakthrough. But he required the assistance of ordinary men. He also required a conviction surpassing the odds of reason to defeat the inadequacies of the present hour. When he decides to fight oppression, his fellow slaves restrain him. They remind him of the fate of the helots in the days preceding the coming of Christ. But the leader does not see the coming of Dionysus in exclusively political terms. He addresses the revelers of the ritual proceedings as his fellow aliens. He thus suggests that he has been dispossessed. He leads the procession into a frenzy of dance and music. Also his hubristic venture into the dangerous abyss goes beyond any normative possibility. This is why his followers respond to his call for transformation.

Yeats too believed in a metaphysical system. He conceptualized it as *animus mundi*, the repository all human emotions, through which it is possible for the poet to

enact a new identity, and for the audience to resuscitate its being. Soyinka encapsulated an affirmative capability. His art is also one of social affirmation. Seamus Deane, in *Celtic Revivals*, in his most interesting account of Yeats 's idea of super -terrestrial revolution', has suggested that Yeats's early and invented Ireland was 'amenable to imagination ' and that he used the backwardness of his country to unleash a radically disturbing and disruptive return to spiritual ideals lost in an overdeveloped modern Europe. Yeats also spoke of the need to break a cycle of endless, perhaps finally meaningless recurrence, in such active social protests such as the Easter Uprising of 1916. Thus the return of Yeats to the sources of his own signatory national culture meant for him a falling back upon the roots of a nation degraded and humiliated by the false dialectics of a colonial regime. Colonialism not merely undid the material bases of the land but by attacking the historicity and the cultural enactments of its people sought to create a false manner of perceiving itself.

The same sense of predicament underlines much of the work of the Trinidadian V.S. Naipul whose representations of India is that of a culture indebted to the mother country for its own self and for the self of Englishness and yet returning to the colony: such a search for a national signature becomes colonial, an account of the different histories of two islands.

In Soyinka also there is a strong insistence that the culture of his country is not outlandish or obsolete, and that there is in fact in it the key to a more enterprising present and also a more acceptable future. The past needs reinterpretation and cannot be mere enactment of a mechanical and formulaic enterprise. But, the past must shape the future. Soyinka's value added past must not be seen as nativism. Hence,

his dislike of Negritude which is so much of an unnecessary activism, hierarchically determined, and is only another name for a systemic theory of oppression and decrepitude. The polity of taking guard against so much of ill and foul impersonations of Colonial temper is not to succumb to abstractions, nor to play into the hands of the oppressor.

Nationality, nationalism, nativism are all terms of a constrained sensibility. It implies a false categorization of the issues related to man and his society. A way beyond such apparent falsehoods says Said is figured in the great turn at the climax of Ce'saire's *Cahier d'un retour* where the poet realizes that, after rediscovering and re-experiencing the past, after re-entering the passions, horrors and circumstances of history, as a Black, after feeling and emptying himself of his anger, after accepting without reservation that his race has been mutilated and carry its blemish, there is still room at the human banquet for all souls and that it is the imperative of the will to make its destiny hark to its omnipotent power (Culture and Imperialism,278).

One feels that in manifesting the importance of myth to his countryman, Soyinka was making amends for all the disastrous consequences of history. He wanted to engraft a beauty, terribly unconventional, which would also change the political and social landscape forever. Like all writers resisting the structuralist programs of colonial rule, he is eager to announce the contours of an imagined ideal community, crystallized by its sense, not only of itself, but also those who do not directly belong to this side of the issue. Imagined community is an apt phrase here, if one were not to accept the wrong blown notion of Benedict Anderson's concept of a linear periodizations. The disquiet says Said of "what T.S.Eliot calls the cunning history [and] contrived corridors of time –the wrong turns, the overlap, the senseless

repetitions, the occasionally glorious moment" (280)– furnishes Soyinka with equal marital accents, and the strides of a general who is preparing his men for the inevitable arrival of a new age and a new human society, divested of the faulty divagations and the narratives of an imperious temper not susceptible to equality and the harmonious enterprise of man. His poetic calling or drama develops out of this pact between the man who is to be the lead taker and those who would follow him to their new home on the other side of history.

