

**THE AESTHETICS OF ACTION:  
THE DRAMATIC ART OF WOLE' SOYINKA**

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Aesthetics in literature is a science of beauty. In dramatic parlance, it involves the use of stage machinery, spectacle, characterization and language to denote the pursuance of the same goal. Theatre had its beginnings in ancient Greece from the dithyramb. In its most primal form, it was an occasion for dance and laughter where the communities participated. But, as used by Sophocles in his play *Antigone* or in *Oedipus Rex*, it charted the tragic dilemmas of its heroes through poetic embellishments.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher defined drama, tragedy especially as an art, which narrated a crisis befalling a man of high rank. The importance of tragedy according to Aristotle was that it sublimated the audience's passions that of fear and pity so as to help them accept pain as an essential component principle operating in life. To the Greek, tragedy involved catharsis.

In Aristotelian tragedy, the suffering of the tragic protagonist was due to his error of judgment. Moral perversion had nothing to do with his moral, spiritual or intellectual issues. The larger issues of his society did not find much relevance within his personal tribulations. Infact, the role of society was limited to only looking at him and commenting objectively on his lapses. The audience could pity the hero. But, there was no cause for personal disasters.

But, in his Poetics, he also suggested the ideal framework for a writer of tragedy. A tragedy involved a plot. But, most importantly, it should include a single action, by which is meant that tragedy must concentrate on delineating the events that are of relevance to the life of a hero. Aristotle again emphasized upon the unities of time, place and action, favoring besides the employment of a chorus to comment on the hero's fate.

Shakespeare composed his plays in league with the principles of Aristotle for tragedy. Nonetheless, he also made suitable modifications in the prescribed framework of the Greek critic. In lieu of Aristotle's emphasis on the triad of time, place and action.

Shakespeare chose to stick more upon the unity of action. Action under European terminology was a term for the events in a play that had a bearing upon the hero's fate. It enhanced the audience's perception of truth. Shakespeare added to the story of the protagonist, a comic underpinning, to nurture a multiple angle of vision on the essential truth of life. He had also a chorus as suggested by the Greek. But, for his stage, he had separate arrangements for the common man and for the gentry.

However, Shakespeare's social and political milieu was more or less placid. Art was not required to destabilize the status quo or even to question it. All was well in the Elizabethan social and political world and there was no need for the artist to prescribe his modification to the social norm.

Soyinka's world on the other hand, detours changelessness. Soyinka's heritage proposes instead a constant negotiation between present reality and what has been handed to his society through tradition. One of the reasons why the African had to emphasize upon a constant search for a mosaic of cultures and aesthetic horizons was because the cultural and political landscape of Africa was made complicated through the incursion of colonialism there. Moreover, there were writers and academicians in Africa, like Achebe, Thiong'o and Soyinka himself, who had been trained in the Universities of the West. These writers brought with them a conscious understanding of the use to which literature was put in the social and political milieu of Europe. Though, of course, most European dramatists, novelists, essayists and writers from other literary genres did not have to actually fight with such an evil as colonialism, most of them were aware of other social evils in their societies—corruption in public life, the fact of war, of the absurdity of man's material quest after his inwards spirits have been left desiccated, the Freudian territory of the ego and id, the problem of unemployment, of the promises of socialism and the increasing frustration of the young people of Britain and elsewhere who could not get

jobs because they were not educated in the traditional bastions of fame-Oxford and Cambridge. Most of these writers like Bertolt Brecht, Arnold Wesker etc were also moved to comment upon the problems of inequality, of labor, of the crisis of the workers as they fought to survive in a system that had nothing for them.

Soyinka, after he came back to Nigeria realized that the greatest crisis facing Africa was colonialism. As a writer, he had not only to express the dilemmas of individuals at a personal level but also point to the need of his society to confront the destabilizing of its culture, brought about by imperialism. As an artist, Soyinka needed to suggest the traditions of Africa to question the presumptions of the colonizers. As a dramatist again, he had to represent this confrontation in creatively adequate terms. Soyinka understood that for the African, a belief in their ancient responses to social and communal crisis should not tantamount to a return to a platonic idyll of a nation untainted by colonialism. Instead, it should bring people together. Soyinka makes his dramas a contesting ground of many ideologies. Also, he combines the aesthetic framework of the West with those of Africa and the Orient to suggest the common responses of societies to large and metaphorical uprooting of their mores, their stable conditions of life.

For a writer in a post-colonial world, writing therefore becomes an act of negotiation between divergent cultural systems and representative arts. Art today has a social and moral relevance. It relies upon truth and beauty as always, but presents, both of these in a new light. To the Europeans, beauty and truth necessarily denote a mimesis of reality. Drama and literature describes life through a heightening of the imagination. Poetry is a metaphor and an addendum to experience. It concatenates the symbolic connection between an ideal and its routine manifestation.

In Soyinka's plays, the hero is a part of his society. He acts as the audience expects

him to. African drama, even before the arrival of Soyinka was a social act. Communities, organized theatres. Even in the performance of his dramas, Soyinka keeps his audience in mind. That is why, his images and sounds, use of lights and music in his plays incorporate Yoruba traditions of theatre.

In his acclaimed work Myth, Literature and the African World and even in his Art, Dialogue and Outrage, Soyinka states that tragedy for the Yoruba is a matter of regaining his lost essence. Infact, Soyinka's unique concept of theatre springs also from his people's belief that their gods are not perfect as the Greeks would believe it to be theirs and must constantly come in touch with men to regain their lost perfection. Ogun according to Soyinka is also the drive of man's ecstatic jouissance, and is therefore placed opposite to "Obatala"(ADO 21). Obatala, the Yoruba deity parallels Apollo the Greek god. Like Apollo, Obatala is serene and composed. But, Obatala is also the deity of "inner essence" and unlike Apollo, does not promulgate "illusions"(ADO 21). In this regard, it would clarify matters to quote Soyinka's own concept of tragic theatre:

Obatala finds expression, not in Nietzsche's Apollonian 'mirror of enchantment' but as a statement of world resolution [...]. Yoruba traditional art is not ideational however, but 'essential.' It is not the idea (in religious arts) that is transmitted into wood or interpreted in music or movement, but a quintessence of inner being, a symbolic interaction of the many aspects of revelations (within a universal context) with their moral apprehensions (ADO 22)

Within the accepted corpus of Yoruba theatrical space, that Soyinka calls the "chthonic realm," "the seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate mix of death and becoming," (ADO 22) the dramatist incorporates elements of modern psychology. Infact, each of the gods that Soyinka

presents in his theatre, has a correspondence with a modern psychosexual principle, a specific aspect of Lacanian subjectivity. Orisa-nla's shattering in the void shows that like the old Yoruba god, modern people mostly carry their identity as given to them by the others. Yet, these 'others,' cannot give man a true idea of himself or what he truly is. Man becomes alienated from himself, and his identity is broken, as if into many fragments of a mirror. Obatala's drunken errors, while molding new human bodies, again show how difficult it is for man to get a real sense of himself, surpassing the ego, put on him by the others.

But, Soyinka's drama of ritual space and becoming also incorporates present social co-ordinates-the political troubles in Nigeria, and in other parts of the world. It negotiates between a society's concepts of itself as handed down to it by tradition, with newer modes of apprehending reality. In Dance and the King's Horseman, for example, the idea of ritual space is elaborated. In the drama, it has both a spiritual and essential matrix as much as a material one. Olunde's confrontation of the Pilkings, his challenge of their political ideologies based upon hatred and misrecognition of the black man's culture, puts forth the idea, that for a tragic protagonist, knowledge is not a matter of indecisions as in Hamlet, or for that matter of blind ego as in Lear. The Yoruba's tragic conspectus does not allow individuals to feel their way towards an unknown ideal. Destiny is as much social as it is political. Theatre shows the individual's response to his social commitments, his ability to get beyond the peregrinations of his fixity with himself, his body and its worldly needs.

Myths therefore comment using parallels. For a writer in a third world country, they examine the predominating culture of oppression, its monologic forms of narration. They articulate dissent and offer to have a dialogue with the entrenched power formations.

Soyinka's favored deity Ogun accommodates not only all "alien material or abstract phenomenon within his infinitely stressed spirituality," but "iron ore", "symbol of earth's womb-energies" (ADO 24-25). Ogun's is naturally a resident of the dual prefecture of the body and the spirit, which is why, his search for a new identity, is arrived through recognition of the material conditions of life. Unlike Obatala, Ogun is not content to merely feel his way to knowledge and wisdom. Ogun's expressive arc is therefore conducive to dance and laughter, to spectacle, sounds and theatre. It has place in it for a society's visualization of the actual process of negotiation between the tragic protagonist and a vast and "incomprehensible reality" (ADO 24).

Soyinka dramas has place in it for music and drums. But, his use of music is Yorubic and must be looked up as a part of the holistic oeuvre of language, sounds and poetry. Like Yoruba poetry, Soyinka's music is highly charged, "myth embryonic" and "symbolic" (25). But, as a dramatist aware of the theatrical patterns of other nations, including Europe, Soyinka makes his music various. To the drums and songs of Nigeria, he adds the sounds of the Europe's concert party. But, there is also the addition of the European brass band, the military tones of colonial and neo-colonial soldiers on duty.

As part of his overall strategy to disconcert and pulverize audiences from their tried inanity again, Soyinka infects his dramas with the sadistic noises of a toilet flushed as in A Play of Giants.

Sounds of bayonets, the opening and closing of iron doors, people salivating under mental and physical duress and the noise of bullets fired on political detainees magnify the overall sinister forces in his dramas that fragment societies in the wake of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Soyinka's achievement, however eschews the "sterile limits of particularization" (ADO 26). Instead it draws together possible responses to social and communal crisis through an intermingling of multi-racial and multi-ethnic aesthetic

frameworks, allowing nations and geographies separated from one another to come together in the common problems of man. Similar and more invidious gestures—the brilliant use of lights and darkness to allot spaces connotative of bondage and freedom, individual or the masses ensure a polygonal viewing.

There is in Soyinka's plays scope for the Bakhtinian carnivalesque and Artaudian voyeurism, Brechtian alienation and Beckett's absurdity. Through the atmosphere of the carnival, Soyinka alludes to the communal and social submergence of hierarchies in an atmosphere of songs, dance and camaraderie. But songs and dances in Soyinka's plays are not there for themselves. They actually respond to the intrusions and disruptions in the momentum of the carnivalesque. The manner in which the praise singers of Elesin deal with the interference of the colonial authority in their celebrations in Death is a case in point and has been elaborated in the chapter 'The Role of Myths in Soyinka's Aesthetics of Action' of the present work.

Moreover for the setting of the plays, Soyinka eschews any massive frameworks. In the Dance the main stage is the actual market place itself. Even when the Pilkings dance around a room, attention of the audience is fixed to their costumes and particular choice of partners in a ball. In The Road, the stage is complete with the church, the "Askident Store" and the road itself. Infact, it is the road that is a metaphor for Nigeria and other newly historically liberated colonies of Africa. In the Play of Giants, audience only must gaze upon the dictators on stage, study their words and gestures that refer back to some particular situation in their state or continent. But here the spectacle of the drama is enforced through the image of the sculptor wrapped in bandages from the beatings of the dictators.

Again like Artaud, Soyinka does not rely on set texts to enact his plays. Even when he adopts plays written by other writers, he modifies them to suit the particular social and

historical co-ordinates of Nigeria and other coerced people worldwide. But, in all eventualities, Soyinka's theatre creates its own "metaphysics of speech, gestures and expressions" (Bentley, Theory 56).

Brechtian alienation techniques are again to be found in Soyinka's play The Road for example. The play is unique in raising the problem of communication itself. The Professor's quest for the "Word" in scraps of paper, his horseplay with the road sign "bend" which puts many lorry drivers to their deaths, illustrate that words by themselves are social constructs and must be constantly reimbursed in the depths of the human spirit to carry conviction in the heart of truth.

Again absurdity is obviously at stake in Madman and the Specialists. Soyinka's Madman summarily negates all prior assumptions of communities on which much of their conventions are built. For humanity, to arrive at a fuller comprehension of the real is through recognition of the multiplicity of all experiences, allowing opposites in terms of social and psychological parameters to clash and evolve something new. The absence of chronological sequence, melodramatic surprise, the loss of homogeneity of individual characters that change their natures in the front of our own eyes again characterize the play. This aspect of the play has been explained in the main chapters of the present work.

In addition, Soyinka's action has social and political intentions. It behoves syncretism and hybridism and disavows essentialism. It seeks to have a re-look at conventions both of Nigeria and Europe. At the same time, it brings home the point that the future of man rests upon a proper amalgamation of the European objectivity and African participatory reason and intuition.

In the introductory chapter entitled 'Frameworks of Soyinka's Ideology,' I have tried to show that for a dramatist writing in a neo-colonial phase, every act of writing becomes

in the end, an act of negotiation with entrenched power positions and so hobnobs with resistance. The socio-political and economic determinants which form the background of Soyinka's art is also the reason why his art is so deeply ingrained with questions of liberty and a possible human appraisal of dogmas and conventions. Consequently, the Soyinkan aesthetics evolves out of a belief that the traditional moorings of a nation need to be capitulated to the task of bonding people together. But a rational estimate of the lacunas underlying a nation's social configuration should be the benchmark of any applicatory determinants of art.

The second chapter entitled 'Critical Scene,' shows that a critical appraisal of the Soyinkan aesthetic must also take into consideration the fact that Soyinka was not out to evolve an ethical doctrinism to supplant the insidious incursion of colonialism. If his art is ambivalent and lack an easy correspondence with simplicity, it is because drama and literature in Nigeria places a supreme emphasis upon syncretism and hybridism to disembowel false axioms. Moreover, the thrust of Soyinka is that any resolution to the present crisis of neo-imperialism must be sought in a nation's own resources, without neglecting what is best in others.

Chapter three entitled 'Politics and Aesthetics,' discusses the responsibilities of a writer in a coerced society as he articulates for his people and other oppressed societies elsewhere, the idioms of liberation. The art of such a writer must however not merely delineate the complementariness of human societies across national and geographical divides, but also implant the idea that any resistance to oppression must eschew mere hatred. But, because regimes opposed to human liberty put a premium on art, drama, poetry or the novel must be so embellished as to convey the rot all around with as minimum apparatus as possible. Poetry must have the same privileges as dialogues and songs to disconcert the straitjackets of thoughts and conventional platitudes.

Chapter four is entitled 'The Role of Myths in Soyinka's Aesthetics of Action.' It shows how Soyinka uses myths to undermine the false hierarchies of racial divides between nations and societies. Soyinka relates tradition to the present turmoil of men. But, myths in Soyinka also bring home the point that people irrespective of their colors and complexities are fundamentally the same. Myths in the plays of the dramatist also disrupt the 'no' and 'negation' of rules, through a recourse to the preverbal chora of the mother, which though providing the foundation for the conscious world of the father, yet, disrupts the latter in uncanny ways.

The final chapter, 'Language and Style' brings opposite linguistic parameters. There is the use of Yoruba proverbs. The use of English is not given up either. Infact, Soyinka is supremely gifted of a writer in English as Achebe is in his own native language. Thiong'o would only prefer to write in Kenyan. Soyinka has no dislike for the English language per se. Soyinka does not write to express a wounded African personality. For him, writing is a social act. It brings people together.

In my effort to suggest and constitute a right approach to the co-relation between Soyinka's aesthetic principles and his humanitarian concerns, my teacher and supervisor Prof. Dr. Soumyajit Samanta, Department of English, University of North-Bengal, has always guided me. I owe to him a great moral debt. Without his most able guidance, this thesis would never have taken its present shape. His critical intelligence was of great help to me in resolving the various issues that came up in different stages of this Research work.

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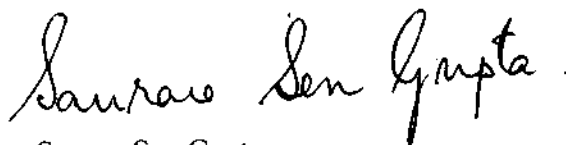
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Aesthetics in literature is a science of beauty. In dramatic parlance, it involves the use of stage-machinery, spectacle, characterization and language to denote the pursuance of the same goal. Theatre had its beginnings in ancient Greece. In its most primal form, it was an occasion for dance and laughter where the communities participated. But, as used by Sophocles in his play *Antigone* or in *Oedipus Rex*, it charted the tragic dilemmas of its heroes through poetic embellishments.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher defined drama, tragedy in particular especially as an art, which narrated a crisis befalling a man of high rank. The importance of tragedy according to Aristotle was that it sublimated the audience's passions that of fear and pity, so as to help them see pain as an essential component principle operating in life. To the Greeks, tragedy involved catharsis.

Infact, the most seminal contribution of Aristotle to the concept of tragedy was his theory of catharsis. Tragedy was supposed to imitate actions that were grave and serious. In the process, it was also believed to instigate in the spectators, emotions of pity and fear. Such emotions were subsequently sublimated, as has been already said before. According to Aristotle, pity turned to fear when the suffering of great man appeared to be those of the spectators themselves. But because, Greek drama always projected the uncalled for sufferings of its heroes who in their dignity and humanity were raised above ordinary men, audiences in Greek theatre could objectively study their men on stage. Simultaneously, the distance between the actors and the spectators always gave the latter a chance to remove themselves from their immediate reality. The misfortunes of the heroes on stage were pitiable. But, it aroused no sense of personal disaster.

When Nietzsche gave expression to his concept of tragedy, he posited a relationship between ritual and drama. Drama, Nietzsche said, evolved out of the Dionysian dithyramb. Rituals were the symbolic expression of individual and universal conflicts in nature. Through dramas, an individual became aware of his membership in a community of people as also his separate identity from it.

The English critic, G. Wilson Knight accepted Nietzsche's concept of drama and the metaphorical links between theatre and the ritual. But, Knight extended Nietzsche's preoccupation with Greek theatre to investigate neo-classic, Wagnerian and Elizabethan plays. Moreover, he emphasized upon the psychological conflicts of the dramatic personas on stage, stressing also upon the psychosexual conflicts.

Aristotle's tragic conspectus however found its mainstay in action in and through the mental life of the heroes who expressed a rational persona. Actions in tragedy represented the inward and essential activities of the soul. External events were relevant in drama in so far as it helped to heighten the emotional and mental dilemmas of its characters. The imagination of the tragic artist helped him to accentuate the dilemmas of his heroes and so in tragic drama, reality was not only implanted. It was also enlarged and broadened. It was transmuted. Objects of the senses were fused with things of the thought. In the end, drama expressed the heightened awareness of its characters.

In Greek drama, the spectator is lifted out of himself. He becomes one with the suffering humanity. He forgets his personal sorrows. But he also knows that what he sees before him is inevitable. It stands in organic relation with what has gone before. Tragedy according to this idea, acts on the feelings, not on the will.

Soyinka's enlarged tragic conspectus incorporates the feelings as well as the will. Man should fight with himself, his inward desire for self-preservation to plunge ahead towards his dissolution and thereby acquire a new personal and communal identity. Consequently, action in Yoruba metaphysics has both an inward and outward manifestation. Placid resolutions of tragic dilemmas are not internally attained.

To the Greeks, the success or failure of a work of art depended upon the use of illusions. Art expressed, not the objective world, as it is, but only its sensible appearances. Consequently, it had to sever itself from material reality. Here lay the secret of its emancipating power.

A poet working with illusions preferred moreover probable impossibilities to possible improbabilities.

But, the Soyinkan aesthetic, which is inspired by the Yoruba metaphysics, has less scope for illusions at least in the European sense. Soyinka does not entrust himself with the task of embellishing the feelings of his spectators- their sympathies and detachment from the actor on stage with poetic novelties. Dialogues, songs and dances in his plays always project the difficulties encountered by the tragic victim and his followers in bridging the space that hold the key to a new order of being. The fecundity of the playwright consist in trying to express a numinous and incomprehensible reality against which man stands and has less to do with certainties. The imaginative heightening of reality in Greek theatre that supports the fictive scaffolding, "whereupon fictitious nature spirits" (ADO 22) are placed has a less sympathetic place with the Nigerian.

The chorus in Nigerian theatre is different in its function from the one in European drama. In Yoruba plays, it does not copy actualities (ADO 22). It contains rather the essence of that transitional abyss that Soyinka defines as the 'fourth stage'. The protagonist resists or at least attempts to do so, his final plunge into the chasm. At an individual level such a resistance defines the conflict in the person between two opposing value systems- his instinct of self-preservation with its attendant desires and then his community's claim upon him that desires his complete annihilation.

From the moment of his plunge into the chasm to his final observation of himself and resolution of his conflicts he has traversed many worlds. His initial hesitation to part with his individually and socially constructed persona is his human predicament. But, once he decides to let his earthly aspirations subside momentarily, he becomes the "mediant voice of the god" (ADO 23) with whom he has a parallel. The protagonist's final re-assembly is not without a consciousness of what he has achieved. It is through this awareness of his social role and his individual commitment to it, his convergence and disjunction from the world of the spirits and also from that of mundane actualities that he brings together aspects of his self that had no expression initially.

In Nietzsche's tragic vision, a tragic protagonist fights between his individual self and his self as part of the community. Nietzsche's community however is only those who live and does not have the variation of Yoruba plays, which talks of the living, the dead and the unborn. In Nietzsche's world-view again, there is no possibility for the embodiment of the transitional abyss as in Nigerian theatre.

European drama allows for the intuitive groping towards wisdom. Yoruba theatre dismisses such an opportunity for the tragic actor. The tragic actor must

undergo some painful ritual, socially organized to actually reach out to a new identity for himself and his community. His mental and emotional crisis must have a social expression. If in European drama, the link between the actor and the spectator is the dramatist himself who places his audience at a hierarchically superior position of vision in the theatre, Yoruba drama makes the author redundant in so far as such an opportunity for the playwright may ever arise. Every single performance is a new beginning for the actors as much as it is for the spectators. Moreover, the embodiment of the godly presences in Yoruba theatre only allows the audience to believe that newer identities are round the corner and may be reached easily.

Soyinka favors Ogun, the Yoruba god because the latter is the "first symbol of the alliance of disparities when, from earth itself, he extracted elements for the subjugation of chthonic chaos" (ADO 25). Ogun preceded the other deities when he plunged headlong into the cauldron of death and becoming. But, he could decide for himself to the point of his flight into the transitional abyss. After that, the only thing he was sure of was the possibility of his experience in the abyss.