It is equally important in the questioning of subversive histories that the author crosses the boundaries that come up between 'them' and 'us'. A matter of significance in this regard is the undoing of the hierarchies set up by colonialism- the class divides between sections of the oppressed etc.

Frantz Fanon, the eminent man of letters, and one of Algeria's most distinguished writers in his book The Wretched of the Earth, says that colonialism is responsible for what he says the freezing of the population's activity into a sullen torpor "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (210). One possible way of getting out of this morass is to render new outlets for the expansive culmination of a people's resistive synchronization against oppression through violence that is urgent and of most need (Fanon, Wretched of the Earth 282). Fanon also calls for the declaration of rights, wants that there should free speech, trade unions allowing for the expressive manifestations of the rights of people. Fanon's writing is impressive because it anticipates the triumph of the human voice against the uneasy fetters of the colonial set up.

The majestic beauty of Soyinka's temper is that it anticipates the possible climax of a united human position against defeat. His aesthetic project involves as has already been said before an articulation of protest through drama. Violence is also expressed through them in a similar way. Soyinka not only shows how political issues of mass interest may have a place in theatre but in fact how drama can organize people for the same.

Soyinka's use of ecstasy in his plays has already been commented upon. In fact, this ecstasy or *jouissance* in his dramas is primarily responsible for their being able to decenter and question the narratives of colonialism by creating sanitized, stylized, and virtual, yet fragmented experiences, audiences find compelling. At the same time, Soyinka's drama does not deny that there is a material condition of existence for all his theatre lovers. Indeed, his drama makes his audience constantly alive to the actual realities underlying the often violent and oppressive social control of colonialism and neo-colonialism that masquerades as a celebration of betterment by recycling pseudo-reforms, false-desires, and selective sightings of progressive evolution, never devolution.

Soyinka's dramas highlight through spectacle, the narratives and theatric performances of colonialism and its modern counterpart, neo-imperialism, that legitimates, rationalizes, and camouflages violent production and consumption. At the same time, they also provoke a counterpoint, through an admission and intervention of a nation's cultural and traditional mores in the dominating logic of the empire.

Costumes of the white man are set against those of the natives. The blunt and dehumanizing structures of the exploiters are similarly set against the ironical, participatory and engrossing narratives of the oppressed. While the exploiters

legitimize hierarchies of class and social position; through their official appointments and embassies, the dramas of Soyinka negate such partitions through the compelling patterns of the carnival and myths. Soyinka's use of the carnival in his plays questions authority figures and norms of their behavior. In turn, Soyinka turns problematic, the rigid structure of colonialism. Bakhtin defined the carnival in the following terms:

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom (Bakhtin 7)

Soyinka has however shown even in the operations of the carnival, the issues against which social movements of the carnivalesque has to be set. His use of invective satire to stimulate and highlight the operations of psychology in the lead taker (the praise singers in Death question Elesin), the intrusions of the white man in the operations of the carnivalesque and above all, Olunde's actual confrontation with the whites in Death, take the play through multiple points and counterpoints.

As an artist, Soyinka is always present, in the characterization, language, and settings of his dramas. While he adopts much insight about people and their passions from the rituals of his land, he also shows himself adept in how modern dramatists have put their pen to describe what goes on in the mind of their characters. The present work has dealt with Soyinka's foresights into human characters. At the same time, it has also explained his unique use of costumes, masks, stage lighting and dialogues to bring forth his unique aesthetics.

The projects of hierarchy are a structuralist machination, bifocal and also an ideological endgame that lives on the policy of blasphemous denial of the culture. Soyinka's art point out that the violence of hegemony is callous to the aspirations of man, besides being oblivious to the compositeness of human identities.