When Soyinka began to write, he accepted the metaphorical relationship between the experience in drama and that in the rituals. But ritual was also the medium of bringing forth a revolutionary social, political and individual awareness in the spectators. In and through his participation in a ritual, a spectator first loses his sense of himself. Subsequently, he creates a new sense of his individuation based upon the evolving dramatic action, revealed cultural values, audience response and a mythic awareness.

But most importantly, rituals in dramas conveyed the tragic victim's anguished despair in trying to bridge the divide that lay between himself and his community

and a new identity. Rituals says Soyinka also transmit "the primal transmission of the god's despair" (ADO 25).

Myths in Yoruba theatre expresses at a cosmic level the disenchantments in the human psyche. Gods as much as the men are imperfect and must continuously interact with each other to attain a rounded wholeness of vision. For the gods, it is important to instigate themselves into a human order to bridge their imperfections. Men on their part must constantly reach for their gods to attain a new identity. Myths in Yoruba theatre are the organized communal expressions of some vast, numinous and incomprehensible reality. When incorporated in dramas, they naturally call upon the participant actors and the society that follows him, to accept and challenge the unknown. They institute change. Naturally, the language of rituals are "highly charged, symbolic and myth embryonic" (ADO 25). They do not have the one to one correspondence with the mundane actualities of life, as in European drama.

It is also important to understand therefore that the incorporation of rituals in Yoruba theatre limits the scope for the tragic victim to act his part. As has been said already, an actor on stage may act his part to the point of his assimilation into some unknown sphere. In spite of this, an actor's Promethean urge to rebel against his incomplete identity says Soyinka, channels his despair into a creative purpose. His sorrows need not break him down. Rather, he may hope to combat an unexpected reality with vision, fortitude and conviction.

At this point it may be useful to bring to summary Europe's estimate of music. Music was held by Aristotle, as by other Greeks to be the most representative of the arts. It was a direct image, a copy of character. The emotion it suggested corresponded little with a reality outside itself. It could speak in favor of the

general and elementary moods of feeling- anger and mildness as well as courage and all their opposites. Music could again reflect character and could even mould or influence it. Each note was an indication of an inward agitation.

In Yoruba theatre, music does not merely express moods of anger and mildness, courage or fear. Instead, it expresses the severance between man and his essence that Soyinka talks of in his fourth stage. It similarly expresses the agitations of the gods to reach out to men. Tragic music says Soyinka is the "stricken cry of man's blind soul as he flounders in the void and crashes through a deep abyss of a-spirituality and cosmic rejection" (ADO 24). Moreover, "it is an echo from that void; the celebrant speaks, sings and dances in authentic archetypal images within the abyss" (ADO 24). Music is the resonance of this unknown gulf and not as in European theatre a direct expression of the will.

The conjugality between divine and human spheres in Yoruba society explains also why men look unto gods with camaraderie and irreverence, just as departure to ancestorhood is marked by bawdiness in the midst of grief. Consequently, music in Yoruba theatre is not merely solemn. It is also humorous and is embellished with irony.

Aristotle had a faith in the power of hearing and far less in the other senses, least of all in sight. Shapes and colors were not believed to illustrate the dimensions of the soul. But, dance was accepted as capable of imitating character and emotion. Moreover, it was supposed to harmonize the soul of the spectators and offer a curative value to their passions.

But the Greek had again no high regards for poetry. Like all Greeks, he did not consider poetry as capable of adequately illustrating reality already known.

However, it was expected to bring forth the inward emotions of characters in all their diverse manifestations. Poetry, music and dance constituted in Aristotle a triad that imitated by means of rhythm. A poet had to have a considerable understanding of the allied arts of painting and dance, which is why Aeschylus was the inventor of many orchestric attitudes.

As a post-colonial and post-modern again, Soyinka accepted the traditional forms of Yoruba theatre. But, he could also draw upon other sources of art- poetry, novel and the essay, influences of Shakespeare, Brecht and Artaud to say a few, to heighten and enlarge his humanistic and tragic vision. Ultimately, Soyinka writes out of his humanitarian concern. He desires to bring people and nationalities together. Nonetheless, the need to converge aesthetic resources is significant in view of the vast mass of humanity oppressed and coerced world over. The colors and manners of oppressive regimes in different parts of the sphere may be different. But the concerns of all writers is to truly illuminate the crisis underlying man's existence and survival in all corners of the globe.

It is not without reason therefore that Wole Soyinka remains one of the most respected and enigmatic literary figures in the firmament of post-colonial African writing today. Though he has written poems and fictions, it is his dramas that remain the epicenter of his moral and creative being and through them he articulates his visions of a new human society, free from the rampaging of human dignity and freedom that has become quite consistent with the dominant parlances of 'civilization' the world over. His creative position has involved a process of artistic and literary decolonization, involving a radical dismantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses. This has frequently been accompanied with the demand of a new social

and political reality that would again be free from the colonial taint. But this affirmation of one's cultural values alongside acknowledging the staying power of European logic even in societies where formal colonialism has ended is desirable and at times inevitable. Consequently as a post-colonial, Soyinka is a hybrid of a writer allowing for the articulations of disparate communities and cultures, ignoring none and yet proposing that the process of change is through a dialogue between the opposites. Decolonization in his case becomes a constant process and not an arrival. As George Lamming says:

It invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversions of them: between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dismantling' (Post-Colonial Discourse 9)

What Soyinka challenges and combats about the Eurocentric discourses is its approaches towards literary and cultural absolutism. As a post-colonial, he fragments and disconcerts, such basic hegemonies and assumptions to unleash new grounds of looking at the order of things. For Soyinka literary discourses of resistance does not simply issue forth through narrative, against a clearly definable set of power relations. Instead it is produced and reproduced in and through communities of readers and through the mediating structures of their own culturally specific histories. As such, his project for a post-modern as different from a post-colonial world is not synonymous with the essentialist retrieval of his national essences howsoever charming they may sound, for there is always the abiding thought that essentialism is itself a form of hegemony and is structured around an incrementally monotheistic discourse that disembowels the hybridity that Soyinka favored and in fact practiced as a writer in the post-modern space.

This hybridity can also be restated in a different manner: through the critical parlance of post-structuralism. Post-structuralism declares the author dead, post-modernism does not admit any such thought. The authority of the post-modern texts on this count comes from the concept of ambivalence-the ability to see all sides of an image, to defer judgment and refuse agency. But, this ambivalence is not disruptive of social, political and even literary action. Soyinka does not give the impression that for him morality is non-existent, futile, a mere guffaw of words sliding into incremental regression. Indeed there is an affirmation of what is positive or at least wanted if humanity is to un-shuffle the debilitating categorization which racialism more often than not implants in the colonized and the oppressed.

But before one ventures any further in these terms it must be worthwhile to narrate in brief the socio-political conditions that led Soyinka to an affirmation of resistance to unshingle the possibility of new beginnings.

#### **Social and Cultural conditions:**

Oluwole Akinwande Soyinka was born on July the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1934 in Ijebu Isara. His parents, Ayo and Eniola, came from adjoining kingdoms Ijebu and Egba and his father was a school supervisor. One aspect of his mother is glimpsed briefly in a conversation Soyinka carried on with an interviewer

My own mother, for instance, was a terror. Not by nature, but she was a trader, and I know that even she, who was a rather gentle person, when she got fed up and wanted to collect her debts from her customers –it is no joke-suddenly she was transformed. (In Person 113-114)

Naturally, even as a child, Soyinka could feel in his pulse the throbbing vitality of his own people, their culture and social mores and the events of his childhood memories were grafted in his consciousness and this he could not negate. At home, however, he had a devout Christian upbringing and in his book, Ake: Years of Childhood, he recalls that how even as a child he would reach out and catch every whisper that figured an 'oro', or an egungun or an abiku. The masquerades of egungun attracted him the most and it was a concept, which the Yoruba people amongst whom Soyinka was born, revered and respected. Soyinka could feel that something was uncanny about it and when he looked for explanations then, he usually returned with unsatisfactory answers. His initial response to the enactment of egungun is narrated in his conversations with a young friend Osiki:

"Can I come back as an egungun if I die?"

I asked Osiki.

"I don't think so", he said, "I've never heard of any Christian becoming an egungun".

"Do they speak English in the egungun world?"

I now wanted to know.

Osiki shrugged. "I don't know. Our own egungun doesn't speak English"

It seemed important to find out. The stained glass window behind the altar of St' Peter's Church displayed the figures of three white man, dressed in robes which were very clearly egungun robes. Their face was exposed, which was unlike our very own egungun, but I felt that this was something very peculiar to the country from which those white people came (Soyinka, Ake14).

Soyinka's personal favorite was the figure in the middle.

Reminiscing his father he has this to say:

He was called S.A. from his initials [...]. For some reason few called him by his own name, and for a long time I wondered, I wondered if he had any.  
(Soyinka, Ake 14)

This quote is important in illustrating the fact that even as a boy, Soyinka was becoming aware of the accommodative functions of Yoruba culture-its ability to withstand oppositions and yet retain the force of its beliefs. There was for example a colonial vindictiveness against native wisdom. Much western thought categorized African social, political and cultural values as driven by impulse and blind passions. Colonialism desecrated the black man's heritage because it was not driven by sheer objectivity. The real issue for an artist writing in a neo-colonial space was not that Europe's cultural vision was fundamentally different from that of Africa. Instead, the beauty of his craft had to be an address in the dialectics of a human art that without being parochial became in essence a repository of divergent forms and cultural aficionados. In a conversation at Washington Seattle, Soyinka has expressed this need to sum and integrate disparate political and cultural zones in an effort to usher the new man

My categories do not seek to eliminate the human being, or control the fluid operations of the creative mind, but rather to provide a context in which the man can be seen at work...I hope that at the end the reader will feel the current of a life which is not pursuing different courses separated by islands and delta flats, but a strong river, full of eddies and subtle flows. But all one stream, one river, one flow. (In Person 113-114)

At the University College of Ibadan, he met an eclectic band of friends: John Pepper Clark, Michael Echeruo and Nkem Nwankwo who turned the university into an intellectual center fostering the ethics of resistance against the exploitative and corrupt regimes of the time.

In the University of Leeds, Soyinka met Professor G. Wilson Knight whose philosophical and metaphysical ideas he found congenial. Professor Knight in his book The Golden Labyrinth mentions how an origin of an idea in his student Soyinka influenced him in the writing of an approach to Lear. But while Knights viewed the origin of tragedy of tragedy in the ritual dithyramb and was concerned with audience effects, for Soyinka, the basis of tragedy has been mediated upon by the ontological premises of Yoruba theatre which believes in the simultaneity of three strata of existence: the living, the dead the unborn. But Knights nevertheless inspired Soyinka to write dramas of action, which could be at the level of form and also technique.

After graduating from the University of Leeds, in 1957, he spent eighteen months as a play reader at the Royal Court Theatre in London, where he came into contact with the English dramatic revival of the late 1950's: John Osborne, John Arden, Arnold Wesker and Harold Pinter as well as with the traditional English drama and the new avant-garde influences, such as Samuel Beckett and Bertolt Brecht, that were arriving from the continent.

As Soyinka turned to look at the African continent, he discovered large scale uprooting of people from their own lands, a deepening political and human crisis, intimidation and assassination. Although he was radicalized by his later civil war experience and did not even consider joining a political party until 1979, his career

as a publicist, controversialist, and political activist began in the 1960's. He waged a fierce campaign in the Nigerian Press against censorship, corruption and repression; used his theatre group to produce satiric political revues, often in barricaded buildings against armed thugs. He also resigned from both his radio series, which he was doing for the local Nigerian station, and from his lectureship at the University of Ife in 1963, when he discovered that all forms of creativity and expression was constantly jeopardized and twisted by the power mongers, the neo-imperialists who were then merely doing what the colonialists had done before, berate human freedom and liberty all in the name of keeping the country in shape. He was subsequently arrested (and later acquitted) on a charge of holding up a radio station and substituting his own tape for Chief Samuel Akintola's victory speech after the rigger Western Region elections of 1965. Though he was not subjected to torture other than the chains round his ankles for a couple of days, he considered the detention itself as an offence. The chain was an affront to human pride and dignity and he recalls his reaction in finding himself in bondage:

I sensed a vivid contradiction in all this, [...] in my human self-awareness and self-definition. In fact one might say that never until this moment did that self-definition become so clear as when I viewed these chains on my ankles. The definition was a negative one: I defined myself as a being for whom the chains are not; as finally as a human being [...]. Abstract intellectual fetters are rejected as passionately (Soyinka, The Man Died 40).

But, he also understood that he could not remain silent over so much of depredation and spoil of human liberty. The reason that he gave for his political commitment was related to his insistence on human liberty and on his integrity as a human being. To this can be added his special sense of responsibility. In 1973 he

said, " I have a special responsibility, because I can smell the reactionary sperm years before the rape of the nation takes place" [interview article in the Guardian, quoted by Hunt]

The need to resist and confront then became a seminal principle with the writer, an abiding interjection for the defining of his identity as a human. At that hour of crisis, social activists and political thinkers all throughout Africa was beginning to streamline their strategy of opposing the façade of imperialism and neo-colonial subjugations.

Soyinka understood that it was futile to deny imperialism or its objective metaphors. It would be impossible again to blindly ape the West. If Euro-centric logic must be assimilated into African sensibilities, a means has to be found where native wisdom can co-exist with what has been imported from the outside. In his dramas for example, the Nigerian combines an objective mimesis of reality with some fast and furious African dances and songs. This is evident in the play The Lion and the Jewel, when Sidi and the other village girls mime the arrival of a photographer in his motor- car. The enactment of the girls is accompanied by the playing of African drums and Yoruba songs. But, there is also the ample use of dance on this occasion.

Soyinka's intellectual and aesthetic position may be understood however through a critical understanding of Fanon.

Frantz Fanon and his position on national culture as contained in the Wretched of the Earth, represents his most orchestrated articulation of the cultural implications of colonialism and its anti-thesis, the anti-colonial struggle. As is characteristic of the other phases of his writings, his views on colonialism and neo-

imperialism takes cognizance of socio-economic motives that shaped the process of exploitation and decided all aspects of the life of the colonized. Proceeding from the familiar premise that cultural emasculation of the subjugated group is the necessary correlate which makes colonialism successful, Fanon goes on to state his way of producing a pattern of cultural evolution among the colonized both during and after the colonial era.

His schema advances three distinct stages and they can be given as follows.

- 1) The assimilationist phase in which the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power.
- 2) The cultural nationalist phase in which the native intellectual remembers his authentic identity and kicks against attempts to assimilate him
- 3) The nationalist phase, which is also the fighting phase in which the native man of culture after having trying to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. (Amuta, Post-Colonial Reader 158-159)

Soyinka was conscious of the hard-hitting dialectics of European logic. He also remembered the culture of his own people. But, he knew that it would be novice to seek every answer to the social and political turmoil of Africa in its own terms. At the same time, he had a responsibility of making his people aware of the drawbacks of their own thinking if there were any- to point to the schisms in the native armor: its manner of perceiving social and political realities other than that of Africa. Simultaneously, it was the prerogative of art to express a human world that accentuates variations and promote an exchange between nationalities divided from one another.

To this end, it is insignificant to define cultural nationalism through hatred. Predicated on a negation of racially inflicted insults and psychological injuries, such nationalism has political significance mainly at a racial or at best a continental level. The idea of creative revolution is not a teeth for a teeth or an eye for an eye. New ideas and social patterns require that hatred is disowned at all costs. But a certain amount of hatred against dominating hierarchies is inevitable in all coercive social configurations. Fanon was sufficiently realistic to admit the legitimacy and historical necessity of this phase in the consciousness of the native. But he also warned his countryman, not fall back on essentialism.

Like Fanon, Cabral too recognized the socio-economic determinants of colonialism and proposed a redefinition in the relationship between history and culture. The province of history according to the writer is to illustrate the contradictions and the conflicts in the life of a society. Culture has this prerogative that it can propose a dynamic synthesis to resolve conflicts. The main thrust of Cabral was then to suggest a reciprocal dynamics between culture and history, to a point when each term remains hardly distinguishable and their dimensions are blurred. Thus, the national liberation struggle as a historical act also becomes an act of cultural resistance.

At any moment, depending on internal and external factors determining the evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance may take on new forms in order to fully contest foreign domination (Amuta, Post-Colonial Reader 160).

Soyinka was influenced in this attitude by the works of Cabral. For Soyinka, cultural nationalism had more forms than a general love for Africa per se. Nationalism also did not connote a mere acceptance of foreign modes of social



renewal and progress, like Marxism for example. It could not be similarly other material dialectics that did not consider the particular conditions of Africa, when instituted. African must move forward and a vision for its progress must combine the best in the traditions of Africa with that of Europe.

Cabral was a Marxist and a Guinean intellectual, and Soyinka defines the former as a "theoretical pariah to Marxists" since he did not take the conventional theory of Marxism per se but rather sought to reconcile the dogmatism of Marxism "with the objective realities he had observed between received theory and observed reality" (ADO 293). That a mire of theoretical pretensions are in their own form, a dangerous extremism, snaring to destabilize human liberty is brought home by Soyinka when he alludes to the betrayal of hundreds of men in the Cuban Revolution, by their own comrades, "manipulated by theoretical purists" (Soyinka, ADO 295). That strict Marxism will not do for Africa and Nigeria for that matter has even been accepted and made aware by Mr. Geoffrey Hunt in his book Revolution in Guinea (56). Soyinka quotes the remark made by Mr. Hunt:

We agree that history in our country is the result of class struggle, but we have our own class struggles in our own country; the moment imperialism arrived and colonialism arrived, it made us leave our history and enter another history. Obviously we agree that the class struggle has continued but it has continued in a different way; our whole people, is struggling against the ruling class of imperialist countries. (ADO 295)

The location of the motive force of history is according to Soyinka an imperative in the process of liberation strategy of any serious revolutionary- it affects decisions on development, tempo, methods of indoctrination and even external alliances in the conduct of struggle.

But there is also Ngugi wa Thiong'o who predicates an anti-imperialist struggle on a socialist ideological leanings. He believes the colonial usurpation of native culture has meant an undermining of the people's belief in themselves and make them look up to European cultures, languages and the arts for a measurement of themselves and their activities. Unfortunately, he says, "the same continues in the Africa of today." (Thiong'o, Moving the Center 44)

Soyinka however does not accept Thiong'o's political ideologies per se. Unlike Thiong'o, he finds any mechanism of social and political progress based upon isms, completely redundant.

Thiong'o laments the fact that independence has not really meant any real progress for the common man and replaced colonial hegemony by another one- a vicious neo-colonial arrangement. So defunct has been these new rulers that some of them even conceded their territorial integrity to U.S. military forces. At times they have done so only for a small fee paid by the erstwhile colonial intruders. The greatest onslaught of these new regimes of rule has been on the authentic culture of Africa with the result that a facetious parading of cultural objects became the norm. But against this hopelessness there was this consolation that there was another tradition of African culture. Even under colonial rule a part of the authentic culture of Africa survived and through the use of songs, dances and, poetry, drama, spoke of the traumas of the common man as he struggled against the appalling conditions of work demanding his rights. Whether in poetry or dance or drama, these cultural mores of the people looked to the past for inspiration. But traditional forms were always infused with new life.

At a time when the freedom of press was curtailed in most of the African nations, it was indeed difficult for the writer to write. One way left for him was to

remain silent. The other was to restrict him to use his craft to tune itself with the official machine. In either case he becomes redundant to new beginnings and fails to fulfill his functions. He courts despair and languishes to the end. Hence the way most of the intellectual workers living and writing in Africa, proposed themselves was to realign with the resistance patterns of the ordinary man: their political, economic and cultural process for survival.

But there were also other hopes at hand. Revolutions throughout the erstwhile colonial regimes proved that a people culturally and socially alive to their realities could refashion their survival patterns. Chief among these were the triumph of Chinese Revolution in 1949 and also the nature of Indian freedom struggle and its subsequent emancipation in 1947.

The fifties were also the decade of the Korean revolution, the Vietnamese defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu, the Cuban people's ouster of Batista, the stirrings of heroic independence and liberation movements in Asia, in Caribbean and Latin America. In Africa the same period saw the Nasserite national assertion in Egypt culminating in the triumphant nationalization of the Suez Canal, armed struggles by the Kenya Land and the Freedom Army, Mau Mau against British colonialism and by FLN against French colonialism in Nigeria. Besides there was also an intensified protest against apartheid in South Africa, a resistance it responded to with the Sharpeville massacre. Receiving his Nobel Prize, he delivered a lecture at Stockholm he referred to humanity at the threshold of twenty-first century, about to celebrate its coming of age. Appropriately titled 'Black Patience is not infinite', the address was dedicated to Nelson Mandela. Soyinka referred to the significance that a black African was receiving the award for the first time:

There is a gruesome appropriateness in the fact that an African, a Black man should stand here today, in the same year that the progressive Prime Minister of this country was murdered, in the same year as Samora Machel was brought down on the territory of the desperate, last ditch guardians of the theory of racial superiority which has brought so much misery to our common humanity (Africa Newsletter 66).

This speech of Soyinka is important in many respects. One: in alluding to honoring a black man at the same time that atrocities were going on against them. Two, his claim that humanity is really one and that it is the duty of all of us to see that no one suffers. Finally: his hope that colonialism is on its last foot and will be replaced soon.

However, much prior to this, Ghana became free in 1957, and Nigeria itself in 1960. In other words, the 50's and 60's in Africa was a period of an emergent liberating consciousness. It was a decade of possibilities. Kwame Nkrumah was the most important cultural representative of his generation. Towards Colonial Freedom was a book that Nkrumah published at the beginning of the fifties expressing his hope that a new Ghana would be born. Most of the other writers writing in this period were assertive and defined the cultural presence of their respective homelands with a deepening conviction of pride and hope. This was a break from the apologetic stance of the pre independence writers. This decade in literature and politics however, is best summed up in the title of Peter Abraham's autobiography, Tell Freedom. David Diop's poem Africa was full of optimism and confidence

Africa tell me Africa

Is this you this back that is bent

Is this you this back that is bent

This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation

[.....]

That is Africa your Africa

That grows again patiently obstinately

And its fruit gradually acquires

The bitter taste of liberty. (quoted by Thiong'o, Moving 62)

But what many writers of the moment failed to decipher was that colonialism is an Argus eyed monster and does not necessarily has to come from the white man alone. But the ordinary people could not be blamed for equating color with rewards and specially since the operative dialectics of colonialism was tilted towards a hierarchical structure. Labor was not just labor, but black labor and similarly capital was white. This was reductionism and translated to equating all blacks under a single canonical term, it envisaged a definition of the complex variables of experience into polarities. So when Julius Nyerere defined African socialism as the attitude of the mind, he was infact representing the limiting contours of definite beliefs that has no need to perceive the changing course of history. Socialism was therefore reduced to a set of constant beliefs, moral absolutes, and not that of a historically changing economic, social and political practise.

In the beginning of the sixties other dominated colonies, many of which were in the African homeland like Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Kenya and others became free. But there were also other territories where the old style colonialism was making a last ditch effort to cling onto its fortress of power. Thus Portuguese colonialism clung tenaciously to Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. But the common men realized soon enough that the end of formal colonialism had not sufficiently

delivered them of their misfortunes. The leadership was corrupt and aided with the big imperialist powers they were holding the country to ransom

Fanon summed the character of this emergent phenomenon.

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty and national dignity. But as soon as independence is declared, far from embodying in concrete forms the needs of the people in what touches bread, land and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie (Post-Colonial Reader 157).

Chinua Achebe describes the general mood of disillusionment that engulfed the writer of the period in his book A Man of the People. Through the reflections of a fictionalized narrator, Achebe sums up what went wrong with the Africa of his day:

We had all been in the rain together until yesterday. Then a handful of us—the smart and the lucky and hardly ever the best had scrambled for the one shelter our former rulers left, and had taken it over and barricaded themselves in. And from within they sought to persuade the rest through numerous loud-speakers, that the first phase of the struggle was won and that the next phase—the extension of our house—was even more important and called for new and original tactics; it required all argument should cease and the whole people speak with one voice and that any more dissent and argument outside the

door of the shelter would subvert and break down the whole house. (Quoted by Thiong'o, Moving 67)

Achebe's novel reflects the widening despair of the intellectuals, fragmented, and suffering the consequences of the latest misrule. The other important work of the time, Ayi Kwei Armah's Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is similarly expressive in holding forth a glum vision of human civilization with its incisive horror at the wide spread moral decay that made the African states horrendously inhospitable.

But Soyinka's aesthetic position is different from that of Achebe's. Achebe or Nkrumah laments the loss of pristine African mores and ways of life because of the colonial infringement. They dig into an imaginary cultural past. Soyinka disembowels any belief in cultural straitjackets to put forward the idea that the African civilization can only move forward in tandem with others.

The glum and profound disarray of all humane mores was acerbated in the 70's. This was the time, which signaled the transition of imperialism from the colonial to the neo-colonial stage with a staggering speed and momentum. On the international level, the US-engineered overthrow of the Allende regime in Chile and proved at the world stage the arrival of a victorious neo-colonialism. The decade also saw the ascendancy of US-dominated transnational financial bodies that by giving aids to the lesser-developed nations of the world held them to ransom and imposed inhuman conditionalities towards fulfilling the terms of the agreement. At this hour of human and social peril- at a time when inhuman brutalities all the world became rampant, the USA established military bases in or around most of the African nations, all the way from Morocco via Diego Garcia to Kenya, Egypt and of course the Mediterranean sea. The formation of the Rapid Deployment Forces, with the

clear support of the big imperial powers intervened in the process of decision making of most of the underdeveloped nations. Indeed their functions were unashamedly stated as interventionist in Third World Politics.

The African people also became more newly aware of the possibilities of freedom achievable through vigorous resurgence of anti-imperialist struggles. The armed fighting of the people of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Zimbabwe made it clear that the opponents of human freedom were not merely the white colonialists, but could be the blacks as well. Imperialism, the people found out, is not synonymous with color. Instead, it is a mental make-up and might just as well crop up anywhere. The need is to identify the enemy, and trigger the necessary coups d'etat: moral, aesthetic and revolutionary to unhinge the inclemencies of misrule.

The full dawn of realizing the implications of imperialism came in the reflections of such writers as Walter Rodney, Samir Amin, Dan Nabudere, Bala Mohamed and of course Amilcar Cabral. The Dar es Salaam debate now published as 'Debate on Class, State and Imperialism', stands out as an important benchmark arrival of new emergent anti-colonial and imperialistic manifesto. It also indicated that the writer of the day had to be more than ever vigilant of the machines of oppression-the way it controls all democratic aspirations of the masses, denying them any avenues, which they might think of. The impending onslaught of such oppressive disconcertions have been framed a la Marquez's novel, The Autumn of the Patriarch! Marquez's analysis of the factors responsible in keeping dehumanization alive bears the implication that the modus operandi of all hegemonic discourse is one party rule, and since in effect the party is only a bureaucratic shell, this means resorting to one man rule. All democratic institutions are outlawed or brought under one man in which case they become defunct.

deadpans of meaningless articulations, absolving the ruler and praising him instead.

Many of the important intellectuals of Africa who had chosen to go against the oppressive regimes of their own country understood by this time that to be conventional was despairing. It kept the status quo alive. An alternative to was to liberate their medium, incorporating newer ways of asking the old queries, much in the same way James Joyce in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man expounds:

I will tell you what I will do and what I will not. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church; an I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning (Joyce, Portrait of the Artist).

That indeed many of writers of black Africa could think only of a limited manner of articulations is borne by the fact that many a writer of the nation was born with the fact of captivity engrafted on him. He was a slave to the white masters and his narrative precedents were Africa as a nation of dancers, musicians and poets, very much in terms that would become the narrative patterns of the Negritude writers of the thirties and the forties. In his own essay, 'From a Common Black Cloth' (ADO 7), Soyinka expresses his outrage over the fact that many of the writers of the black subcontinent were displaying an imposed identity-primitivism, of localized historical and social causation, only in the lines dictated by the retarding thought of European condescension. Many of these testaments were to please the Western audience. Some other writers living and writing in Africa grouped their images of oilbean and nude spear around the images suggested by the modernist Ezra Pound. The Negritude writers, the essentialists as Soyinka calls

them, scorned this image making process that took inspiration from Europe, corresponding to the second category of poetic and artistic dissension as suggested by Fanon. But in affirming a pure African culture they showed themselves to be weaklings who continue to suffer excesses of an imposed European identity on them "the burnt offering, image of the charred skin on a defiant platter "(ADO 8). This was regionalism at its worst and subvertly its dark shadows bore on the true creative inspirations of writers as Amos Tutuola and D.O.Fagunwa who wrote in Yoruba.

Tutuola's, work, Palm Wine Drinkard remains his best. Suffering from no inferiority syndrome complex, this book is the earliest instance of the new Nigerian writer gathering multifarious experiences, assimilating forms and images both from Europe and Africa and exploiting them in one extravagant, confident whole. Amos Tutola, as long as he lived, responded to change and phenomenon and his work is in the best Yoruba tradition. Images of war, sex, violence all steam his works and as Soyinka himself points out "the result in Tutola is a largeness that comes from accepting life in all its manifestations" (ADO 11).

Tutola moves progressively from a consideration of his physical insufficiency, through the Quest into the very psyche of Nature. Hence his work The Palm-Wine Drinkard along with Fagunwa's Ogboju Ode becomes representation of man's eternal restlessness; his search for the meanings of existence, and by continuum expands into a commentary for the final Search. Its relevance for the reader is in this fact and indeed in many more-he can always begin his presumptuous search for meaning. Tutola's mythical interpretative is restive, formulates new beginnings for the literature of his nation, takes in traditional narrative mores without denying the accessories of day-to-day existence. There is a delectable tight web, enmeshing the

various levels of perception.

But Soyinka and Tutuola are still different writers. Soyinka accepts the cultural ethos of Africa and those of Europe, admitting none blindly. In Soyinka, the aesthetic principles of Europe is brought close with those of Africa. If Soyinka uses African dances and songs in his plays, those from other nations are not ignored either. Soyinka's use of masks in his plays is for example African. But, his comic invectives may be traced to Chaucer and Brecht.

Tutuola's creative inspiration on the other hand is predominantly African. Also, Tutuola does not say anything about a dialogue with entrenched power formations or having a re-look at old conventions. There is no intention to question or pulverize the narratives of imperialism. Unlike Soyinka, Tutuola has no inkling for the social commitments of art. There is hardly any conflict between the past and the present or between disparate ideologies as in Soyinka.

Soyinka also remembers Fagunwa and in his own work Art Dialogue and Outrage, he infact mentions the latter's Ogboju Ode. Fagunwa began with the idea that the literature of his country needed a vernacular medium. He also translated the oral tradition of his country into a written form, thus laying the basis for its transformation into a literate culture. His narrative techniques showed the influence of the oral traditions on him. But his achievement lay in trying to go beyond the limitations of traditions in the context of an extended literary medium. He drew from the rich stores of his native traditions and at the same time gave it a sufficient modern color to interest his readers. But while Fagunwa adopted his materials from the folk tales of his country, he reinforced them using images and symbols to produce what Soyinka calls Fagunwa's "vivid sense of event" (ADO ).

But his language is only a minuscule part of his larger attitude, his humor and his visions of a grand concept of the universe, which dissolves the limiting frontiers between the living and the spirits, nature and super nature. But the world of the spirits, the realm of the fantasy, is made familiar and alive because it is mediated through from the perspective of an individual understanding of human life.

Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer of great distinction was a "chronicler, content to follow creases and stress lines, not to impose his own rearrangement on them" (ADO 11). Achebe's traditionalism manifested itself in many ways, one of which was his fictionalized enactment of the mysteries surrounding human life through the traditional Nigerian concept of 'chi'-the psychical influences on a man's daily routine, representative of the large and dimensionless forces of mother Nature at whose hands man's personal quest was itself shaky and meaningless. But, in this intricate hinterland of determinism and free will, it becomes impossible to find out at what point does a man really leave his fate to his chi and when he decides to defy the apparently inevitable and destroy himself in the process in which case again, he receives the adulation and respect of his onlookers. But to fall into the trap without the minimum resistance is not becoming of a proper human dignity, which is why readers of Achebe who witness the protagonist drifting helplessly to his doom become more than impatient. But, his other work, No Longer at Ease, is informed with the conjugal presence of tradition with resistance patterns through "individual depth in a incredible hero" (ADO 12). Okonkwo's shapes interest in his actions because he stands opposed to the overriding conventionalities of custom and social mores when they force a total subjugation of human dignity. The community members of whom Okonkwo is a part, speak the first sentence

When a man blasphemes, what do we do? Do we go and stop his mouth? No.

We put fingers into our ears to stop us hearing.

OKONKWO: If a man comes into my hut and defecates on the floor, what do I do? Do I shut my eyes? No. I take a stick and break his head? (ADO 12).

But the play is remarkable in positing no definite conclusions about the parameters about the absolute good and bad. Instead, its moral logic is affirmatively human, communal, and universally conducive to the survival of a necessary order. Hence, its logic, far from being a fixed set of principles is self-evolutionary, a continuity of perception of what is useful to the community and that what is not.

Again for Achebe, artistic reality has a basis. Achebe defines his reality between a past, cut off from the present, which again provides the mode of allegory; and the present in which the ironic effects of the narrator is achieved. It is this acknowledgement of the present hour with a capacity for demystifying the same that Achebe moves literary history forward. But irony also suggests the latent possibilities of moral absolutes. Hence the stance of a speaker who exists in the present is that he is sure of himself. The irony with which he looks to those around him does not entrap him. To this extent he has the right to criticize those who have followed Europe firstly and when it came to Africa in the form of colonialism, accepted its ideology. This desire to persuade, and not simply present is due to the consequence of art being placed at the altar of social meliorism. Inherent in this attitude is an inherent hostility to romance or allegory, a stringent commitment of art to education, which is ironically enough at odds with the composite view of the world that is to be discerned in the traditional epical patterns of narration.

The historical experience of the Europhone African author then virtually argues a need for a process of mediation with each act of writing. Instead of a single process of mediation between opponent cultural dimensions, an assertion of

complex mediations become the motto. In fact this is necessary considering that the African writer is engaged in the struggle for power with each act of literary expression. The writer has the choice also of daring to express a sensibility and an outlook apart from, and independent of mass direction. This may require that a writer efface his definition as a writer as a matter of choice, to shape a re-examination of the facile role expected of him in a moment of crisis.

Soyinka's tirade against Negritude is a commonly known fact. But, to reassert, Soyinka's disliked Negritude because writers of negritude "accepted the grounds of cultural valuation from the racial deniers" (ADO 229). Moreover, Soyinka needed to deny the charge implanted against the black people even from such man as Sartre who said the following:

The being-in-world of blacks (according to Sartre), covers all the ways in which the black experienced his condition in the world: through rhythm, sexual pantheism, a cosmic sense, the indissoluble unity of suffering, the erotic, and joy. (ADO 230)

Soyinka had to prove charges against his people wrong. He had to define an aesthetic of defiance against the pre-pondering cult of colonialism. At the same time, he was morally and artistically responsible in fermenting a manner of writing that did away with all sentimentality accruing from a notion of the white vs. the blacks, objective reason as against passionate voyeurism etc.

A fuller survey of the Nigerian literary scene at its hour of independence and ouster of colonialism should clarify matters. At the juncture of an anti-colonial movement, it happened that the writer decided to identify himself with all manifestos that were doing the rounds and for him any -ism seemed valid and

could be embraced. Soon after Nigeria won its freedom, the writer dedicated himself to the political opportunists of the time the demagogic manipulators of human history and dignity. Reality was resigned to the new visionary -the politician. Cultural definitions became the new source of literature. There could now be two different ways to tackle the problem for the writer. One: he could stretch his accidental conditions to embrace the whole of society. The other, he could discover the fundamental truths of his community to inform his vision and provide him with the real know-how of how they lived. A writer had to evolve his art independently from the politician and to this end learn to identify the ways in which his art has been subverted and taken away from him.

One of imperialism's greatest ploys has been that it outsmarted the writer from his actual present. By allowing him to nurture dreams of a superabundant past, it blinded him to the consequence of denying the social anomalies, which really was to be investigated. The necessity of the writer living in the present hour is to inform his art with the throbbing vitality of a historic vision, which is of consequence, universal and re-examines the whole phenomenon of human heritage. To this effect Negritude becomes an enfeebled denominator, because it does not negotiate from a position of strength and consequently solidifies the boundaries which colonialism wedged between the discrete ethnic bases of Nigeria and the African continent as a whole. Hence Edward Said in his book Culture and Imperialism, says:

To accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like negritude, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentializations that have the power to turn human beings against each other; often this abandonment of

the secular world has led to a sort of millenarianism if the movement has mass base, or it has degenerated into small-scale private craziness, or into an unthinking acceptance of stereotypes [...]. (276)

An important historic event of literary and social consequence was the arrival of iconoclasm whose chief priest Yambo Ouloguem in his work Bound to Violence makes a demolition act of all cultural presences in human history and even concludes that none of them has any value-eminence or indeed historic probity. Ouloguem described history in garish, clashing colors. What Ouloguem does is to show that all cultures of the world whether Judeo-Christian, Arab-Islamic, Black-Animist, European-imperialist, medieval-mystic are in the course of collision against one another. While Ouloguem destroys the intellectual edifice of western imperialism, at the same time pulling the assumptions of Negritude, he does not succeed, because of the very nature of his acerbic logic to give Africa any historical presence.

With Ayi Kwei Armah, the crisis of colonialism suggested a retreat to the mythical past of Africa as a potential model for the future. Decolonization in the cultural and intellectual terms, according to Armah in Masks and Marx, is "the search or research for positive African ideas, perspectives, techniques, values. That enterprise tautologically is centered on Africa" (Armah, Presence African 64). Decolonization therefore involves a parallel process of the re-Africanization, or a discursive formulation wherein the artist, in a conscious act, is building or reconstructing an identity he was hitherto denied or deprived of. The very act of writing becomes a means of self-realization.

While Armah signaled the need for the African to return to his cultural moorings in a simplistic call to come to being, Ousmane Sembene's evocation of an authentic tradition is in the cause of social transformation. Sembene's work God's Bits of

Wood rejects the pitfalls of sentimentality in tradition and offers an alternative to the extremist posturings suggested by the essentialists—a complete annihilation of modernism in the cause for a new radicalism. The importance of Sembene is therefore significant for he not only says that the new African should know of his cultural past and integrate himself with an organic vision of the universe which such a culture suggests, he also brings to light the fact that the old culture is not enough and must be reconciled with present necessities to enrich, crystallize and foreground the Africa of the future. Sembene's call is for harmonization: tradition with modernity, machine with organic coherence. This is what one of the characters in Sembene's work God's Bits of Wood, speaks:

The kind of man we were is dead, and our only hope for a new life lies in the machine, which knows neither a language nor a race. (Quoted by Soyinka, ADO 185)

This language, apparently paradoxical, is at the heart of Sembene's articulatory dialectics. It plays with opposites. But the real meaning lies elsewhere. The modern machine, symbol of a modern age incorporating technology and science, is the true neutral. It is at the same time an achievement of the conjugal existence of the head and heart.

But it is not enough says Soyinka in his Art Dialogue and Outrage to merely concentrate on the African political and cultural scene to propose even a tentative articulation of the new aesthetic enterprise of the new African writers. Without acknowledging constructs of other cultures and nationalities, an exclusivist passion for a pure African essence: its objective material reality, and literary phenomenon tantamount to an assertion of racial autonomy. This is not to deny however that like all nations, Africa deserves the right to forge its own aesthetic territory, and

selectiveness. Hence, the need to appreciate such works of national expressions as the Iliad and the Odyssey, the Bhagavad-Gita, and the Gilgamesh becomes important. These works express of the craving of all humanity to discover sources of sustenance. Providing a wealth of creative and historical metaphors they maximize the "involvement of the oral, traditional specialist in the creative processes and concerns of the modern writer" (ADO 189).

Something must be said of the theatrical patterns of the Yoruba people which even at the heights of colonial and imperialist repression in Nigeria acted as the bulwark for the rights of the common man combining with its traditional expressionist components, forms and techniques of the modern theatre. In forging this eclecticism, it was of course responding to its environment and the fact that the colonial regime of the days maligned and restricted traditional narrative arguments of the theatre, this assimilation was seminal.

Theatre in Nigeria, made this possible by incorporating dance and poetry within its compounding metaphors, dance and music being more thoroughly expansive, they could disseminate even potentially dangerous sentiments under the watchful eyes of the oppressor. But, it also relied on the rituals such as those of egungun, associated with the Oyo monarchy in the Western Province of Nigeria. There was also the relevant presence of the cultic mores of expression-Agbegijo, Alarinjo, and the allied genres that more than their religious implication also suggested secular credentials viz their ability to posit parallels between the past, the present and the future, relating the materially mundane with the numinous and the metaphysical.

With the fall of the Oyo Empire against the more powerful military might of Hausa-Fulani in the North, most of the traditional expressive patterns were curtailed and restricted. The progeny of interference continued with the arrival of

Christians who banned indigenous musical instruments such as the bata, gangan, dundun and so on replacing them with musical instruments imported from Europe and enervating the traditional theater more by the introduction of Christian dramatic themes and Western forms.

But traditional forms of drama in Nigeria had its masquerades, the "Okumkpa" (ADO 193) event and the "Oje Ogwu" (ADO 193) both being part of a male initiation ceremony performed in the theatrical expansions of a native culture. While the former was basically balletic in form, the latter was mimetic. But both of them were more or less audience oriented and the spectators were used to boo, judge and approve them on purely aesthetic grounds-appreciate or condemn the leaps, turns and control of the performers.

The "Okumkpa" festival centers on the use of masks. These masks are intended for the purposes of satiric rendition of the events that took place in the neighboring places. It even ridiculed personalities, and the events in which they were involved were re-enacted. The purpose of this festival was therefore to produce a creative transformation of existing dramatic apparatus, and not to show them off literally. The performance was rounded with the parade of all the other actors on the stage. But the Afikpo festival was also important otherwise: in putting into perspective male prejudice.

Masks have a unique role in Soyinka's plays. Within the ambit of tragedy, they only indicate humanity's ability to parallel the Yoruba gods who charted a course through the void. Hence, an actor on stage while performing a tragic role does not need acting by putting on a mask. The spirits take him in their charge.

In Central, Eastern and Southern Africa, one notes the presence of a heroic

tradition known as "pakrouk" (ADO 329) among local people. Here the individual would emerge from his group and sing chants in his own praise. But he is contended by another and sometimes replaced too. This helps the audience to exercise their creative and participatory faculties either to support the truly eligible man or to decry the false boaster.

But other sociological factors too contributed to the emergence of a new theatre in Nigeria. This was the complexity brought by the return of Western educated elites from the black continents, eager to prove their learning to the white settler colonies in their homeland. On the other hand, there were those people who despite staying back in their own land understood the various forms of Western theatrical implications, but unlike the former did not think of their own people as barbarians. It was this latter group who being dissatisfied with the Euro-centric resolutions of theatrical and social apparatus in their homeland, exploited their native forms for resuscitating their cultural presence and identity.

Much before Soyinka began to write, his country had its own dramatic corpus. Nigeria's theatrical culture had plays that communicated through the complex rhythms of the body and the sound, drums, laughter and music. It was impertinent to use lens, pigment and print and infact supercilious too. Its language was not the literal one of European plays. "Hubert Ogunde," says Wright, "fashioned his plays out of a broad cultural matrix of Bible drama and colonial concert party" (Soyinka Revisited 23). But even before Ogunde plays in Yorubaland were ceremonial masques:

Where personality transformations were conjured by costume, and vocal projections and distortions by masks, the effect was a powerful combination of the consecrated and the comic (Revisited 23).

One may also remember Baba Sala, whose real name was Moses Olaiya Adejumo, the most recent of the Yoruba traveling personalities. Baba Sala used the mass media as well as traditional songs and dances in his plays. At the same time, he used anything in his performances, which were likely to be popular with the audiences.

Thus there was always conflates between the traditional cultural patterns and the imported forms and this contributed to the mosaic of values that is the delectable Soyinka.

That the Yoruba world-view also contributed to the making of Soyinka need not be stressed. He has admitted this influence in his book Art Dialogue and Outrage.