To Soyinka's credit again goes the fact that while allowing the joining his people to their histories, he does not permit for the limitation of his mental or spiritual horizons in the gaze of the limit set off by his country, and his universal framework of insight is best admissible in his unifying the cultural logic and affirmations of other geographies and nations. However, this invigoration of the instinctual life of man is also commensurate with much of that reality that lies beyond either the rodomontade of either the reason or even the imagination, and hence requires the will to be fully understood. For an untrained mind, unaccustomed to this orientation of the mental temper, this is not merely beyond hindsight, but beyond comprehension.

Soyinka affirmative logic incorporates this irrationality, some reason in madness, which would be no longer creating a scorched earth where man is forever an alien, and a foreigner. This is possible when man articulates such formation that go beyond the dominant definitions. It is such a reality that the Pilkings do not make at all, and the Elesin only partially understands. Only Olunde the said cultural hero take up the cudgels left by his vanquished father and so creates an experience that has no sense in the purely empirical way. But one that surely goes beyond that which is always normal, always taken for granted. That there are even more unfathomed definitions of courage and non-compromise, and ardor of the human spirit, is what Olunde shows. This is something beyond any personal commitment might justify and call for.

The Road, which is one of the foremost among Soyinka's plays, exposes the basic qualities of Ogun, the dramatist's favored deity. Ogun is the summation of the paradoxical antidotes of destructiveness and creation. He is the true tragic actor. He has known what it is to stretch the limits of one's being. He has known besides that true knowledge is only attained when the individual is laid to experience the most inimical forces against his self assertion and so cannot have a predetermined and predefined notion of truth. This also means that wisdom is to be gathered through a dialectics of antithesis. It has almost a practical connotation, an achievement learnt in the field of action. Soyinka's thesis supports by interrogating and hazarding the written word, the calamitous predetermination of an organized social discourse to conjecture and assert that there can be a completely unsettling and disturbing blueprint for learning about experience itself which can be more succulent than the arid formulation of a die hard rational rodomontade. Sometimes such knowledge needs sacrifice of what may appear priceless at the first glance such as the sacrifice wanted by Ogun, for Ogun always makes heavy demands of his devotees. He has to be propitiated, and his share of meat cannot be denied, which by the way is the rotting flesh of the victims of the road accidents. What is therefore redundant to sensible man is the food of love for someone else. There is again this dissolution of barriers between what is acceptable and what is not, the frontier between the conventional and the irrational, seized upon to see into the heart of a deviant logic that has its own ethos. The dialectics of a confrontational art is this elevation of unfounded, the creating of a territory of truth that has in fact no set domains at all. William Walsh makes this vision of the dramatist clear in putting it that the theme of the work is "life conceived towards a dissolution, the action of the play is an arrest of time at a point where man is dissolving into the underworld" (Walsh Commonwealth Literature 35). Soyinka however argues that the play is oriented

towards the Yoruba cult of 'agemo' and in his directions to the producer of his play he make this affirmation:

Agemo is simply, a religious cult of flesh dissolutionAgemo the mere phase, includes the passage of transition from the human to the divines essence. (Soyinka, Road 149)

The Road also explores the basic qualities of Ogun, Soyinka's favored deity. The character of Murano in the play dramatizes the Ogunian phase of transition, for while he is conventionally on the non-rational plane, he, like the fool in Lear is also aware of a truth that is denied to those who have all their senses intact. Infact, he sees more. His dance has again a special meaning, as a dramatic embodiment of this suspension. But, he is also the God Ogun, the Alagemo spirit of flesh dissolution in the prefatory poem, the masquerader knocked down by Kotonu's lorry, killed in the body, but still alive in the spirits and in his worldly office of bringing palm wine, Ogun's favorite drink each evening to the professor's communion. This man is physically dead. But his spirits are alive. His consciousness is active. But they are also not to be shared, until man ventures himself into the dangerous realm where to be is to transcend the puerile limitations of the flesh and the desires they behoove. But, his character has its political ramifications as well, suggestive of the state of Nigeria wherein democracy has been an unfulfilled promise, without an allowance for the movement of the country from its pathetic position of a demented national power, to a major player on the world stage. Thus Mr. Derek Wright in his book Wole Soyinka Revisited points out that the road is a symbol in Soyinka's play:

It stands for a very doubtful kind of progress in a new nation reeling from post colonial culture shock and alienation .It brings automobile technology but not the proper expertise to handle it; education and literacy, but unevenly

distributed and therefore leading to the exploitation of the illiterate by the semi-literate; and urbanization, but without the industrialization to provide work for the lumpenproletariat of the new shanty towns, thus sprawling webs of crimes and forgery" (Wright, Soyinka Revisited 48).