I cannot claim a transparency of communication even from the sculptures, music and poetry of my own people the Yoruba, but the aesthetic matrix is the fount of my own creative inspiration; it influences my critical response to the creation of other cultures and validates selective eclecticism as the right of every productive being. (ADO 329)

Indeed the Yoruba culture testified for Soyinka a resilience of cultural patterns, having an in-built capacity to withstand coercive techniques applied on it: to assimilate alien national expressions; combine the traditional apprehension of the spiritual with a restorative analysis of the objectively real and the mundane.

But the Yoruba religious beliefs and mythology are also repositories of apparent contradictions. One of the reasons for this is that Yorubaland in Southwest of Nigeria is itself not a culturally monolithic body of beliefs. It comprises instead of a whole compounding of cult practices, with many local variations loosely organized around the Ifa Oracle. Translatable in social terms it has enabled the ordinary Yoruba to

capture within his system of beliefs a necessary pragmatism "underpaid by a belief in the indeterminate, many faceted nature of truth and its expression as a variety of emanations from a single irreducible essence" (Wright, Revisited 7).

Hence songs of praise that forms a part of the traditional Yoruba dramatic festivals are metamorphosized into satiric condemnations. Even in other social manifestations the Yorubas maintain a plurality of beliefs.

A brief survey of actual social formation with its structural configurations in West Africa should make this clear. Here for example, the spirit of the elder is revered and respected and in his death he is treated with care. There are specific ceremonies of burial and especially second burial that are intended to ensure the passage of an honored member of the society to an appropriate afterlife. The patterns are complex and cannot be justifiably put in this brief space. There are several spiritual components to one's being and each member of the society has his own destiny. He has also the chance to be reborn in his own descendents

Except for some communities who are hunters, institutions that admit of some degree of leadership generally rule traditional African societies. But outstanding individuals are allowed the chance sometimes to voice their opinions in important social matters. Hence as is shown by the character of "the Man" in Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born or Okolo in Okara's The Voice, whose individuality reflects to an original ethical impulse-corresponding to the sons who have attained their maturity, like Edogo in Achebe's Arrow of God, these men are not satisfied with restrictions placed on them by their elders and even rue the fact they are still under the tutelage from their elders. On the other side of the spectrum, one finds the traditional ruler who however cannot take independent decisions and

are under the watchful eye of the councils of elders. This council has not only the power to sustain tradition, but also has the capacity to dethrone the ambitious king

In the social structures, there are divisions of role. The young considering they are impetuous are often given works that requires them to learn completely the manners of their society. The young naturally resent this and often align with the rulers opposing the traditional authorities of the elders. But, happen what may, every individual has the responsibility to change with times and maintain order through his intrinsic sense of morality that is however taken care of the society as and when recalcitrance develops.

At the death of an elder, various age groups respond differently. So the elders presents gifts to the younger men and woman and even to those who have been without child to see that their passage to the other sphere is not blocked. At times as it happens in the case of the Nigerian Edo, there is a state of uneasy equilibrium between the different age groups.

The ambiguity in society is however not only restricted to political functions. Instead, it manifests itself even in the production and creation of the African people's body of literature and other cultural practise. One of this is that these people have not favored writing and this was a willing negative and not a historical failure on the part of the denizens of the African homeland. Writing, it was believed, could preserve in an indestructible form the laws or beliefs that inhered in a definite power structure and this was not commensurate with the requirement for balance and harmony in the actual social patterns of the Africans. Thus Duerden in his book, African Art and Literature goes so far as to say that in traditional Africa the permanent preservation of stored memories constituted a "sacrilege" (7). This

was also the reason that the masks and statues were hidden precisely from becoming a stored memory. The careful isolation of powers, the divisions between the man and the woman allowed this knowledge proper repositories and rather than being indefinitely enshrined in an indestructible form was inevitably consigned to loss and death with the passing of each elder. The loss of the elders was not to be lamented. Young men who are competent to carry the community forward would replace them. This also explains why most African communities did not land with positing fixed significations to masks or statues or to social roles. Similarly Duerden concludes "art must never become a frozen symbolism, must not make the structure of the present into a lasting and visible structure which takes too long to destroy." (24)

This is inevitably a pronouncement for the need of art and society to respond to one another and change over the times as a prerequisite to human liberty and freedom.

Soyinka draws upon the traditional frameworks of his culture to re-look and newly examine the social, political and artistic parameters in existence in and around Western Nigeria. He combines besides an aesthetic temperament that allows distant memories in art to have a place in his humanistic concerns. In Death and the King's Horseman, the myth of the follower accompanying his dead king to his heavenly abode through a ritual surrender of his physical self, encompasses within its spectrum the fact of the white man. In the Bacchae, ritual dances and merry making of the Dionysian revelers comment upon the qualities needed of a good leader of men, which of course Pentheus does not possess. But, again, Soyinka transforms Euripides work. Instead of putting an end to the play with blood sprouting through Pentheus' head and the abject ignominy of Agave at having killed his own son (an inversion of the Oedipus story as in Euripides), he shows Pentheus' head

turning out wine, which even Agave drinks. Soyinka's Dionysus is representative of nature and Tiresias' faith in him is because the new god can take his countryman to freedom and liberty. Tiresias addresses the baffled slaves:

You hesitant fools! Don't you understand?

Don't you know? We are no longer alone-

Slaves, helots, the near and distant dispossessed!

This master race, this much vaunted dragon spawn

Have met their match. Nature has joined forces with us (Soyinka, Bacchae 7).

Wole Soyinka is not unjustly esteemed as one of the most famous thinkers and writers of Nigeria and the world to day, but for the literature he has produced, his novels, poetry and dramas, that already have earned for him an undying fame. Among all his writings, it is especially his Dramas that are not unduly esteemed and spoken of by the readers and critics of our Age, but for their intrinsic merit and the relevance they have with life and its truth. It is a matter of no less seriousness that his plays have been most critically debated over. Many of his admirers and readers have found his plays not easy to understand or appreciate. In his essays and novels and more so in his dramas, Soyinka dislikes to have his intellectual positions easily understood or falsified. He builds into each one, fine distinctions and subtle qualifications that challenge the complacency of orthodox judgments.

The slipperiness of Soyinka's moral and aesthetic framework for his dramas is partly a matter of content and partly of context. It must be remembered, while making an analysis of the dramas of this Nigerian writer that what he was trying to create had no equals even in the cultural context of his own country, and this despite the fact that the Nigeria of Soyinka retained even after the colonial upsurge, a honest recognition of metaphysical and moral roots of tradition and their importance of constantly building up to further and signify human actions and orient it in accordance with honored traditional perspectives.

In his essay 'Ambivalence in African Arts and Literature', included in his Art Dialogue and Outrage, Soyinka quotes from the Russian Kadinsky, a European exponent of Expressionism in the 1920's, which appears to address the syncretism of his own incrementally complex art form and representative dramas:

It can be imagined altogether without exaggeration that a science of art erected

on a broad foundation must be international in character: it is interesting, but certainly not sufficient to create an exclusively European art theory (228).

Kadinsky went on to declare that this science of art would lead to “ a comprehensive synthesis”, which will extend far beyond the confines of art into the realm of the ‘oneness’ of the human and the divine” (qtd. in ADO 228). What Kadinsky was referring to in response to the virile complexity of African arts was its complex and intricate references which dethroning the concept of imitation as a facile replication of the processes of human society and nature and coming in direct knowledge of itself, changed the responses in kind.

Euro-centric criticism, with all regards for it, has traditionally looked down upon the artistic achievements of Africa. Euro-centricism suffers from paranoia of racial desiderata, and cannot do complete justice to what is alien to its perspectives. African wisdom, with its paradoxical basis and orientations does not fit into the former's dialectics. It is with this mindset that some European critics have commented that the African arts as such, and this means all African manifestations of the poetic, are celebrations of the intuitive man where appearance becomes identified with essence.

Geoffrey Hunt has, for example, taken Soyinka to task. Hunt has categorized Soyinka's belief of the continuity of the empirical with the metaphysical, as “confusion and not complexity” (Marxism and African Literature 64). According to the critic, the flow of one idea into the territory of another is a grand homogenizing simplicity and not protean multifacetedness, an absorption of discrete knowledge into mystifying monotony of numen and essence, recommended for its “infinitely stressed spirituality” (Marxism and African Literature 65).

Soyinka has not helped matters himself in his definition of Ogun. In his essay And after the Narcissist? African Forum 1, no 4, (Spring 1996), he has said that Ogun is a singly comprehended essence. "There is no separation of the scientist from the artist in him, of the explorer from the warrior, the warrior from the artist, and so on. The face and the essence are the same" (59).

The dramatist, however, lays emphasis upon the dualities of his own culture to prevent the total abrogation of his own moral aesthetic and social values. His project of finding accommodativeness between tradition and modernity is to reconcile the present with the old. Besides, a sense of belonging is important to the survival of any society. Racism, which had its highest institutionalized form in apartheid ruled through obscurantism and by weakening the sense of the subdued people, of who they are. Tradition allows for psychological survival. In the face of a continuous onslaught by European colonizers on Africa, the role of an intellectual artist like Soyinka is that of an image-maker. Soyinka had to resist the violent mutation of his own people and his belief in tradition was one way of instilling strength and hopes in them.

At the same time, his belief in the complementarities of opposing viewpoints stems from his Yoruba outlook. Soyinka's vision of truth as an all-inclusive fact is arrived through his view of the world and its reality as penetrable from all directions:

A blacksmith's poker, an egungun dance, an Ifa prognostic verse, or a royal stool may simultaneously express the history of its makers, their concept of beauty, their propitiation of unseen forces, a statement of cosmic relativity and a mode of experiencing all these, of harmonizing them with the challenge of existence (ADO 108).

Dances and reveling submerge social and economic inequalities among men. As a means of social bonding, it expresses man's attempt to harmonize himself with his brethren. Men as post-modern subjects, continue to be traumatized both at the psychic and psychological level. In cities where identities are in flux, the need to challenge rational patterns of behavior becomes an emotional necessity. Organized modes of social ecstasy allow individuals to reach out for states of being outside rules. Society is no inhibition against individual expressions if the conduit for such expressions seep or address man's most primal wants-love of society, companionship etc.

Etherton in his book The Development of African Drama has analyzed some studies of writers and scholars on the dances in Africa. He speaks of K. Clyde Mitchell's study of the Kalela dance on the Zambian Copperbelt in the 1950's. Mitchell's work has shown that grass root dances among rival groups in Zambia "was a kind of metaphor for traditional animosities- in much the same way as some team sports are"(38). The writer goes on to say the following:

There is another dimension to the metaphor, which exists in the actual dance itself; its use of specific role play, costumes and dance-steps, all suggested the colonial authority, so that dance itself became a metaphor for colonial presence (38).

Again, the study of T.O. Ranger on the Beni dance of East- Africa has shown according to Etherton that rural dances there "first reflected the colonial authority, and then later mounted a satirical critique of it. The dance itself was a dazzling stylization of the colonial brass band"(Etherton 38). Scraps of metal were used as musical instruments. The dance parodied the short pants and white tunic of colonial

masters. Dancers used their whole bodies, giving rise to acrobatic embellishments.

Soyinka in his plays, in Death and the King's Horseman for example shows two different dance movements. In and through Elesin and his followers, the writer presents the dance of his native land. Elesin's dance has a trance like movement. It depicts him entering into the world of the spirits where conscious movements and accurate foot-stepping are unnecessary. The Pilkings on the other hand, dance in a ball. Unlike Elesin and his followers who put on their traditional dress that are also highly embroidered, the Europeans wear their own uniform suggesting that their dance in the play has less moral underpinnings.

In Soyinka's dramas however, dances not only qualify an African society's need to be well organized. It also implies that societies of the present need songs and dances too. A parallel between people and human societies are at once suggested. Naturally, the logic of dualism-civilization as against barbarity, whites vs. blacks, reason and objectivity as against sensuousness and instinct, is seen to be redundant.

A referential mode of analysis qualifies perception. The possibility of absolutes is rendered equally uncalled-for. For mankind, it implies his dependence on and responsibility for his fellow brethren and an acceptance of all sections of humanity as having an equal right to survive. At the psychological level, it renders an acceptance of the warring dualities of good and bad plausible. This is shown from the example of the Earth Mothers in Madman and the Specialist, who are ambiguous and serve as either poison or medicine.

Lewis Nkosi, has even seen these warring complementarities in Ogun, Soyinka's favored deity as merely a rival narcissism and private eccentricity on his part- that is another ultimately, one more polemical counterconstruct to Western mythologies in

which Soyinka outdoes the West at its syncretic best by incorporating scraps of Nietzsche, Blake, Dionysius, Zagreus, and Prometheus in order to transcend them (Home and Exile x).

Biodun Jeyifo, finds the narrow creative, destructive cycle of Ogun, to which Soyinka has virtually reduced the whole corpus of Yoruba myth as tragic (Essays in Sociology of African Drama 27-35). To this critic, Soyinka locks his vision of humanity into a fundamentally reactionary worldview.

However, Soyinka makes Ogun syncretic, because it is in the very nature of the deity to be so. Adaptability is also characteristic of the Yoruba knowledge on life and reality. In an interview given to Uli Brier for the Yoruba Magazine, Soyinka narrates his Yoruba view:

This seems logical, because whenever a new phenomenon impinged on the consciousness of the Yoruba whether a historical event, a technological scientific encounter - they do not bring down the barriers - close the doors. They look at the new phenomenon and see what they have that corresponds to it in their own tradition that is a kind of analogue to this experience. And sure enough, they go to Ifa and they examine the Corpus of proverbs and sayings; and they look even into their agricultural practices or the observation of their calendar. Somewhere within that religion they find some kind of approximate interpretation of that event. They do not consider it a hostile experience. That's why the corpus of Ifa is constantly reinforced and augmented, even from the history of other religions with which Ifa comes into contact. One has Ifa verses, which deal with Islam and then there are Ifa verses, which deal with Christianity. Yoruba religion attunes itself and accommodates the unknown very readily; unlike Islam because they did not see this in the Koran - therefore

it does not exist. The last prophet was Mohammed; anybody who comes after this is a fake. And Christianity! The Roman Catholics: until today do not cope with the experience and the reality of abortion! [...] (Iskon Yoruba Magazine Vol III, No. III).

It must be admitted however that Soyinka uses drama to focus not on any facile explanation of social and political reality of his turbulent times but to give expression to the hybrid character of his art that combines traditional forms of art-drama, poetry, as it existed in Africa with such modern innovations in music as the jazz songs etc.

Some of the Nigerian playwright's detractors have however also condemned him for not explaining the contemporary scene in his country as the determination of complex social and political forces. Peter Nazareth (An African View of Literature 65,66) believes that Soyinka's definition of evil is obtuse and metaphysical. Corruption: political, social, individual or at the level of community is not well defined. Neither is it viewed as being made up of rival groups and interests who are themselves involved in the abuse.

But, A Play of Giants should prove Soyinka's detractors wrong. A Play of Giants shows three dictators Kamini, Kasco, and Gunema, vying for the control of African states. Their oppression of human potential shows in their treatment of the guerillas that carry out strikes against the dishonest regime of Africa. It even shows in the way the Dictators violate the basic human rights to get even with those who chose to escape from them.

GUNEMA. My subjects, they are very careful how they plot against Benefacio Gunema. When I look at each of my ministers, or army officer,

he knows I am looking into the heart, into the very soul of his village

(Giants 27)

The Western Press is aware of the topsy-turvy nature of African politics. But, they prefer to remain either non-interfering or worse side themselves with the politicians. Gudrum, a representative of such a press is a Scandinavian and prides herself as a liberal. She has still no compunction portraying Kamini in her book 'The Black Giant at Play', as a jovial family man and a "big uncle to everybody in the country" (Giants 12). The United Nations is also to be blamed too for the rot in Nigeria and other African states. Not only did the UN, not interfere positively in the crisis of Africa but also honored the political culprits by deciding to install their life-sized statues in its headquarters.

But, Africa's own people are also to be blamed for their sufferings. Much of the rot in the country has stemmed from their indecisions- the common men's ineptitude, their desire to remain subservient to the political class and surrender their rights to fight back. Small money and even smaller opportunity have made them so. The Department of History in all of Kamini's country devotes their time to trace the dictator's history. They concoct stories of his bravery, family history and how he killed a lion when he was five years old. There are also the aristocrats, Africa's traditional feudal lords. These men have enjoyed power for centuries. But, they are disgruntled to be left out of the newer equations of a neo-colonial regime. Gunema, one of the dictators, blasts them for conspiring against him.

GUNEMA. The plots of my supercilious aristocracy, the mestizos...They think that they are superior to Benefacio, because I, I am full of Negroid, and I arise from low background, poor environment (Giants 36)

Soyinka draws the attention of his readers to the faction ridden caste society of Africa. In and through the character of Jero for example, the dramatist focuses on the diverse social, political and economic determinants doing the rounds of the society in the corrupt regimes of neo-colonial Africa.

Brother Jero is a religious charlatan. Though belonging to the Church like Chaucer's Pardoner and Summoner, he uses religion for his personal gain. Chume's wife is under his influence and so is the politician, who is each manipulated by the devil in Jero. Particularly interesting is the manner in which Jero subverts the Christian thanksgiving theme to illustrate the greed and covetousness of the social and political mafia for whom self-acquisition is the most sublime religion. Jero knows that he is morally corrupt. Yet he indulges in his hypocrisy until proven guilty.

The political turbulence in the country is as much a result of the newer regimes of power as much as it is the result of traditional hierarchies. This situation is made more complex by the presence of rebels who interfere in the political mess to make matters worse for the common man. Life President Barra Tuboum, a ruthless dictator, speaks of a group of one such rebel who harbored the false hopes of upstarting his government. The rebels were from a place called Sabira and they decided to keep the contingent of a few living men to be exhibited at the UN and then to made the sport of his commando force which would later kill the hostages for sport or food.

Side by side, the political mafia and academic saboteurs, Africa's financial recovery, has been made complicated with the presence of large industrial corporations. Professor Batey, who comes to meet the three dictators as they pose for their sculptor, blame the MNC's for their neo-colonial economic conspiracy. The

MNC's in Africa continue to play havoc with the country's mineral resources, plundering its rich mines for raw materials and then supplying the finished products through a chain of outlets in the same country.

The developed and industrially advanced nations of the world are equally implicated in the African crisis. Kamini speaks of America disgustingly. Gunema charges the Russians for troublemaking. The Russian delegate coming to meet the dictators, scorn the latter for watering down the principles of revolution which people like Lumumba's Nkrumah, and Jomo Kenyatta fought for. They term Kamini a buffoon. But, they lack the moral courage to owe up to their fury against the dictators. When confronted by the Professor who charges them for speaking slander against the African heads of state, they blame the Professor as an American spy and support Kamini instead. Their *raison d'être* is anti-Americanism. Russia equips Africa militarily, once the place as an arms supplier to the black continent is conceded to them by the Americans. The Russians on their part confirm that the British created Kamini and then the Russians took over. But they ditch the monster they helped to grow once Kamini fails to coincide with the interests of the socialist superpower.

Critics have also seriously considered some of the plays of Soyinka. Derek Wright while commenting on Camwood says that "beyond the battle between paternal dogmatism and youthful rebellion in the play lays a deeper conflict between Christian and African beliefs" (Soyinka Revisited 44). It would be however novice to argue that Camwood merely projects the differences between traditional African religion and Christianity. The play in fact explains the aberrations resulting from a circuitous representation of Christianity in colonial Africa along with the freedom promised by pagan religion. The arrival of Christianity in Africa brought about far

reaching changes in the continent. It not only implied a new religion for the masses, but also a new prestige, to be so. But religion is finally a social fact. Christianity that has had far reaching consequences in Europe helped to interpret man's relationship with his environment there. The importance of hard work, industry, and the like was important for the survival patterns in the climates of Europe. But, Africa had most of its resources in the forests. The only requirement for man there was to integrate himself with his surroundings. Society had to honor the traditional wisdom of its makers to be able to live in harmony. The pagan religions enabled the blacks to be a part of the environment and respect its dynamics. There has to be another reason why Isola loves pagan religion. An understanding of the same has to be grounded in the fact that paganism was more close to Isola's natural instincts of survival symbolized by his closeness to his mother and detachment from his father. However, a more serious criticism of the play by Mr. Wright is that it is an undeveloped dramatic script. The play according to the critic has scenes that fade in the flashbacks to Isola's traumatic childhood and the earlier events of the day are too fast and frequent (Soyinka Revisited 44).

The critic also believes that the play has certain unresolved puzzles, such as the violent opposition of the Westernized, socially aspiring families to a union of their offspring. Again, the snake and the tortoise, "though powerful general images for a predatory, life crushing religion, are the dark whimsies of his mental suffering and final madness, and do not blend with their human referents in the play" (Soyinka Revisited 44).

The symbols used by Isola are definitely unique. One of these is the tortoise in the jungle that he calls "Moji." "Moji," is again the name of his mother. To him both the tortoise and his mother are interrelated. Both are so overburdened that he cannot tell

their age.<sup>6</sup>“Erinjobi” is the name he calls his father by and he uses the same name to describe the snake in the bush. Both his father and the snake seek to victimize him. In his innocence, symbols from two different worlds are coalesced. His mind can see no difference between the tormentor of his person in society and his enemy in the jungle. His attitudes towards two recognizably opposing systems of human interpretation, where the jungle and human habitats are antipodal identities, question very the stringency of civilized beliefs by which society decides to place one fact as superior to the other.

To look at Isola’s use of symbols as the result of the protagonist’s mental suffering is again to ignore the basic fact that his pagan cult endorsed man to respect the relationship prevailing between various order of existing beings. In all traditional societies, the snake and the tortoise have been recognized as symbols intertwined with human perceptions. But looked merely as creatures of the wild, the snake stands for what is violent while the tortoise for a subdued, benedictory presence. Human societies need to respect the power and lethal destructiveness of the snake. But, the tortoise is due for a deeper respect by way of its power to help man equate with his environment. Isola equates his father with the snake because there was the myth of the snake in the jungles, known to him and his likes. The snake was known to harm the tortoise eggs for which reason it was the symbol of cruelty among the local people. Isola deconstructs the cult of civilized hierarchies. He turns the outside into the inside thereby dissolving the norm.

It has to be accepted here that Soyinka’s dramatic spectacle has a place in it both for men and creatures of the wild. Spirits, animals and humans are related to each other, which is why all have a voice and speak. Soyinka speaks for the silences, both at the human and metaphysical level using Africa’s unique cultural predilections that

see no ignominy in placing humans equal to the other orders of creation. Spectators watching Cam wood are may be divided from one another as they watch the play unfold. But, it would augur to both the camps that poetic justice is achieved once Isola kills his father. It may be said again that Isola's symbols are those of Soyinka's who uses tradition to comment upon the callous indifference of the present hour.

Again, Isola is certainly not mentally plugged. There is no indication in the play to believe this. Infact, the play weaves multifaceted characters to define the ultimate variety of social, economic and political configurations determining the African scene. Isola's father may be a Christian cleric. But, he is despite all limitations a family man and wants his son to follow his footsteps. He has ingrained himself with the formalized Christian Church and wants his son to follow suit. It is immaterial that Isola wants to be different. Erinjobi is a traditional African patriarch and he needs his young to ask him to guide them in their social and personal needs. The position of the woman is obviously minor in this conventional setup, which is why his wife is not due to be equated to him in all family decisions.

Soyinka's dramatic arguments strongly challenge the hierarchies established through the play simply because the power and the authority of the father is not always attuned in the best interests of his children and even to the fermenting of a new social order. The arbitrariness of its created momentum may be self-defeating as the play shows in the death of Erinjobi. Moreover, his union with Marounke is also not a whim. The protagonist loves his girl, wants her to bear his children and is also aware at the same time of the inclemencies of his social atmosphere. He impregnates Marounke in a natural consequence of his intimacy with her.

His obstinacy for his love for Marounke, even at the cost of defying his father

betrays a natural moral norm. Devotion for loved ones is not subservient to rules. At the same time, it expresses his angst at formal Christianity, its imposed rituals and colonial hangover. Infact the characterization in the play is complex and cannot be studied analytically.

The stubbornness of the Westernized families in not allowing Isola and Marounke to be united may stem from Isola's disrespect of ritualized and formal Christianity itself. Isola's parents felt that their daughter was beyond any malice and could be made to walk away from Isola. It was only the boy who was fermenting trouble for her. Finally, Camwood deals with a society in the throes of change. At one hand, it is a new religion, its new rules and behavioral patterns, and on the other, a primitive byway, more ancestral than any acquired branch of faith. The proposed novelty of Christianity is obviously resisted by the younger breed, which feels it has contaminated their personal and individual lives. If Erinjobi is a true Christian, liberal minded and imbued with the sprits of free enterprise, he should have supported Isola's choice. Instead, he decides to haunt his son down with weapons. In the end, he gives up his civilized pretensions. He embraces the rule of force. He triggers off a whimsy of bedlam, fortitude and chance survival, where death as much as life, becomes fortuitous.

Stanley Macebuh finds trouble with Soyinka elsewhere. He specially disparages the ambiguity in many of Soyinka's plays and though he acknowledges the Nigerian's astringent critique of the social parameters of Nigeria and of the overall African milieu, yet, he finds it hard to justify the Nigerian's use of harsh and difficult language, especially, at a time when the language of myth is typically unprompted. Macebuh imputes the writer's obscurity to his colonial distemper:

Soyinka's harsh inscrutableness may be seen as an exact equivalent in words of that unease of mind that is the lot of those who have suffered a modification of vision through colonialism (Critical Perspectives 209).

Soyinka's difficult language is not a matter of choice. As has been said in the introductory chapter of this work, it is instead the natural outcome of his aesthetic focus. What the Nigerian presents in his works is the result of his tragic protagonist's awareness of a reality that is incomprehensible, weird and disruptive of rational conclusions. Tragedy in Soyinka's plays is the anguish of man's severance from his true essence. The linguistic parameters of European dramas are consequently inapplicable in Soyinka's dramas and eschews 'the sterile limits of particularization' (ADO 26). Soyinka also asks the following:

Is it really intelligent to demand that all poetry be simple? Not *all* experience is simple. More pertinently, not all *experiencing* is limited to a simple unilinear activity of the mind. And does any work which results from man's creative intelligence not become in itself a source of experiencing? That a creative intelligence should *communicate*, no one in his right mind would deny. But what should it communicate? The dictionary value of every word? Phrase? Stanza?...Or could it be that a mind does not demand a literal value out of every image? (ADO 101)

Again, Soyinka's disgust of the effects of colonialism is implicit in his desire to help his country regain faith in the honored beliefs of his land. His concept of dramaturgy takes its starting inspiration from the primitive ritual practices of his country. The tragic architecture for his plays is based on the same foundation too.

Rituals in the plays of Soyinka are a mere shell. They foreground the contours

within which the dramas are fundamentally worked out. But, within such a framework, one finds an engagement with the dominant social, political and economic realities of the times. The simultaneous co-existence of diverse societies and cultures in the dramas of Soyinka also mean a richer and fuller definition of the co-ordinate of artistic perception. It is also a way of recognizing an extra terrestrial dimension to man's problems, beyond the invidious cacophony of hatred, throw back and aggressiveness to alien events and milieus.

To again briefly recollect Soyinka's linguistic patterns, one finds therefore that the language of Soyinka addresses itself not just to an African audience but also to a European one. Yoruba proverbs converge with English. The blacks speak English as they would the Yoruba tongue. It would appear therefore that Soyinka is not trying to fight shy of the colonial reality. He is engaged in formulating a negotiation between the blacks and the whites.

Frantz Fanon describes the dialectic of language between the colonized and the colonizer bleakly. According to him, "the colonized is raised above jungle status [in the eyes of the colonizer] in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards." Fanon, who rejects the codified colonizer-colonized relationship, advocates total rejection of the standards of the colonizing culture including its language. Fanon believes that "a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language" (Fanon, Post Colonial Literature Web).

Fanon reasons that he who has taken up the language of the colonizer has accepted the world of the colonizer and, therefore, the standards of the colonizer. Following Fanon, Ngugi Wa Thiongo also proposes a program of radical decolonization in his collection of essays Decolonizing the Mind, which points out

specific ways that the language of African literature manifests the dominance of the empire. He builds a powerful argument for African Writers to write in traditional languages of Africa, rather than in the European languages. Writing in the language of the colonizer, he claims, means that many of one's own people -- meaning those people with whom a postcolonial writer identifies by nativity -- are not able to read one's original work. About African literature written in European language Ngugi writes, "its greatest weakness still lay where it has always been, in the audience -- the petty-bourgeoisie readership automatically assumed by the very choice of language"(Brown, Post-Colonial Literature Web 22). According to him, literature written in a European language cannot claim to be African literature, and therefore he classifies the works by Soyinka, Achebe, and Okara as Afro-European literature. But, there were also other writers who believed, albeit theoretically in a dynamics of a meaningful confrontation.

As Chinua Achebe himself reflected, "we lived at the crossroads of cultures" (Post-Colonial Reader 190). Yet this vision, for him, is a hugely positive way of looking at things, for though "the crossroads does have a certain dangerous potency; dangerous because a man might perish there wrestling with multiple-headed spirits . . . he [also] might be lucky and return to his people with the boon of prophetic vision" (Post-Colonial Reader 191). For Achebe the confluence of cultures creates a transcendent, new culture, somehow advanced beyond the sum of its parts, a prophecy.

But, Soyinka has shown that it is possible to interact at various levels with the idea of a powerful colonial one up-manship and to establish for the jaded and culturally subverted people a new identity of being. The requirement for such a position implies an aggressive dialogue with the entrenched power formations, to

build up the desired implications for change. If his poetry, or drama is obscure to a certain extent, it also implies that for the writer, a means of subverting cliché is through an allegorical instrument: through the creation of an intellectual parole to justify a langue of ulterior and clandestine possibilities. Such an implication is also ironical- the challenge to understand, bedeviling towards a better perceptivity of a commonality between ethnicities and diverse nationalities.

When G. Wilson Knight, objected to Soyinka's language, with specific reference to the latter's 'Idanre and Other Poems', he pointed to the difficulty of taking the Nigerian's image making process, beyond particular suggestions. The critic in his assessment of Soyinka has moreover found certain ambiguity in relating symbols used by the poet in question to their traditional and individual associations, "an inadequate working out of images and metaphors" (Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol VIII, No.1 p.69).

To cite an example, Knight maintains that the image "A spring-haired elbow" remains "disembodied" and that "the elbow" is not after attached to anything. Wilson again does not ask why Soyinka images the palm-tree as a phallus, "piercing/ High hairs of wind" bearing "the pollen highest" and "tearing wind/The chaste hide of the sky" (Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol VIII, No.1 p.70).

The tree is a source of creative energy that stands erect and is aflame with kernels. These kernels, and the shafts of early morning sunlight, combine to suggest the presence of blood drops in the air. The image of the phallus described by the poet however requires an understanding of the traditional myths of the Nigerian people.

E.B. Idowu, in his book entitled Olodumare, says that Olorun, the Yoruba God, handed a palm-tree to Orisanla, when he sent this divinity to equip and

embellish the earth'. Idowu also says that Olorun ordered this so that 'its juice would give drink, its seed would give oil as well as kernels for food' (20-21). The palm-tree's fertility ensured the survival of the Yoruba divinities and people, and this seems to stand here as, amongst other things, an emblem of the creative essence inherent in Olorun's universe. The God bestows life, and Soyinka uses a sexual metaphor to convey this idea. The use of the phallus is a practical way for the poet and the dramatist to convey to his readers the importance of the palm fronds in their social, economic and creative life.

Soyinka's use of language in his poems brings up an important perspective: his shift from one level of reality to another, often frequently to illustrate a unique idea. The feature is present in the verse of the Nigerian, as much as it is present in his plays. In the use of such figurative language, Soyinka, does not embellish, but also ensure a unique mode of perception.

In his anti-colonial stance, this apparent slipperiness he divulges, becomes a strategy, a foil to the oppressive control of the means of communications which colonialism precisely strengthened. To cull an instance from colonial literary markers, Cortez's successful campaign against the Aztecs of Central America is explained by the Spaniard's seizure and domination from the beginning of the means of communication. The problem, says Bill Ashcroft in his essay 'Replacing the Text' included in his book The Empire Writes back, "for Aztec oral culture, based it was on the ritual and cyclic interpretation of reality, was that there was simply no place in its scheme of things for the unpredictable arrival of Cortez" (79-80).

Soyinka however says that his plays lacks no historical perceptiveness and they infact prepare his readers for the challenges ahead. The reason why he claims so is

because the Yoruba myths upon which he builds up his concept of man and society is opposed to stasis. Art, Dialogue and Outrage' runs thus:

The African world-view is not however, as though by implication, static...an attitude of philosophical accommodativeness is constantly demonstrated in the attributes accorded to most African deities, attributes which –deny the existence of impurities or 'foreign matter' in the gods digestive system. Experiences, which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's recognition, are absorbed through the god's agency and converted into yet another piece in the social armoury of society in its struggle for existence or enter the lore of the tribe. (105)

Death and King's Horseman is beyond doubt one of the most celebrated works by Soyinka. It honors death as the highest form of achievement. Though centering on an actual series of events that took place in the ancient Nigerian city of Oyo in 1946, with the ritual suicide of the Chief Elesin, it generates its interest in diverting the centrality of the play's motif from the act of death to the process involved in it. Besides, the inclusion of a confrontational aesthetic between Olunde the colored man, and the white colonizers Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings has led many critics of Soyinka to propose the play's attractiveness as due to a tag of cultures. Soyinka himself however cautions against such reductions warning of the dangers this involves:

The bane of themes of this genres is that they are no sooner employed creatively then they acquire the facile tag of the clash of cultures, a prejudicial label which, quite apart from its frequent misapplication, presupposes a potential quality in every given situation of the alien culture and the indigenous, on the actual soil of the latter. The Colonial Factor is an incident, a

catalytic incident merely [...]. (Author's note to Death and the King's Horseman 6)

Death and the King's Horseman remain for Niyi Osundare "both the watershed and ultimate in African tragic dramaturgy... a drama which juxtaposes the beauty of form with the disturbing controversy of content." (Quoted by Cheeka, Soyinka and the Crisis of Nigerian Petit-bourgeois Radicalism)

For Ejinkeonye the book compels a second reading for the sublime language and the dignifying and overwhelming characters of Eleshin-Oba and Iyalaja<sup>31</sup> (quoted by Cheeka, Soyinka and the Crisis of Nigerian Petit-bourgeois Radicalism). But, Ejinkeonye raised questions, too, concerning "the rationale in celebrating suicide and thinking that the mockery of Mr. Pilkings who tries to halt it, will justify it. One wonders why young Olunde would want to waste his youth and usefulness just to make the shallow, uninspiring point that Pilkings is fighting against what he does not understand" (Quoted by Cheeka, Soyinka and the Crisis of Nigerian Petit-bourgeois Radicalism).

Didi Cheeka, finds no point of difference with Soyinka's claim that the play does not present a clash of cultures. But, the critic, nevertheless questions the writer's rationale in celebrating suicide.

But the question remains; why celebrate suicide? (Quoted by Cheeka, Soyinka and the Crisis of Nigerian Petit-bourgeois Radicalism)

Soyinka answers this query in his essay 'Who is afraid of Elesin Oba?' included in his Art, Dialogue and Outrage:

My circumscription of the possible areas of 'argument', my rejection, for

instance, of the option to make Olunde reject suicide because of 'overseas' enlightenment is a creative prerogative logically exercised, since I have no wish to demonstrate that the colonial factor is ethically superior to the indigenous. (ADO 128)

The critic further considers why Soyinka's work finds such wide acceptance abroad where social development is considerably more advanced. In a more serious note, he argues that, Soyinka is a poet and ideologue of class rule. His individualism accords with their belief in rule by the minority.

The struggles of Soyinka's heroes are purely individualistic. A more general liberation for the toiling masses is left out of the question. Present in them is the triumph of the strong over the weak, and the inevitability and effectiveness of brute force. In the *Lion and the Jewel*, Side, the village belle, who had consistently rejected the amorous advances of Baroka, the wily village head, to make her the latest wife in his already congested harem was finally 'conquered' by Baroka, thus, presenting women as something to be conquered and put in their place – a congested harem. This is a point worth looking into. (Quoted by Cheeka, Soyinka and the Crisis of Nigerian Petit-bourgeois Radicalism).

The plays of Soyinka celebrate daring. They have heroes who can oppose or go against the political and social bounds of the times and in doing so help their communities as a whole to march forward. Apparently, such acts, looked from the perspective of an alien would suggest a detachment between the leader and his men or more fundamentally, a salute to the courage and will to being of an individual. But, the Nigerian social and communal life, being what it is, is closely knit. The inter-relationships between the community and its representative are undisclosed

one-yet, commonly known and practiced. It is the community, which is behind the individual in his march forward. Without the community, he is blank.

It may be said at this point that Oluinde's confrontation of death and indeed the white man even after his return to his ancestral land is between a concept of hubris that finds its solace in annihilation and another that despises death as a mere material and physical act.

For the audience the chance is to understand and hone the individual psyche under the stress of knowledge that attends this dialectics of combat. It sublimates in him the "social particulars that go into the engagement, the conflict that lead to self-liberation."(ADO 45)

Soyinka however does not only present men face to face with unfamiliar experiences as a matter of fact accruing from the white man's advent into Africa. But, he also shows that for any individual venturing into unknown territories of existence, the journey is never easy and he presents the emotional and mental conflict of his heroes through his dramaturgy. In this place, it is relevant to quote what Etherton speaks of Soyinka's view of his spectators and the way the Nigerian dramatist has used his stage space:

The members of the audience are part of the space of the performance and therefore metaphysically part of the conflict taking place. This conflict is itself symbolic of a primal conflict in the origin of the race. The audience participate in this much deeper metaphysical sense throughout the 'ritual'- which is the word Soyinka uses for drama in performance-because they are an integral part of the space in which performance of the conflict takes place [...]. Soyinka

therefore sees the use of space as *affective*, not merely effective, because it affects the audience in certain emotional and physical ways (244).

Soyinka's dramaturgy is evident in such works of his as the Madman, where the writer places his character against unknown odds that they must comprehend.

The Old Man who is an important character in the Madman, knows how to cure the sick. He is an herbalist. But, his traditional perspective is not unqualified. He despises organized religion and offers war victims human flesh. In doing so he irritates those who are in positions of strength, i.e. the authorities.

His son Bero is similarly equipped like his father to treat the sick. Before the war he had been with his father and sister in curing the patients of his village. But the war makes him cruel. He takes to eating human flesh not out of necessity as the lower ranks in the army would due to want of food but out of relish. But, it is his father ironically who had first offered him man's flesh and he vomited it up. Finally, he disowns the fact that human meat is worse than other flesh and consumes what comes his way because it is his way of ending inhibitions. He ultimately kills his father as proof that he recognizes no human order. But here again his father instigates his son to kill him. In doing so, the Old Man sacrifices himself to curtail Bero's capacity for evil.

Bero too is not without his own dilemmas. At a time when the earth mothers come to destroy his house so as to destroy all cures, herbs and medicines that the earth has yielded, the Old Man parodies operating on the Cripples so as to distract his own son from saving his medicines. Soyinka's stage direction at this point are precise and to the point:

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

OLD MAN. *(His voice has risen to frenzy) Practice, Practice, Practice on the cyst in the system [...].*

*(Bero is checked in stride by the voice. He now hesitates between the two distractions) (Madman 76)*

The Old Man definitely wants his son to be at peace with himself and to be happy as any father would. But, he apparently torments his son to ignite his most blasphemous passions so that they may finally be rendered inconsequential. The tragic dilemma of the Old Man then veers upon a love for his son and that of tradition, cut across by his rational estimate of a world that needs extremes to generate their opposite. Soyinka's characterization of the Old Man or even Bero may appear to be influenced by his Yoruba outlook. But, it is also definitely modern. Psychological inhibitions and emotional suppression of feelings and desires in individuals do lead to evil being committed by them. On the other hand, a conduit for their release offers humanity a hope for peace.

Rituals offers man a scope to address his most inward wants. As Soyinka had said in his book Art, Dialogue and Outrage, the ritual space offers humanity a better means of expressing their anger, frustration and the like, by breaking a gourd than by taking the life of their brethren.

Again if ritual is mediated upon to unhinge new understandings of social parameters, simultaneity of neglecting the uncomfortable modes of realities or wishing them out of existence cannot be attributed to Soyinka and infact becomes a gloss over. Soyinka's literary excursions have this effect that it produces change by

unsettling the certainties of life. There is destabilizing reference point in his plays and mostly in *Death and the King's Horseman* one cannot be sure to the end if normative expectations might be fulfilled. Olunde is confronted with a sense of loss that is unmotivated, unexplained, and yet paradoxically over determined. He suffers a fractured self. His desire for learning medicine takes him to England. But his home remains a much-honoured presence and to this effort he mitigates between a senses of nostalgia for the past with a present demand to carry out this search. Why then one might say, does Olunde do what he finally does? One account of it has been rendered visible through the application of the 'father child concept' as given out by C. Kerenyi:

The expression 'the child is the father of the man', becomes within the context of this time-structure, not merely a metaphor for development, one that is rooted in a system of representative individuation, but a proverb of human continuity that is not uni-directional. Neither 'child', nor 'father' is a closed or chronological concept. The world of the unborn, in the Yoruba world-view, is as evidently older than the ancestor world. (ADO 10)

But Olunde's decision to go for his cultural affirmations is situated in a comparative analysis of Euro centric jargons, faith, commitment to duty and nationality with those of his own country where the metaphysical contains an inbuilt mechanism of accommodativeness, the divine and the mundane, material science and spiritual resonance. The process of his arriving at a truth is dialogic-through comparable analysis and studied discursions into colonial space and the colonized one and is best exemplified in the conversations he has with Mrs. Pilkings.

From a deconstructive viewpoint, the privileging of presence, of logocentricism, is achieved by the suppression of differance. Mrs. Pilkings stands for a state of

European knowledge as supreme, which is why Olunde says, "You believe that everything which appears to make sense was learnt from you" (1: Scene 4, 194). Mrs. Pilkings is also not willing to accede to other wisdoms and for her the native who in this case is the black colonized, is a barbaric race, feudally oriented. Her response to quirky and almost incomprehensible British snobbery- her wearing of the egungun dress lamentably offshoring the respect with which it is seen by the natives, to please a British prince who is on tour, is only an ingenious attempt to come to terms with the horrors of war, a fact recognized by Olunde who defines it "decadence" (195). Indeed the war which the British was fighting out at the hour was illogical:

OLUNDE: By all logical and natural laws this war should end with all the white races wiping out one another, wiping out their so-called civilization for all time and reverting to a state of primitivism the like of which has so far only existed in your imagination when you thought of us (Death 195).

By apportioning logic in the British sense, Olunde the black man proves that he too can be capable of reason and conversely the colonizers are not despite all their protestations to the contrary. Olunde's response is to dismantle the rationalistic framework of imperialism itself, voice its silences and therefore reverse the text and involve itself in a continuously receding play of meanings. He moreover takes pain to prove that the hierarchy of colonialism is only a mental construct, best shattered, the possibility of which he himself executes by nominating death over life. But even when Olunde goes to accept death outsmarting his father in the job, he defamiliarizes the socially recognized role of the father as the lead taker and the first one to take the move. It was however his father who was believed by all and sundry to actually go for the ritual suicide and to this purpose the praise singers constantly remind the

King's horseman of the latter's duty and the reason why he should commit himself to his social and communal aspirations. That ritual suicide is a not a paucity in the traditionally bound society of Nigeria and remained a part of its cultural ethos even in the 1975's need not be referred to again. This is also because the Yoruba's believed in the cult of 'Agemo' one of the rituals dealing with the process of transition from one stage to another.

Critics like Jonathan Culler (1975) defines such defamiliarization on three levels 1) the text's relationship with the real world, the socially given text 2) a cultural text, recognized by participants of a given culture as naturally belonging 3) genre conventions that is specifically literary vraisemblance 4) the natural attitude to the artificial in which a text makes explicit its use of genre conventions, implying a natural presence on the metatextual level, and thus reinforcing its own authority and 5) another specific work which becomes a basis and point of departure and which must be assimilated in relation to the work (Structuralist Poetics 35).