Soyinka's aesthetic convergence between a mythical pattern and political reality confirms that he could explore through the ritual a whole gamut of moral and social issues. Myth was his means of enlarging the consequences of the actual.

Beyond Murano, the Professor lives an impending enigmatic survival arranging for the deaths of many of those who decide to take to the road, by the removal of the signs against dangerous turning points. He desires to know the essence of death and thus to cheat fear by foreknowledge.

Obviously, the Professor's activities look hideous. This appears more so because he denies life, having dishonored the sacred repository of religion by placing the mute and docile Murano in the throes of two worlds. But, he is also the Yoruba symbol of the transitory state between the moment of death and the physical dissolution of the body and spirit.

While the Professor sets up an unconventional pace with society, other characters in the play set up the actions and movements of the drama, which render the moral play of society redundant and so obtuse.

Samson the champion Tout and Driver breathes into the play simple, human qualities, which strikes an opposition to the glum and atrophied surroundings in which the play takes its lineage. The important point is that Soyinka has been able to create, as Chaucer beforehand, a series of opposing characters that set contrary moral principles in the play. Some are morally culpable and rule the roost. Others who are

unsuspicious are grinded in this misfortune. But the answers to the queries of sorrows and pains are again beyond any simple good and bad.

There is in the play Road a series of immoral charlatans, whose moral visions are clouded in a sequential, perfidious non-grata. They, belong neither to the good or the bad. Kotonu for example is a sleep craving, slow moving truck driver whose lapses into immobility as he moves in the road and though, he will not put a dog to death for the appeasement of the God Ogun, has still to kill Murano, a blemish, which hangs round his neck like the dead albatross. In a sense, he is undone, because in his excessive sympathy for life, he has infact promoted death. His knowledge of truth overburdens his consciousness. Unlike the professor, he does not seek knowledge .It comes to him. In this great travesty of the values of life however, he is not alone.

Sergeant Burma, who is dead much before the play in fact begins, and who was originally in charge of the Askident store, has a casual view of life that is at the same time devoid of properly moral or ethical principles. Along with Particulars Joe, with whom he has fought in the wars in Burma, he would kill any body, which belongs to the opposite camp.

It is peaceful to fight a war, which one does not understand,

To kill human beings who never seduced your wife or poisoned your water.

(The Road 216)

It might seem therefore that man inhabits a universe, which, devoid of any seminal consciousness of the moral, is a charnel mad -house--irrespective of any sanity whatsoever. Soyinka's purpose is not a recommendatory moral. But he champions the cause of human liberty and wants man to live his own life, without interference.

But why does the Professor who devises death for others, die an accidental death himself? An answer to this may seem even more mysterious than can be explained simply in terms of evil setting its own counter. Professor Eldred D. Jones points out:

Soyinka does not usually give his characters perorations at the moment of death, but the professor dies with a Jacobean peroration on his lips, the import of which seems to be as ambiguous as anything else about him. It has the sound of a moral without being one. It has the externals of a final revelation without revealing anything (The Writing 70).

A *mélange* of a zealot and madman, drunk as well, the Professor's quest for truth and pure knowledge is a requiem for his perfect bliss. What he longs for in life, through the agency of death, is knowledge without dissolution. This is again like hypocrisy and his final adieu to his companions is a parallel of his own life. What he has learnt by courting death is through a proper surrender to the final frontier of life. It also unleashes the preponderant dichotomies between free will and determinism, the inchoate and undecided circuitous route that humans take to have real power.