It is another paradox that Soyinka who has always spoken against Negritude, is himself blamed for promoting a screeching African value system that contradicts with his talk of liberalism and an acceptance of other cultural milieus. Critics such as Rachael Teich in the Postcolonial Literature Web, in his essay 'Colonialism in Conrad and Soyinka' gives the following point to argue why he thinks Soyinka is after all such a good prop of Negritude:

Although Soyinka criticizes Negritude, his drawing on African myths, including those of his own Yoruba culture, does in fact define Negritude in the best sense; thus, there appears to exist a contradiction in his sentiments against Negritude, for, on the other hand, he accedes to dominant African culture in his

Négritude, for, on the other hand, he accedes to dominant African culture in his works. In Myth, Literature, and the African World, Soyinka discusses the creation of the universe by Yoruba deities as well as Ogun, thus yielding to the dominant ideology of Négritude-- pride in African history. However, Soyinka does base his play *Death and the King's Horseman* on the events in Yorubaland in the 1940's when European ideology dominated Nigeria: he depicts European versus Yoruba notions of personal honor and self-sacrifice, which he renders irreconcilable. In this aspect of Soyinka's writing, his use of African "mythology is part of an active, dynamic, liberating African culture and political assertion." Furthermore, "there is a double focus in the play, almost as if the world of British skepticism and power only superficially impinged on the real world of the Yoruba community [...]. Whereas Soyinka disagrees with the ideas prevalent in Négritude he ironically embraces it in the subject matter of many of his works, and as an artist he commits himself to social awareness, seeing his African heritage as a background in which to express the Africans' struggle with the environment of colonialism (Teich, Colonialism in Conrad and Soyinka, Post-Colonial Literature Web).

Soyinka need not give up his African beliefs purely because alternate philosophies explain the world. If African traditions have any iota of truth in them, they need not be disowned simply because Soyinka had been trained in the universities of the West and therefore could have examined the Yoruba world view from the perspective of an European-with detachment and irony.

That Soyinka's dramas are set in Africa is a truth beyond much debate. It is also factual that he does not dispense with the myths of his own people to interrogate the

present. Nonetheless, tradition is made complimentary to the newest social and technological viewpoints. The cross-cultural tendencies of his age and the world over find an expression in his plays, in the equally robust articulation of a vision of truth by the Europeans and other racial identities.

If, Mrs. Pilkings is not wholly wrong in sending him to England to study medicine, Olunde is not incorrect in promoting himself to the privileges of his father. In Olunde, Europe and Africa meet—the technology of Europe with the assimilative wisdom of Africa. Similarly in the mythical figures in Soyinka's plays, one finds an extremely individualistic reading of communal history, in accordance with the spirits and culture of the Yoruba people themselves. Soyinka does not acknowledge Negritude as such. But, he accepts to a certain extent the contributions made by it. Negritude glorified the intuitive man, proclaimed war on black bourgeoisification. It let loose 'the unrestrained poly-symphonic man, which like its forbear, tried to replace the empirical drift with communalistic faith, intensity of emotions and ethical intuitions' (ADO 230).

But, Negritude had its own drawbacks. It was reductionist in its tendencies and as such became 'the apogee of the critical phase of European xenophobia- racial chauvinism, honed to the last limits' (ADO 230).

Negritude insisted on African mythologies unsullied by foreign and alien interferences. It disowned the material evidence of a culture that supported a cohesive totality of human experience, and an integrated world-view. In a way, it was the frustrated expression of minds unable to absorb and dissect present conceptions of life. The African writers of Negritude were in fact shaped by centuries of European historicism and intellectual cannons for which the African reality provided only the occasional, marginal, race –motivated fodder. Soyinka also calls

them the “neo-Tarzanists- lazy, undialectical interpreters of their own society, choosing the line of least resistance” (ADO 235).

Mukotani Ruyendo, from the University of Tanzania puts an opposite point of view than suggested beforehand. He makes the following remark about Soyinka’s play Kongi’s Harvest:

Wole Soyinka in Kongi’s Harvest failed to come down completely to wallowing in true African theatrical tradition [...] what we would otherwise expect is a drama whose total form is based on the traditional forms and with all the incidents in the drama existing within the confines of that form (ADO 235).

Soyinka’s play, according to Ruyendo, does not stick to any particular form. It is also unsuccessful due to this lack. What the critic fails to comprehend is at times the limiting parameters of tradition in fully enriching consciousness. Tradition kept to itself is a cloistered virtue and lacks the power to define newer modes of apprehensions through an acceptance of the changing socio-economic dimensions of history.

Ruyendo should have considered that Kongi’s Harvest plays with a contrast between a wily and mischievous old *rogue of a king* and a modern dictator who to legitimize his authoritative prowess intends to lay claim to the Oba’s spiritual authority through his ritual consecration of the crops of the annual New Yam festival. But the real issue is far from resolved in the oppositions between two power seekers. As has been discussed earlier, the real challenge to Kongi’s despotism appears to come not<sup>1</sup> from Danlola, however but from his nephew and heir, Daodu, the head of a successful farming commune, and from Segi, the strange

nightclub dancer and ex-mistress of Kongi with whom Daodu is both sexually involved and is in vague political league.

Thus the play leaves the vanguard of pure political arena and risks an assessment of the human psyche. It justifies the wants of man. The way personal choice dictates political opposition is another way of saying that appearances are deceptive.

Annemarie Heywood says that it is the club and in Daodu and Segi's world "whence originates the moves which activate both Kongi and Danlola towards the climax". Even the production set, says the critic demands a static set with three distinct acting areas, separately and characteristically lit and furnished (Critical Perspectives 130).

Moreover, the characterization has to have its own nuances and a naturalistic acting style seems inappropriate in the play. Soyinka has made efforts to this end. Danlola in his play is not an attribute of great personal charm as much as any psychologically form of megalomania in Kongi is discounted. Danlola and Kongi are further representatives of their class and have been represented in the epic style of Brecht's drama, rhetorically projected in the third person. Similarly the love scene between Daodu and Segi cannot have the illusion of reality. For this to happen, the audience will be ill at ease and might not fathom the true motif in the opposition set by the lovers to the sterility of a Kongi/Danlola confrontation.

Soyinka suffices it to say, upholds neither the modern dictator who is a killer, nor the traditional ruler whose inertia is the reason for his subject's misfortunes. He supports Daodu instead and to this end moves away from what would otherwise have been a rather hackneyed end to a play of contradictory impulses to look out for an alternative. Through a different refractory index, the incorporation of music

distraughts through contrasts the inbuilt motifs of the play-insinuating grave nostalgia and lyrical mockery to say the least, made complex in the incorporation of a synthetic gathering of sounds and instruments for Segi's club.

Pointed references to the characters mental makeup and their denotative social hierarchy are made visible through the incorporation of dance and costume. Danlola's dance for example is slow and has swirling movements. His attire too is heavily ornamental and stiff the play's mention for the same term is 'gbarye' suggestive of a old world with its entrenched laws. Kongi on the other hand has mechanical movements. He is also a military man and his bedfellows are in the army. Hence, they drill out their exercises in a puerile machine like manner, wear military costumes and suggest a robotic world where stringency of laws comes uppermost even to the discredit of human impulses.

What is eluded in and through the presentation of the play's imaginative chiaroscuro is a heightened social awareness and temperament, which far from being a subjective term incorporates a complementary objective analysis (ADO 120). The hiatus given to credit Soyinka's ritualisation of experience at the cost of other social dimensions in the plays, involves a hysterical exaggeration. Outside the cocooned boundaries of the academic quarters it has little or no recognition. Soyinka never intends ritual to mean reconciliation with history.

And so when Femi Osofisan writes what follows one knows that he is besides the mark:

The humanist asserts that a subliminal mythological intuition identifies all humanity, that in every society at whatever stage of growth or decadence, the progressive human impulse –that is, the human urge to come to terms with

history or even transcend mundane imbecilities, resolves itself ultimately and dynamically into a continual drive to invoke the ancient communal psyche, through a dance –even transient –backwards into the womb of primeval chaos, into what Soyinka calls the ‘chthonic realm’. Then the archetypal myths are again resuscitated, the symbols renewed, the community is again reconciled with history (ADO 121).

Soyinka lambastes such decrepit assumptions with the retort “ Which society is this? Mine?”(ADO 121).

Indeed so. Even his most unmediated work *Death and the King’s Horseman* never represents a society reconciled with history. Myth must be understood as a forceful benedictory presence, and invites the recreative intelligence to accommodate the most alien jargons to the culture and society of a nation. But it favors critical reconnaissance too and to this end the writer has to initiate his own discourse patterns to the already established repository of tradition. While Soyinka favors a cyclic version of history, there is no suggestion that the society returns to its “original phase”(ADO 122).

If we turn to investigate such works as the Road, Soyinka’s technique of defamiliarization becomes apparent .One of the primary reasons why the play has elicited confusing responses from critics has been its process of mediating normally accepted notions of truth, celebrating a madman of a Professor who fizzles out in incoherencies and at his death leave for those who lives a strange cocktail of deceit and treachery as an ideal to be followed and realized in life.

D.S Izevbaye in his discussions of Soyinka’s dramas especially with reference to The Road included in his essay ‘Language and Meaning in Soyinka’s The Road’

comments, that although The Road is one of the most exciting of Soyinka's plays, it is also a problem play because not only it raises the question of linguistic communication and apprehension in the theatre-it is itself about the problem of communication (Critical Perspectives).

However, the critic referring to 'Times Literary Supplement', says that the critical journal, "despite its favorable and proficient view[...] seems to hold an unintentional scare for the reader of Soyinka's works in its ironic title, 'Keep off the Road' " (Critical Perspectives).

Soyinka' has used the commonplace language of his listeners. But, at the same time he has infused in such a language new significance in terms of words and proverbs from the Yoruba term. He even uses words, which are unheard of in the language of his colonizers. But this is only a strategy. The attempt is to usher forth in a dialectics across multiple semantic horizons.

Even when Soyinka uses myth it is not with the tendency of the modern writer, merely to camouflage the difference between a writer who is inspired by myth and a writer who takes an ironic attitude towards myth but does not believe the modern world. Many recent writers of myths look try actually to reconcile the anachronisms of the Manichean/Cartesian dualism, and are afraid of a world, which is beyond their control. At this point one is reminded of Joseph Conrad's illuminating dictum: "The habit of profound reflection is the most pernicious of all the habits formed by the civilized man" (Victory 58).

The metaphysics of the Yoruba world recognizes the many sided nature of human experience. At the same time, it prepares its believers to constantly look out for new answers to meet the ordeals of life. Soyinka's world-view accrues from his Yoruba

mentality. He is always prepared for the unexpected in experience.

To return one more to The Road and trying to understand what it means we are brought to the most insidious use of language use, complicated through visuals and the array of images that also form a part of the intricate network of values which it holds. The word miracle, which the Professor for example uses is one such for coming from a man whom we have taken to be of no sense its use complicates the issue of laughter with which we are ready to greet the possibly lunatic man.

PROF. Almost a miracle ...dawn provides the greatest miracles but this...in this dawn has exceeded its promise (The Road 6).

And again when the same Professor uses the word 'wonder' the general expectancy is of audacity. But its power to arrest captures the imagination simultaneously.

PROF. Come then, I have a new wonder to show you ...a madness where a motor-car throws itself against a tree-Gbram ! And showers of crystal flying on broken souls.

SAMSON. (Suddenly alarmed): Wait! What was that about an accident? (The Road 51)

He finally ejects his final adieu, calling upon his listeners to be like the road:

Flatten your bellies with the hunger of an unpropitious day, power your hands with the knowledge of death. In the heat of the afternoon when the sheen raises false forests and a watered heaven. ...Coil your self in dreams, lay flat in treachery and deceit at the moment of a trusting step , rear your head and strike the traveler in his confidence , swallow him whole or break him on the earth[...] (The Road 96).

The Professor is actually using words for the dual purpose of combating stereotypes and also to heighten the benchmarks for illumination. Destruction creates. Hunger, treachery, deceit and strike- are mere words of moral conduct and legislations. Without their apprehensions in application they do not ignite the opposite. Virtue remains comatose in the bargain since not arrived at through a tested social conduct. This is also the possible 'Fourth Stage' that Soyinka speaks about, the field of transition, which must be evoked and transcended and evoked again to reach incrementally newer domains of wisdom. What is conventional is also deadening. The requirement is for an unprecedented and calamitous proposition of effort. Such is illustrated in the character of Murano whose dance is the key to a symbolic encounter with truth. Soyinka explains this:

The dance is the movement of transition; it is used in the play as a visual suspension of death-in much the same way as Murano, the mute, is a dramatic embodiment of this suspension. He functions as an arrest of time, or death, since it was his 'agemo ' phase that the lorry knocked him down (The Road 149).

What Soyinka is proposing here is a sublimation of mere walk and infact the impossibility of the same under the gravity of an overburdened consciousness, a cyclic and even at times disruptive concept of time which detouring the linear can be a buzzword of true liberation.

Derek Wright concedes this when he says:

The violence of transition in the play is perhaps most acutely felt in its treatment of time. The road covers a single day, with time lapses curtailed even to the extent of performing without an interval, but this outward

adherence to the classical unities is disruptive. The second part of the play, though its duration is only a single twilight hour, takes longer to perform because so much time is spent reproducing the accidents of the past week. These are piled up thick and fast- the Driver's Festival, the rotten bridge, Sergeant Burma's the morning crash at the uprooted sign-that it is difficult to tell them apart or to say what happened when (Soyinka Revisited 93).

The first part of the play is again continuous and has no breaks. The audience is unsettled at this juncture and their temporal bearings are consequently put out of depths. When the clock strikes thrice with the simultaneous disappearance of Murano into the dawn it again indicates that what is put forward is not mechanical time or its linear concept, but rather a liminal space and time element in which a dumb god exists. It is to establish this concept of concatenation, the parallel existence of past and the present that the play does not offer any flashbacks from 'then' into the 'now'. And out of this blurring of dimensions, arrives the foreknowledge that the play is after all grounded in the Yoruba worldview of accountability.

When Samson and Kotonu put on the mask of Sergeant Burma and others, they literally put themselves in other time zones, seeps, as out of life into the horrors of death. The Professor, however must in fact die, physically and mentally i.e. dissolve in the body and the mind to release himself from the entrapment of his quest- defined in his belief in the "Word" (The Road). And when he does that he will know that true knowledge is not derivable in scraps of paper or signs of road. It is a state of the mind and death is only an act of affirmation towards the same process. Death and silence becomes impregnated by contrast with the callous verbiage of the scraps of paper which the Professor accumulates, almost reminding of Keats's famous dictum in the 'Grecian Urn' "Heard melodies are sweet/ but those unheard are

sweeter /Therefore ye pipes play on /To the spirit ditties of no tone.” (Complete Poems)

This is why the Professor says at the play’s finale: “death’s revelation must be total or nothing at all” (The Road 226).

Examined from an anti-colonial combativeness, the final say of the play is disconcerting and extremely riddle-like not only because it leaves the possibility of any structural assumptions indefinite, but also says nothing at all to conform to straitjacket expectancies. There are no resolutions in terms of an affirmative good and bad, which is also why, like Shakespeare’s Hamlet, it leaves the ground of civilization extremely scorched and uncertain. The result is an ironic, radical, savage and amoral turning of tables upside down. This does not make Soyinka historically invalid or inaccurate. But it says that his dramatic artifacts are consciously self-aware, mixed genre performances in the present and it is not possible to decode their semantic contours without arriving at the text devoid any presuppositions or set valuations of the normal. To do so is to defeat the end of effort itself, and foreground the hierarchies upon which so much of modern anomalies and frustrations are built.

In and through this instance Soyinka parallels Foucault who wanted to turn history against itself, “to sever its connections with memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and construct a counter-memory—a transformation of history into a totally different form of time” (Language, Counter Memory and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, 205-217). Foucault’s attitude to knowledge and the epistemologies of human faith was counter productive in so far it was evolving, complex and ambivalent, a trait which Soyinka adheres to. Soyinka stands apart from conventional markers of civilizations and spins a whole configuration of systematic

apparatus so as to do what knowledge does to its material. As a humanist he is opposed to the confinements of didacticisms, to what society thinks as acceptable and the norm. He stimulates the dialogic struggle between competing voices and foregrounds in some sense the formalistic strategy of the contrastive principle of construction. The projection of experience is also deconstructive in so as the hierarchies between an inside and an outside are turned over to make what is incidental or marginal central by virtue of its very marginality. This is also the logic of the parergon, which according to deconstructive critics is the manner of turning outside into the inside. Thus it may be said that interpretative statements constructed as self-referential within the African literary text are meta literary and literary at the same time.

The subjective space of a Lakunle, for example, in Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel fits into this category. In an important centripetal movement, he comes to his village with a European value for civilization, advocates progress, opposes the idea of bride price, and invites Sidi to civilized romance and to a life of knives and forks and breakable plates with him. Also, his proposals include his desire to walk side by side with his wife in the street;

Just like the Lagos couples I have seen  
 High heeled shoes for the lady, red paint  
 On her lips. And her hair is stretched  
 Like a magazine photo. (Lion and the Jewel 9)

The "stranger with the one-eyed box" (Lion and the Jewel), a foreign journalist who went about taking photographs of several rural scenes to be published in a magazine is like Lakunle, a source of immense delight and curiosity for the woman in the play. Both Lakunle and the photographer nevertheless lack true personal

charm. Lakunle loses out to Bale for having received the proposal of marriage from he dithers.

But I must prepare myself

I cannot be

A single man one day and a married one the next (Lion and the Jewel 55).

The hypocrite and the weakling that he is, he emphatically condemns Baroka when the latter wins Sidi

Voluptuous beast! He loves his life too well

To bear to part from it

Baroka has such a selective eye, none, suits him

But the best

[...]Yes one must grant him that

Ah, sometimes I wish I led his kind of life

No! I do not envy him! Just, the one woman for me. Alone I stand

For progress (Lion and the Jewel 24-25).

Referring to this passage, Eldred. D. Jones points out the conflict between the dual aspects of Lakunle's nature that is reflected in the variations in his diction:

Once he recovers and the prudish sentinel in him takes over, he returns to a rhetorical style studded with clichés from his book of learning. The inverted syntax signals the return of the respectable veneer: 'Alone I stand for progress...' This is an example of Soyinka's subtle use of linguistic register to highlight Lakunle's total unfitness for the role of the reformer with which he flatter himself (Moore, Wole Soyinka 23).

Lakunle, the emaciated man is the real outsider. The rise of Bale is explicable in what Derrida concludes in his book Of Grammatology:

An external frame may function as the most intrinsic element of a work, folding itself in; conversely, what seems the most inner or central aspect of a work will acquire this role through qualities that fold it back outside of and against the work. The secret center that appears to explain everything folds back on the work, incorporating an external position from which to elucidate the whole in which it also figures (Of Grammatology 198).

Had Lakunle married Sedi or taken the trouble of opposing the wily Bale, he could have been the forerunner of change and evolution. But his precise incapacities of the role that is expected of him shroud his dignity and honor. He cannot be the man she wants who says one thing and does another and so negates his former self. Lakunle, the man who might have been takes the mantle of the old Bale, and fizzles out his rational claiming. So when Gerald Moore finds a touch of paradox in the character of Lakunle, the frustrated lover and reformer, one cannot possibly disagree that the critic's opinion might have been sounder.

We should feel for him (Lakunle) even if we are to endorse Sidi's final preference for the old lion of Ilunjinle (Wole Soyinka 23).

But one cannot really feel for Lakunle. This is because he is a man who does not understand his own social responsibilities. At the same time, he is weak, ignorant and cannot force himself to stand against the old Baroka in guile. He has no moral courage. He despises his own grounds, the culture of his own people, which is why he is reluctant to join the revelers and partake the spontaneity and ease with which they participate in the celebrations.

The African's feisty celebration of life through the profuse use of dance and mime, reflects his commitment to his own country, its sounds, gyrations and moods that are at the same time an opportunity to regroup and reorganize himself and his brethren. But in the play, it has another important role cut for it: it enacts the important events in retrospect. This is similar to the flashback techniques referred to by E.D. Jones who believes that their introduction in theatre is for emphasis, clarification and to break the monotony of the narrative structure, which the drama uses.

At this point one is reminded of what K.E. Senanu says:

In the script, Sidi stages a pantomime to re-enact the arrival of the photographer from Lagos who had fallen in love with her, taken photographs of the village and given her image a front-page printing in a popular magazine [...]. But the problem that the production faced at this point and never quite managed to solve, was to make the traditional dances chosen as a substitute for the pantomime, a celebration of Sidi's youth. This would have prepared the way for the finale and contrasted capitulation of youth to old-age cunning at the end of the play. (Critical Perspectives 74-78)

Whatever might have been the success or failure of the dances which K.E. Senanu observed, it is undoubtedly true that they act as a vehicle of social commentary, enlarge the narrative modes of the play and focus attention on the other mediums of semantic exchanges available to the exploratory artist who stands at the crossroads of culture, i.e. use both traditional story telling with the measured notes of the colonial tongue. As a form and pattern of expression they are recognizably the most direct and yet the most complex form of theatrical communication, which is both prior to, and transcends, verbal drama. But their relevance in societies such as that of Nigeria

is in their ability to speak to audiences who lack the specialist knowledge to appreciate the technical jargons of modern drama.

But then dance is also the sub-text of the written form and puts to the reportire of the dramatist all the resources he needs to reach to his people, his audience. Its gestures, motions, and colors help the story to move along without any hiccups.

Leslie Paik, in his essay entitled 'Wordsworth, Shelley, and Soyinka's Pessimism in Procession,' in *Postcolonial Literature Web*, refers to the Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook, where some serious charges have been leveled against Soyinka. He points to that section of the 'Yearbook', which contains the attack.

Although satire and social and political commentary have always been a staple of Soyinka's work, even in such lighthearted examples as his early drama *The Lion and the Jewel*, critics discern an increased anger, pessimism, and devotion to political themes in his work after 1967 (Contemporary Literary Criticism, Yearbook 1986, 277).

In 1966, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a distinguished professor of literature and East Africa's foremost writer gave a brilliant lecture at Africa Centre, London, entitled, 'Satire In Nigeria' in which he discussed the works of Wole Soyinka and T. M. Aluko, identifying the satirical thrusts they make in Nigerian society through their work. But Ngugi had reservations about the pictures Soyinka presents, especially in his play, The Lion And The Jewels (produced in Ibadan in 1959).

Confronted with the impotence of the elite, the corruption of those steering the ship of State and those looking after its organs of justice, Wole Soyinka does not know where to turn. Often the characters held up for our admiration is ... cynics, or sheer tribal reactionaries like Baroka [...]. Although Soyinka

exposes his society in breadth, the picture he draws is static, for he fails to see the present in the historical perspective of conflict and struggle. It is not enough for the African artist, standing aloof, to view society and highlight its weaknesses. He must go beyond [...] (Thiong'o, Satire in Nigeria 1966).

Soyinka could see the disastrous effect of colonialism in Nigeria. The political, social and economic mess and above all the climate of fear under which people all around lived, made Soyinka weary, but not really exhausted. His faith in the resources of his people, and in fact those around the world, similarly oppressed, stemmed from his incisive assessment that societies can regroup through interaction.

Soyinka's dramaturgy never suggests a society in inertia. If traditions are culled in his work, they also explain and contain the dichotomies of present aberrations. But, Soyinka's dramaturgy is also a latent exercise in building up the consciousness of readers. It makes them aware of the many different ways of looking at things- through exchanges- with events, histories, nationalities and cultures, alien to each other apparently. It provokes humanity to take up the positions of the 'other'.

Thus it is within human relationships that the essence of a human attribute, that such a dignity, is most meaningfully sought, not within the self as some mystic endowment, but as a product of social interaction.

Africa should not bother to ape the West. If Lakunle is admonishable, it is because the teacher has no notions of progress expect through the vague façade of fashion. Bale may not be likeable too. But in some ways he is better than the foolish master. At least, he recognizes progress and knows how it is to be attained.

In choosing between two evils, Soyinka, goes for one, his people are best acclimatized to control and define. Traditional incompetence of its rulers was the

result of Nigeria's domination by the West. If Nigeria must accept the West at all, it must be on its own terms and one that suits its human enterprise.

Mikhail Bakhtin in his work The Dialogic Imagination (1983) asserts that a discourse "orchestrates" voices on many levels: "authorial speech, the speech of narrators, inserted genres, and the speech of characters". Each voice he mentions "permits a multiplicity of social voices" whose diffuse movement, whose dispersion into rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia", whose "dialogization" defines the novel in its richest aspect (263) endowing it with the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the written work. But in focusing on this social component, the linguistic basis is apparently suppressed, and in Africa this basis is what is most heavily overlaid with palimpsests and echoes, voices that remain silent and not spoken at all.

But while Bakhtin admits the fertility of written forms in allowing for the intermixing of disparate linguistic genres, he is not supportive of the oral forms and believes that orature signifies a closed world which affirms a stable order, with characters who are either epic heroes or mystical beings or folk types.

The epic past is called the "absolute past" for good reason: it is both monochronic and valorized; it lacks any relativity. (The Dialogic Imagination 15-16)

This attitude of Bakhtin must be looked into and examined.

Soyinka uses ritual to organize and define in communal terms the apparatus of opposition to stasis and provoke meaningful new changes. But, he is not the only writer to have incorporated rituals in his aesthetic framework. Aristotle was the first to do so and Friedrich Nietzsche and G. Wilson Knight both of whom were deeply alive

to the functions of drama have anticipated his position in the modern age in sublimating audience emotions though differently than what the Greek believed in an achievement of a catharsis of pity and fear.

Like Aristotle, Nietzsche believes that tragedy developed from the Dionysian dithyramb (Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy 26). He also argues that in tragedy, ritual dithyramb is only a symbol of the universal and individual conflicts raging in all societies of the world (Hinden, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 359).

Nietzsche's concept of audience effect was also that in the experience of drama the individual achieves a subliminal perception of a communal consciousness. In and through the dramatic dialectics, an audience member realizes that the dramatic conflict parallels his internal psychological conflict both as an individual and as the member of the society. At the same time a conflict is paralleled within the world will between the principles of fusion and those of individuation (Hinden, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 8)

While G. Wilson Knight accepts Nietzsche's model of the link between rituals and tragic drama which in the latter's case was restricted purely to the Greek plays, in Knight's case an examination of the dramatic process also takes into account the plays of Shakespeare, Wagnerian and modern drama. Knight discusses in his arguments the psychological and the psychoanalytic conflict which drama engenders in the audience.

While Soyinka accepts that drama has a ritual component to it, he departs from any monotheistic concern with the ritual to include references to contemporary history and even gears the same to a revolutionary or liberating consciousness. He also postulates that in the experience of the theatre, revolution and the ritual, the

individual loses a sense of himself and when he fights to have it back he carries along a new sense of individuation based on a renewal awareness of communal values and beliefs. Ultimately, the individual does not remain ensconced to his earlier self and when he realizes his true potential for wisdom, it is generally with an understanding that his community must benefit from it. For Soyinka the easiest way of achieving transference of meanings catapulted by the culture hero is through an incorporation of ritual, which encourages the inclusion of the audience to have its complete say and evolution. Masks, dance, songs and the like and those that the common man understands have been consequently brought in by the artist, purposefully, to allow the audience participate in the dramatic processes.

But one point needs to be pointed out here. This is that while Nietzsche indicated a body of living man as his community, Soyinka's definition of the same proceed from an ontological summation of Yoruba metaphysics which posits three major areas of experience—the living, the dead, the unborn. To these time frames, Soyinka adds another—the area of transition, which he defines in the 'Fourth Stage,' which is also a mediatory world, the "area of transition". (ADO 26)

All action Soyinka further must involve a stage of transition with its precedent in the will of Ogun who is also Soyinka's favored deity in being the first amongst the gods to cross the abyss that separated man from the gods and thus reuniting them with the humans. Human actions must parallel the gods who led by Ogun defied their inherent fears, to forge ahead a new world.

But in A Dance of the Forests, Soyinka's patterning of contemporary Nigerian history through the weaving of past, present and the future-is to point out to an incomplete ritual, the rites of passage being blocked and fissured in the devious manipulations of leadership. The inconsistencies which this triggers off, between the

expectations of the common man and what he finally achieves is a commentary on the lackadaisical and equivocal commitment of the powers that be in addressing the political and social crisis that strangled Nigeria after the independence of 1962. Obviously tragedy in such a society is far from being an individual event and a spectacle for the society. It is rather the contiguity of the whole social body in the malignant and hazardous dynamics surrounding its being that gives to the Dance an exponential social argument. It is the social manifestations that dictate individual suffering and to that extent, recognition of hamartia is both an individual and social necessity.

The play's opening with the "Welcoming of the Dead" and "Gathering of the Tribes", turns out to be no solace in the past for the emergence of the "Dead Man" and the "Dead Woman", subverts all expectations of a fruitful beginning in the nation's march and celebrations towards prosperity. The implications are intended to be expansive and far from a simplistic idealization of the past. The need is to critically examine the totality of paradigms which gives the past its distinction. Mata Kharibus for example appear in every generation under different names. Rola or Madame Tortoise is the coquette, the flirt or the prostitute endangering the security of individuals and nations when she is in position of power. The Court Historian's interpretation of history is the same in all eras-it is the tyrant's version. It is the common man who is the victim of state's oppression. A release from this morass is however not possible in the way of life the common man chooses.

This has to be through an alternative, such as Demoke suggests- through his human suffering and expiation, promoting the liberty of those who continue to suffer the consequences of destabilizing intrusions in their lives by the mighty and the powerful. That the commentary of the play is expansive has already been suggested

earlier. Soyinka's dramatic apparatus at this point needs recognition of its functioning momentum. It may be reemphasized that while he speaks of the simultaneity of the divine and human order, Soyinka is essentially making a point to relate the repercussions of individual anomalies on the larger social scene and of society as such on the latter. His plays, especially the serious ones, are not linear. Each scene reflects on the others, except that the episode of the Half-Child is completely kept in isolation. Una MacLean views the Half-Child as symbolic of the perilous existence of Nigeria on the attainment of independence. (Black Orpheus. Vol 15, 1964) Eldred Jones 'regards it as a symbol for man's future (The Writing of Wole Soyinka 44-46). But Margaret Laurence in her essay complied with Ulli Beier sees the arrival of the Half-Child as a mere scene only and does not take cognizance of its relatedness with other parts of the play. (Laurence & Brier, Black Orpheus. No 8, 1960)

But Laurence's view cannot be taken for granted. Though the Half-Child, is negligible on the surface it is the victim of an inhuman political regime and thus its presence in the play is illustrative at a concrete level the repercussions of misrule. The Half-Child again bears resemblance to the Yoruba concept of 'abiku' though it is really not for it is not even born. His subsequent game of *sesan* with the 'Figure in Red', his loss to the latter who intends to take him as his own agent of death reveals at a deeper emotional level the hostilities and insecurities suffered by the weak and the despondent as mere devices in the larger game of ego and self-aggrandizement. Its movement towards its mother may be taken at a connotative level- Nigeria's search for its own roots when it was being rumpiled upon by the neo-colonial regimes. In fact, it is also upon the Half Child reaching its mother that she can be unburdened of dented sense of completeness and nourish to life and activity as only a mother can.

Shall my breast again be severed

Again and yet again be severed

From its right of sanctity? (Dance 80-81).

Ogun who supports human beings throughout, especially Demoke, tries to help the “Dead Woman” by drawing the child towards her. (Margaret Laurence sees in this act of Ogun an affirmation of the Half-Child being an abiku, and in Ogun’s acting a malevolent aspect in this case.) But, the “Interpreter”, and the “Third Triplet”, who, dance the dance of “ampe” and throw the child between them, intercept Ogun. Demoke intervenes to save the child for having already taken the life of his apprentice Oremole, he is under a deep mental duress and recognizes that a component of creativity is preservation. The question thrown by the ‘Forest Head’ at Demoke assumes relevance at this point.

Aroni, does Demoke know the meaning of his act? (Soyinka, Dance of the Forests 82)

And Aroni goes on to add:

Demoke, you hold a doomed thing in your hand .It is no light matter to reverse the deed that was begun many lives ago. The Forest will not let you pass (Dance 82).

Demoke however makes the human choice. In his hubristic daring, he allows the future generations of mankind to live with the conjugal possibility of being attached to its past and also being responsive to the future. Demoke’s act may then be seen as a genuine, but difficult act of freedom. But it is nonetheless necessary to forge ahead and “pierce the encrustations of soul deadening habit, and bare the mirror of original nakedness” as the Forest Head says (Dance 82).

Demoke's catharsis is arrived through a recognition of his personal delinquencies, his negation of ego, and his commitment towards those who suffer.

Soyinka's dramaturgy, the building up of opposites through the dance of the "Interpreter" and the "Third Triplet, " involving the child, symbol again of the country's future, transmutes "ampe," the traditional Nigerian dance pattern into a short and snappy expression of the nation's ills. Tradition has been aesthetically changed in this act of the dramatist. Soyinka applies the form and pressure of a past jargon and gives it a modern interpretation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Those who experienced individually the volcanic rise and upsurge of expectations and then its falling trajectory responded with bitterness and increasing pain to “a nationalism of mourning”<sup>1</sup> (Brennan, Salman Rusdie 3) seen at its most poignant in shift of balance in the works of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, from the high idealism of early years as in The River Between (1965) and Weep not, Child (1964). Even more problematic became the definitions of nation and nationality and as Mazrui laments<sup>4</sup> “never again would it be possible to distinguish between a song of national patriotism and the anguished choke of Africa’s self-indictment”<sup>1</sup> (Ali, The Patriot as an Artist 89).

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHO BORN FOOLS

SOCIALISM CHOP MAKE I CHOP

CONTREY BROKE (Beautiful Ones 106).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Okri also defamiliarizes the anxiety-generating potential that would normally

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

decision not to choose temporal power is community decided.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

suicide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Madman 289).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bio ti wa

As Was-Is –Now.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So he changed back to Christianity. (Opera 310)

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

A laborer's life is a healthy one

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

Clean exercise; see how those muscles bulge

Power beyond you my bookish don (Opera 311)

But, it is the second part that is disturbing.

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

The proof's in my lungs when I sneeze

Well, my chest is congested

But the port's decongested (Opera 311)

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

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

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

Rather than spend all the nights with her love

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

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

(Obscene gesture by Anikura on 'Salute' )

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Pregnant mother wedged with elbow*

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

*Well the rich can telephone for a cure*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The famous Scotland Yard

Its record yet unmarred

Did smell a rat in a diplomatic bag

A crack team did they field

Round the strong room barred and sealed

But the pouch... ..

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WING COMMANDER. Every offender shall be guilty as charged

Laundering of earnings from drug operations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

ERINJOBİ. 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 fulfills 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. Seanannu 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." (Bacchae17) 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 infact 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 dissolution .....Agemo 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 form 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  
Retched 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).

In any postcolonial discourse, language begets configurations of power. It is also an instrument for the fulfilment of democratic aspirations. At the height of colonialism, the use of language was a measure of culture control and the language of the masters played an essential role in the process of colonization. As of now it has come to be recognized as a strategy for an egalitarian society where men irrespective of culture and sect have the right and the capacity to force changes in league with its basic rights and desires. The postcolonial voice can decide to resist imperial linguistic domination in two ways -- by rejecting the language of the colonizer or by subverting the empire by writing back in a European language. In his Clarendon Lectures Part III, Oxford, 1996, Thiong'o speaks of the need for subaltern communities to move out of their straitjackets of linguistic and cultural insulation to fight against their oppressors. Thiong'o speaks of the cave as a metaphor, which begets ignorance and illusion. An escape from it is the true way to knowledge and any subsequent venture into the real:

The original allegory appears in a crucial section of *The Republic*, where Plato is discussing the practicality of his ideal state and the qualities and attributes required of the philosopher king. The narrator is Socrates. Glaucon and his circle are the participatory listeners to his outline and details of the ideal republic. At one point, Socrates asks them to imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance as wide as the cave and open to the daylight. In the cave are men who have been prisoners all their lives. Indeed, their feet and necks have been chained so that they cannot turn their heads. They can only look straight ahead. At some distance behind them, burns a fire--the source of light--but between the entrance to the cave and the source of light is a screen. Thus, for the prisoners in the cave, every object, even their own bodies, appear only as shadows thrown by the fire on the wall opposite to

them. It is clear that for such prisoners the shadows become the whole truth until, some of them are somehow able to escape from the cave and see the Sun that endows with visibility all objects of sight. Socrates highlights their ascent from the realm of the illusionary to that of absolute knowledge, the form of the good, and the necessity of their eventual descent back among the cave dwellers to help light away the shadows and illusions of their existence. The rest of the allegory involves the relationship between the few who have escaped into truth and reality and the rest of the prisoners in the cave.

And again,

It will need the strenuous and continuous presence of the men of knowledge eventually to persuade the dwellers in the shadows to turn to the light. It is not a mechanical journey into knowledge. In fact, it is in the allegory of the cave where we see Plato's dialectic at work: the play of opposites in the journey of reason to absolute knowledge. (Clarendon Lectures III, Oxford 1996)

The process of disseminating truth is a complicated one and involves first the selection of a medium. Even then the intellectuals may come under attack from their readers and listeners. It is important to understand at this point the issues arising out of authority through language and the way the latter has been managed as a bulwark against any proper build up of resistance to oppression and material exploitation by the colonizers. Thiong'o calls back his impressions of humanity subjugated and harassed by the dominant powers that be, even disallowed to understand each other and so remain cloistered for the best part of their lives. This was to finally convince them of their own unworthiness in challenging the iron hands of misrule. But, he is optimistic that if the apparatus of language is put to the use of resistance, subjugated

humanity across the world stands to gain much. In fact the intellectual who is trained in the Ivy League Universities across the world can offer the best way to a resistance simulacrum, since he is aware of the interpretative strategies of the masters and can turn the same to the use of the oppressors. But most importantly, he can enable his men to come to terms with the most advanced ideas of the West, its technological and financial infrastructures which finally is what is going to be important in the running of the country.

Soyinka also proposes almost the same commitment from the intellectual. But, his vision of an Africa abundantly powerful in its financial and democratic resources, calls for a language, which holds forth the promise of a dialogue between two opposed cultures, traditions, outlooks and ways of life.

In his essay 'The Dialogues of Cultures' essays presented at the Center for European Integration Studies, Bonn, 1999, he begins his summative assessments of the cordon sanitaire against cultural movements.

These restrictive practices, he explains, are the result of anomalies, xenophobia, mistrust, fear and the like. Some may be accrued to religious purism.

And to what end is such a rigid-and often brutal-regimen of conformism? Obviously the elimination of identity and pluralism- a time tested mechanism of control, the suppression of individual will, choice, initiative, in short-the project of Power and Authoritarianism.... What, however, has been the lesson of human development? Simply that, in the long run, cultural boundaries have the virtue of porosity, the ability to let in foreign matter, and that culture itself has certain penetrating attributes of its own that enable it to find a vulnerable entry zone through the skin of the most hermetic carapace that has been

moulded around the pristine existence of any human community [...]

(Dialogue of Cultures)

Caution has to be exercised against so much of cultural despotism- the officiating of one cultural practice over the will and desires of another to dismantle and ostracize it. Hence, the language of discourse and indeed of any cultural discourse is supremely relevant. For Soyinka, his own language is a measure of his commitment to this truth. As a writer, he shoves off no cultural determinants. Instead, he shows his reluctance to disfavor the complex hobnobbing in discrete human experiences. For him the important question to be answered is whether the writer is in league with his ideological formulations, his social and human vision and above all else provokes a new and absolutely unfathomed aesthetic formulation that will make sure that man is not bothered by fissures any longer. As a writer, committed to the society of his age, looking at the present and its lacunas with umpteen discomfiture, the need to resolve and remake the social and human parameters has not left his vanguard. This is especially necessary in all dehumanized regimes of the world where divisions and breaks is the norm, rather than the exception. One of the ways, says Soyinka again, of a strangulating hegemonic enterprise is to ensure human social communities value the ideal of cultural osmosis and organism. But even in places where boundaries in class have been reduced and at least blurred to indistinction, the disjointing syndrome crops up again and again, re-surfaces even in the harshest repressions and must be confronted.

The history of animosities between cultures and people has been many times in and through language. Not so many years ago says Soyinka the greatest ambition of the Puerto Rican was to assimilate his culture and society with that of American society and to this effect he learned the English language and also tried to speak the

same like Americans (ADO 137). Now of course, the illusion no longer persists. Today, the Puerto Rican retains their Spanish accents and have even compelled the state to broadcast programmes on radio and the television in their native Spanish. Some years ago the Britons also vehemently opposed the imposition on them of the French language and made a united effort to see that their own languages that is English is not tampered with. The Welsh have been also successful after violent political agitation to resuscitate and integrate their own language into the official blocks of their country. Canada is on the brink of secession on linguistic lines.

Africa also has been far from acknowledging the legitimacy of pluralism. Writers and political activists have been excluded from official recognition owing to their choice of languages that marked them as alien even in their own homeland. Soyinka recalls some of these instances from countries like Congo. Here the linguistically proficient spoke the official language of letters, French. But they also retained some of their local dialects. They admitted their own languages and some even used the same for communications. But this created the real problem. Their verbal patterns were distinctly and individualistically those belonging to their communities and to this effect they could not be assimilated into the dominant linguistic groups. The official establishment segregated them.

The only recourse to prevent such hostilities says Soyinka, was to not speak or communicate at all. But such a defensive position had its own drawbacks:

A non-verbal man, [...] is equivalent roughly, to a piece of inert utensil. To conclude: the degree of linguistic assimilation of any group within a community inversely affects the level of potential animosity, which the community can evoke against itself (ADO 137).

Soyinka could even recollect an incident that happened at Ibadan where he had been to collect scholarship forms. In his meanderings alone in the corridors of the Secretariat, he heard someone speak the 'furthers out Ibadan accent I had ever heard' (ADO 135). The speaker was a Caucasian, not even tanned. This was surprising in all probability, more so when the speaker belied all expectations to speak the language of the Blacks. Narrating the experience, Soyinka confirms that it is more often than not that the aural perceptions color the visual. Even when official recognition is bestowed to any language its markers are subjectively analyzed by the powers that be, coloring the approach and the experience which they signify so that even in selection and recognition a whole attitude of segregating them from us goes into play and presuppose the process of group-identification:

And more pertinently, the executors of government decisions are the very members of the community whose subjective definitions of aliens have been created by this very process (ADO 135).

In all civilized parlance therefore language is the mark of distinguishing one people from other and the process for the same has been built into human social consciousness through a selective discourse of segregation, building up in the process a whole data of boundaries. And the end result of it all is that humanity more often than not end up being opposed to one another, fighting and pulling each other down, unable to restrict the animosities that has been so clearly manipulated and build up in the consciousness. Soyinka's obvious concern in making man come to speaking terms with each other is in promoting a restorative and opposing force to such dissensions and also to re-embark for a society where there may be unity and conjugality.

As an anti-imperialistic and post-colonial, Soyinka sees so much of verbiage on language and segregation as another example of colonial dissimulation, a camouflage aimed at keeping nationalist and humanistic drives against imperialism at bay. This also makes sure that through a false reportage and addresses to the victimized through the socially recognized intellectuals of the oppressed nations, the common masses believe that all is hunky dory with languages and by extension with the official policy of recognition meant to ameliorate unhappy dignities among the so called aliens.

Like all other social parameters, language is a lived phenomenon and a social construct. It is subverted politically to further hegemony. An opposite and more creative form of linguistic apparatus would deny this possibility of segregation; make language the midwife of politicizing, redundant. Soyinka while advocating the need for a language of assimilation makes it a point that for all purposes, Kiswahili be made the continental language. Obviously, there can be dissensions amongst the academia and the political mandarins about such a move. Soyinka's indulgence of Kiswahili is however merely for its overall functionality and has nothing to do with denying the freedom of expressions that is traditionally available to all self-respecting linguistic communities of the pan African Diaspora. Such a pragmatic initiative is necessary and more so important in forging coalesced and united linguistic societies to challenge the outlandish and coercive artificial boundaries foisted on the oppressed "by the colonial powers by so arbitrary and greed oriented directions" (ADO 137).

The colonial attempt to solidify and aggravate the already existing boundaries between the ethnic and groups of the continent has to be resisted. Soyinka confirms

that patience, even in such sham manipulation is fidgety, blunt and dangerously detrimental to all attempts at cohesiveness.