Like Esu, his words create confusion. He apparently misguides those who take his dying speech in haste. But his premonition can also be looked from Lacanian subjectivity. The Professor's final words remind people that the way to a real self is through a negation of ego and a mere literalness with events of day to day life. His piling up of words from here and there also implies that the apparatus of language and also its signs have no meaning without contexts. It is the society that seeks to construct particular meanings out of definite signs and hoists its standards on others. Man is determined by the desires of the other and break must break the shackles of conformity with the rest to be able to look deeply into experience.

The Professors' final adieu reads thus:

Be the road! Coil yourself in dreams, lay flat in treachery and deceit and at the moment of a trusting step, rear you head and strike the traveler in confidence, swallow him whole or break him on the earth (96)

D.S. Izevbaye in his essay 'Language and Meaning in Soyinka's *The Road*,' included as part of Critical Perspectives on Soyinka says of this final speech:

The above quotation combines the literal subject, the road, with the speaker's interpretation of his experience of this road, in the single image of the snake. It uses the symbolic language of the myths, as means of encompassing all its experience, for it is in the character of myth to express in a single image a complex or coherent experience (100).

In comparison, another English play, Waiting for Godot deals with the quest for meaning in life. The play opens at a time when the tramps Vladimir and Estragon are waiting amongst a country road and a tree, anticipating the arrival of somebody they know. But, the play does not end with any novice hope in tradition. Rather, it denounces the audience's expectations of any preemptory moral in tradition as blunt and novice.

Soyinka's play The Road has similarly a few symbols: the road, a church and an 'Askident Store.' The road as has been said already is an ambivalent symbol. The Church represents organized Christianity. The 'Askident Store' has in its store all spare parts for driver's decrepit machines. The setting obviously is minimalist. But, the road in the play is the starting point of all human experiences. The road is also a woman, since it endures the destruction of human life described by Professor. as a menstrual waste.

Below that bridge, a black rise of buttocks, two unyielding thighs and the red trickle like a woman washing her monthly pain in a thin river. So many lives rush in and out between her legs, and most of it is a waste (58)

But creation and destruction as two essential principles operating in life go together. Soyinka's play however must be understood through a group of poems, like Idanre and Other Poems.

On this
Counterpane, it was-
Sudden winter at the death
Of dawn's line trumpeter, cascades
Of white feather-flakes, but it proved
A futile rite [...]

Similarly, the use of drugging dances and drum music evokes a transcendental movement. But, like the poems which require to be understood for a complete understanding of the play, the use of drums create an Artaudian whirlpool of voyeuristic desires. But, the jokes in the play are a means of transporting the audience back to the objective realities enmeshed within the play. It is Brechtian in its alienation.

Language in the play does not therefore work upon simple creation of illusion of reality as in European theatre. Poems have to be interrelated to these dialogues to make them more meaningful. But, its symbols, like the Professor uses of 'Bend' are important. More than a physical reality, they ask the audience to learn to comprehend experience without prior assumptions.

In the end the spectacles in the play, costumes, scenery and images bring forth an image of modern Nigeria, an inchoate economic territory where lorry drivers carrying petrol, run forth from one corner of the country to the other. It is also a place where traditions have been transplanted by modern technology and weather pitted roads. Soyinka's poem In Memory of Seagun Awolowo, written after the accidental death of his friend confirms the writer's agony with the present regimes of his country. The poem has road as its symbol too:

The road, the aged road
Retches on this fresh plunder
Of my youth [...]
Death the scrap-iron dealer
Bleeds a glut on trade [...].

The African people must accept technology and a new economic regime on its own requirements. At the same time, native traditions must be respected and preserved. Newer concepts of social and political organization in the new country must be corresponded with what was of value in the past. The Professor's belief that his quest of the elusive 'Word' will end where ascent is broken and a winged secret plummet back to earth (45), suggests that for him and the dramatist alike, the flight of the human spirit towards its maker Olorun, the father, must be rooted in Ogunbi, 'the earth, the mother of all life' (Williams, Africa 373).