I have no patience with any national strategy which in any way, overt or covert, solidifies the meaningless colonial boundaries which have created and are still creating such havoc on the continent among African nations and peoples [...]. I believe that the nation state as an ideal belongs to the last century. To consolidate untenable geographical boundaries with the linguistic is not merely stagnating in essence and effect; it is sterile and regressive. Obviously, this is a standpoint from which my concepts of a linguistic strategy stem. (ADO 137)

The necessity to challenge subversive ploys of the colonial regimes is the need of the hour. It is equally important to figure out the sociological configurations of life, the patterns of human social survival, which in repressive colonies, is through exploitation, coercion, inequality and oppression. Afterall, divisions along linguistic and ethnic lines are meant to keep people down and out. But, investigation of linguistic boundaries must also expose the very process involved in the making of identities and the imposing of the same at the wake of man's garrulity and superficial information.

In any case however such boundaries must not mislead the people for long and if recourse is made to reach to the roots of any social organization and its way of creating discourses, common grounds for an expressive identification and goal similarity is not hard to fathom. Ultimately, such discoveries are also a necessary coming into being of the powers of the mind and to this end it is a new mode of liberation, in and through the consciousness.

It is a process of the mind, which transcends the emotional content of separation or unification, and forges, in whatever field it can, the psychological, cultural and political tools for a healthy social entity. (ADO 138)

But how is this bond amongst people to be declared and clarified. That remains the basic priority with Soyinka. In Africa, there is not one paramount linguistic pattern or a monoculture. The experience of the Diaspora is even more complicated by the presence within its boundaries of colonial influences and similitude of linguistic diversities. Despite such apparent odds, it is possible to take cue from the works of men like Frantz Fanon, DuBois, Nelson Mandela and above all the great Elizabethan, Shakespeare whose works create dangerously new modes of linguistic and spoken genres. The Elizabethan caved in the outlandish and obsolete modes of human experience to forge new similitude of moral, spiritual and psychological action to mark the coming into being of a synthetic, revolutionary culture. But there was also Mahatma Gandhi who voiced his concern at the linguistic trap in which the colonial product finds itself. Gandhi's language, simple and easily graspable, expressing the home-spun truths of honest labor, commitment and duty towards the motherland, culling incidents from the folklore and the mythological patterns of India's rich historical culture was a medium for a nationalistic discourse, a medium also to reincarnate the new Indian, a throw back to the parochial Euro centric medium for expression brought by the colonialist.

But, apart from this, Soyinka's motivating indulgence to incorporate the treasures of England's and France's linguistic wealth with those of Africa was to an extent driven home at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome, 1959 where the following resolutions were passed

(1) that free and liberated black Africa should not adopt any European or other language as a national language

(2) that one African language should be chosen and all Africans would learn this national language beside their own regional language

(3) that a team of linguists be instructed to enrich this language as rapidly as possible, with the terminology for expression of modern philosophy, science and technology (ADO 140)

At the same conference the Malagasy poet, Rabemanjara expressed his disgust and triumph at the linguistic cleft in which the colonial writer found himself:

Truly our conference is one of language thieves. These crimes, at least, we have committed ourselves. We have stolen from our masters this treasure of identity, the vehicle of their thought, the golden key to their soul, the magic sesame which opens wide the door of their secrets, the forbidden cave where they have hidden the loot taken from our fathers and for which we must demand a reckoning. (ADO 140)

Soyinka knows that it is not easy for the Africans learn a particular language as the national language, especially when regional and group solidarities are manifest in-which in Soyinka's own words represents a ' political claustrophobic, and therefore explosive social capsule' (ADO 142)

Soyinka re-emphasizes the point that to persist with the colonial policy of allowing each linguistic community go about in formulating its own language divide is to expound the crisis, and thereby aggravate the culturally divisive colonial

orientation. The logical development of, or complimentary phase to the revolutionary assault on the colonial framework is to evolve a new medium of communication.

Soyinka's dramas suggest a tentative resolution of linguistic barriers. As they move between the past and the present, they enact a symbiotic parallel with other dynamic aspects of the African society, which retains the memory of the past even today. In doing so, they answer the needs felt by the dramatists and writers of Africa to bridge the continent's present with her past and also because the society of the continent, with its cultural beliefs of tradition in incessant change and modulation, accepting and coagulating innovative semantic variations, is a pragmatic one, and progressive also. All are based on the recognition of the need for the earth, society, individual, and even the gods to seek renewal as a condition of growth and life.

One aspect of this relationship is confrontational-past against the present; indigenous traditional mores with that superimposed from without in the form of colonialism; linguistic communities and confidantes, uncomfortable with change and innovation and the urgency of the latter in giving form and shape to a new Africa which would take a position of honor among the committee of nations.

Soyinka's dramas allow for the meeting of two cultures, people, civilizations, discourses and modes of human social experience, the mythological and the mundane, orature and the written word, objectivity and subjective experience to forge out of them an extraterrestrial dimension, not lived separately, to shape up a hybrid, vital, complex and intermingled world. In a forceful upheaval of modern style, the boundaries between languages have been enraptured, and then the fields separated by these barriers have been shaped literally from beneath the surface, to their most amazing formulations.

Soyinka's use of ritual, affects change through the act of transfiguration or sacrifice, because the victim or the carrier as Soyinka calls him, is the dual inhabitant of two realms: he or she is like Esu –messenger, horseman, bridge –who moves between the human and the divine. So too does the hero belong to two worlds and act as the bridge from one to the other. The hero again would not be able to take his people with him if he were to neglect his past altogether and so that his audience or chorus or the society of which he is a part understands him, he begins the process of change keeping in mind that for his people, tradition is a living force, though susceptible to change and modulation. In turn, he is also the pragmatic beginner, the vision of a new human and social world that builds its foundations upon the vital, fermenting and vigorous moorings of an ancestral world. But, when he fails in the process, or his lacunas are exposed, the community is still empowered to gather out of such grievances, the benediction of a new and salubrious awareness, and changes still. Thus alteration is in the very ethos of African culture, because it involves leaving a familiar world, and a transition into an uncertain world. Soyinka's linguistic genres, relies on this recognition of boundaries, and the process which his dramas exemplify, of transcending them to force newer insights is through juxtapositions, as has been said before. But the technique of sabotaging the center also involves a few other methods. In this connection, it is important to remember that Soyinka's theatre being what it is, rooted in his own culture is also influenced by other dramatic oeuvres from Europe- specially the theatrical techniques of Bakhtin and Artaud.

Bakhtin's struggle against the abstraction of literature creates a strong structural analogy to Antonin Artaud's conception of theater, which has also been inspired by the vision of transcending textual-based theater. Artaud's theater of cruelty aims to lead the individual back to theater's archaic roots of self-constitution. However,

Bakhtin and Artaud approach the issue of textual representation from opposite sides; since Bakhtin favors the spoken word, his critique is directed against the abstract literacy of books, thus making a reference to the theatrical. The aim of Artaud's critique, on the other hand, is aimed at the Western tradition of theater itself, as it doubts its textual and literal foundation. Yet both sides show a particular interest in the dialectics of the body as a basic medium of aesthetic and ethic innovation. While Bakhtin develops the concept of the grotesque body, Artaud requires the artists to traumatize their bodies methodologically.

A discussion of Bakhtin and Artaud's re-conception of theatrical representation requires both a theoretical and a practical perspective. A theoretical perspective allows us to study the basic mechanics of the visual and the verbal apart from the language and body in theatrical representation. A practical perspective, such as that of Bakhtin and Artaud, may help to better understand forms of performing arts that are highly body-orientated, such as those of late Soviet and Post-soviet arts and culture.

Throughout the modern theater movement - including Strindberg, Mejerhol'd, Brecht and, of course, Artaud - one finds a general tendency to subvert, or even eliminate, constitutional elements of theater. In order to understand the modern conception of theater, it is helpful to recall some of the media-theoretical basics of ancient Greek theater. What Friedrich Nietzsche's late-romantic view calls the spirit of music, responsible for the birth of tragedy, can be traced back to the alphabetization in ancient Greece. Theater was one of the phenomena resulting from the invention of the phonetic alphabet, and as such it functioned as an amplifier of the cognitive, emotional and sensory effects of alphabetization, ensuring that all members of Athenian society, regardless of whether they were literate or illiterate,

would acquire and internalize these effects. Kerckhove has summarized these effects as follows:

- 1) Theater turns visuality into an autonomous medium. It helps to develop a focused and distanced vision able to function independently from other senses or sensations. Whereas the sort of visuality required in daily life is always integrated into the blend of other sensations, the visual perception learned in the theater is removed from this context, as it is purely one-directional (Kerckhove, Substance 27).
- 2) Theater removes the senses from the contents of knowledge and the forms of memory. At first glance, this may seem paradoxical, because we are used to contrasting the sensations and emotional qualities of dramatic activity with the evident rationality of the written word. However, rational abstraction can also be found in the theater, because it is here that people first began to cultivate the typical Western habit of dividing sense into meaning and sensation. Theater seems to have been invented to enhance the separation of the mind from the senses, to teach us to divide mind and body. (Kerckhove, Substance 29)
- 3) In traditional theatre, there is the possibility of a detachment on the part of the audience. The audience always knows that the actor is a mere performer and his words are mere articulations of texts. The actor himself enacts his scenes without any particular attention to the sensations of words. Consequently, in modern theater, as it is understood in Europe, the body and knowledge, the somatic and semantics of it are separate from each other. In an epic on the other hand, the narrator embody the sentiments created by his words. He is aware of the immense possibility of sounds and attempts to

communicate their emotional state to the listeners. The narrator himself embodies the story and allows the same for his listeners. In writing tragedies, a rational interpretation always has to precede the action itself. In theater, the performance of language loses its direct physical foundation. In traditional epic narration, body and text appear as a unity, an integrated whole; there is no external text. In addition, the function of the ancient chorus is defined by the transformation of all spontaneous emotional and somatic reactions of the spectators into a state of self-observation. These separations of language, text and knowledge do not necessarily mean the loss of an archaic unity; still, they have to be viewed as a basic precondition for the understanding of somatic and semantics as two independent systems that each have their own dynamics. The independent status of seeing, and the separation of semantics and somatic, of knowledge and life, have a fundamental impact on the position of the individual in the world. In a world dominated by hearing, perception is always located in the middle of reality itself. This is why oral culture makes no categorical discrimination between subject and object, between self and other. Writing and the theater provide the cognitive precondition for taking a step back and observing from a distance. It is no longer the world that flows through the human being; now, in contrast, the individual turns the world into the object of his or her theoretical and practical interests (Kerckhove, Substance 30)

One thing that all the different manifestations of modern theater have in common is the desire to eliminate these conceptual elements, since these are fundamentally linked to the birth of tragedy that came out of writing.

In his essay on linguistics, The Word in the Novel, Bakhtin repeats, to some extent, Plato's skeptical discussion of writing, voice and oral communication, paying particular attention to the physical foundation of speaking. (62,64) Under this equation, language communicates the mental and emotional stress of the human spirit- its excitement, cry and desire to express what it feels. This obviously means that language itself, or at least the written word is not sufficient enough in bringing out what the individual understands. There is always a void between what the individual knows and what he finally puts in words. Hence Bakhtin points to the "sensation of verbal activity" - a "sensation that involves both the organism and the activity of creating meaning". He speaks of a "concrete unity" of "the flesh," of "the spirit of the word," and of the unity "of the active soul and body" (The Word 62, 64)

Bakhtin understood that the true and proper language of theatre must incorporate the voice, with its particular tones and intonations. At the same time, he rejected the traditional form of theater in Europe because it originated from writing and only worked to internalize literacy. Bakhtin's concept of dialogue and dialogism is therefore different from its traditional conception. He rejects dialogue "as a compositional form of speech" (The Word 92). Moreover, traditional dialogues promote social and economic hierarchies. It promotes various forms of differentiation, such as I versus the Other, internal versus external, observing versus acting. This is the starting point for Bakhtin's criticism of traditional dramatic dialogue, which moves towards the conception of an "immanent," "inner," and even "natural" dialogism (The Word 92).

There are three areas in which Bakhtinian dialogism goes against the fundamental

conditions of traditional theatricality and representation. 1) In a traditional dramatic enactment, an actor has his own individual perspective to things, different from others. Bakhtin however believes that an actor is always under the influence of his environment “bonded inseparably with the response, the motivated repartee” (The Word 94)

2) In traditional theater dialogue, there is a difference between individual utterance and objective context. For Bakhtin, however, all dialogue partners are inevitably dominated by context:

The repartee is formed within the context of the entire dialogue that exists; it is formed and assigned meaning to by one's own (the speaker's) and the other's (the partner's) utterances. Self and Other cannot separate the repartee from this mixed context of utterances without losing its meaning and tone. It is an organic component of an undifferentiated whole” (The Word 97).

Bakhtin also believes that it should be the project of theatre to take language back to its relevance with the spirit of man. This so-called “inner dialogism” is located in the depth of every word, regardless of the specific dialogue situation: “Every word is directed towards an answer and cannot escape the far-reaching influence of the anticipated repartee” (The Word 93).

Bakhtin discovers this inner dialogism in literature, in the written text. A word may penetrate the concept of an object and gain a deeper meaning out of it. A word may do so by transforming its own semantic and syntactic structure. The existence of ambiguity even in a written text proves that it is possible for words to sink deep into an object and dissect its social, intellectual and emotional parameters beyond what

appears externally. The changing dialogical orientation seems to become an event of the word itself, vitalizing and dramatizing the word in all its elements (The Word 97). This inner ambiguity makes language a corporal process. This third element clearly reveals the function of dialogue, and also the references to theater in Bakhtin's argumentation: theatricality works to translate literature back into life. Hence, Bakhtinian theater tries to eliminate the effects of literacy in favor of an oral, spoken and corporal form of social community.

Bakhtin deals with theater more extensively and directly in Rabelais and His World. Here, he discusses various forms of theaters in the late Middle Ages and early modern times, such as mystery plays, scholastic dramas, commedia dell'arte, diableries, and street theater. But, it is his concept of market place theatre that is of relevance here.

The theatre of the market place is set "without stage, in the middle of life itself" (Rabelais 291). Here, "there is no separation into participants (actors) and spectators; they all play together, [...] no dividing line exists between theater performance and real life" (Rabelais 292). The spectator is no longer a distanced observer, but becomes an actor of a dramatic situation himself. This element of the market proves to be an aesthetic principle of Rabelais' text.

Also, in a market place theatre, the theatrical space is created by sounds and cries of actors and spectators interacting with each other and their environment. These cries include everything: the cries of merchants and dealers advertising their wares, curses, puns, swearing, praise, science and philosophy. In such a theatrical arena, images and visual effects have less importance. Important are the pragmatics of the actors and spectators.

The speaker always declares his solidarity with the crowd on the market place. He is not separate from it, he does not teach it, he does not expose it, and he does not frighten it; he laughs together with it. His speech does not even have a touch of sinister seriousness, of fear, reverence and humility. It is the cheerful, fearless, open and uninhibited speech of the marketplace, unrestricted by taboos and conventions (Rabelais 299).

In this acoustic space, language loses its distinctive denotations. The marketplace is dominated by semantic inversions and travesties. Everything becomes an object for puns, for reversals of semantic opposites, for disguises, jokes, deceptions, illusions (Bakhtin). Everything here has to do with language as a pure performing act and the comic and grotesque activities of producing words. As Bakhtin shows in an example taken from *commedia dell'arte*: "The articulation of a complicated word is staged like a birth" (Rabelais 391), and: "The borders between body and world are removed" (Rabelais 344, 350).

Bakhtin however praises the theatre of the market for another reason. This is the motif of book trading. Book trading in Bakhtin's concept is not an economic enterprise for trading of knowledges. Rather, it suggests the flow of knowledges, ideas and beliefs from books into life. Bakhtin repeatedly describes how, in the marketplace, the abstract and exclusive medical, philosophical or theological book-knowledge can be at last proved and criticized on a corporal level.

What's more, it is not the individual body that appears as the final basement of abstract book-knowledge, but the marketplace turns into a space where all those bodies separated by degrees of literacy merge once again into the whole of a social

body; here a total body-drama takes place in which every individual body participates as an unfinished grotesque unit:

In that solemn self-organization of the people [...] individuals feel themselves to be an inseparable part of the collective, members of the body of the masses. In this unity, the individual body begins to lose itself, and it almost becomes possible to change bodies, to be reborn [...]. Through this, people feel its concrete, sensory, physical unity (Rabelais 281).

The main elements of Bakhtin's conception can also be found in Artaud's theater, yet with a much different stress. At first glance, Artaud seems to define theater language in a way that is very similar to Bakhtin. Artaud makes a strict survey of traditional dialogue. According to him, dialogue - whether written or spoken - does not belong on the stage, it belongs into the book. This is why theater has its own reserved place in manuals of literature history as a form of articulated language. According to him, a theatrical stage is a physical and concrete place that has to be filled. Such an area demands that it has a language of its own and this language is different from the one employed for other discourses.

Artaud describes the proper language of theatre as concrete language. It is also to be differentiated from the word.

Conventional theater according to Artaud is a theatre of the word. But a true language of the stage includes something more than the word. It is everything manifested on the stage materially, and that is initially oriented towards sensations, rather than towards the mind and verbal language. To Artaud, the task of theater is

not to work out the psychosocial effects of literacy but --as to Bakhtin-- to reconstitute language as a physical event:

[...] as language is born on the stage, acquiring its effectiveness through this spontaneous emergence. [...] without taking the indirect path through the word [...] should be the theater itself rather than the written and spoken play (Theatre 49).

As in the marketplace theatre of Bakhtin, in the theater of Artaud words are used not for the clear expression of ideas. In Artaud's dramas, words are meant to interrogate, disconcert and subvert all relations between the objects themselves and their forms and their meanings. In this sense, they are anarchistic. Meanings become displaced and inverted. The shock of this theater is not produced by action, as in traditional theater, but through the merging of fact and fiction on stage. According to Artaud, theater does not deal with "the unexpected [...] in situations, but in objects that [...] change from a mental vision to being real" (Theatre 53).

One also finds that Artaud bridges the divide that marks off the actor from the spectators. In Artaud's theatre one sees the viewers and the players in the same arena. Artaud abolishes the stage and the auditorium. This means that the spectator is now at the center of the play and is a part of the action that engulfs him. Between spectators and play, between actors and spectators, a direct relationship now emerges. The audience knows that it can be in a position where the actor is and so, cannot be fully detached from the players themselves. This reintegration of stage and auditorium leads to two phenomena that have already been addressed in Bakhtin's conception: First, there is the tendency towards systematic depersonalization that Artaud discovered in Balinese theater, and that he considers to

be fundamental to his so-called theater of cruelty. The declared aim of this theater of cruelty is to return to a theater of the masses.

The second phenomenon concerns the transformation of the theatrical space from a visual into an acoustic space, into a space filled by language, noise and shouting. However, in Artaud's conception, this transformation is carried out much more carefully and in a more reflected way than in Bakhtin's initial idea. Artaud talks about the "shouts, moaning, vision, surprises, various bombshells" that must fill the stage; about "a permanent sound scene; sounds, noises and shouts need to be chosen first for their quality of vibration, and "only then for what they may represent" (Theatre 98). He emphasizes the intonation of language, while disqualifying its syntactical aspect: "A shout, uttered at one end, should reach the other, while being amplified and modulated from one mouth to the next" (Theatre 115) For Artaud, "theater is the [...] only place in the world and the last extensive means available to us for reaching the organism directly" (Theatre 97).

As in Bakhtin's marketplace theater, Artaud's stage language, which had been alienated by writing, returns to its corporal foundation. Consequently, Artaud wants language to express what is normally does not. Language must be such as provokes an irritant to the dormant senses. It must capture humanity's inward want to blend with its own spirits. Literacy as such is an assortment of mere symbols. By itself, it is nothing significant.

Despite the closeness of Bakhtin and Artaud's conceptions of theater, there is one important respect in which they clearly differ. Bakhtin holds the utopian belief that the theater of the marketplace may return the alienated verbal language to its corporal roots, thus reconstituting both an intact speech body and an intact social

body. Artaud acknowledges that the body of language can only be represented on stage as "dismembered and broken up in space" (Theatre 97).

The difference between the organic language body of the Bakhtinian marketplace and the dismembered language on the stage of Artaud's theater of cruelty leads to a further separation. Although the concept of fear plays an important role for both Bakhtin and Artaud, to Bakhtin, the grotesque body action of Carnavalesque Theater fulfills the cathartic function of overcoming a cosmic fear that is buried in the soul of all members of the community. This is very different from Artaud's conception of fear. The theater of cruelty attempts to bring back on stage and reawaken among the spectators, the great metaphysical fears on which ancient theater was based. The fear that Artaud wishes to recall in his theater of cruelty may be the deep shock that stems from the irreversibility of the separation between somatics and semantics, of body and mind --in other words, the shock about the irreversibility of literary psychosocial effects.

But, while Soyinka restores to the theatre its acoustics, using the stage area for the intermixing of voices, shouts, gestures etc, he also clarifies that another possibility to theatrical space is in the use of dance to propel a communal sensitivity. In most of the plays of Soyinka, one finds dances and other movements. Now, dance can be regarded as a classic case of negotiation. In the case of Africa, it is not only a part of its culture, but also rather an essential component of its togetherness, its opposition to authority and a challenge to rules.

To begin this discussion, taking The Road, at the first go makes a few things said about Soyinka already clear. The Road is important among Soyinka's plays. It achieves an unequivocal success in the union of theme and dramatic technique, an

experiment, which he had carried in A Dance of the Forests. In balancing of message and method, which says D.S.Izevbaye, “a successful communication, not in the sense of something immediately and wholly understood, but in the sense of a play which satisfies our sense of dramatic rightness” (Critical Perspectives 91). The tension in this play is not only made up of the linguistic devices employed herein, but due to the dichotomy that pertains to the fissure between what is seen and what is heard.

The setting of the drama is itself awkward. Its semantic overtures are noted through the employment of mime and setting. The road, the dominant symbol of the play connects the spiritual, the mundane and the satirical, while the sprawling motionless figures lying on the stage around the Askident Store, reminds one of death.

Among the characters of the play, Samson particularly revels in easy and affable wit, bludgeoning confident looking words, to unleash a whole non-serious attitudinizing.

SALUBI: Six o’ clock I bet .I don’t know how it is, but no matter when I go to sleep, I wake up when it strikes six .Now that is a miracle.

*(He gets out his chewing stick, begins to chew on it.)*

SAMSON: There is a miracle somewhere but not what you say. Maybe the sight of you using a chewing stick (The Road 2).

Samson’s term “miracle” is a comic subterfuge. It undercuts the seriousness with which Salubi has used the word. Similarly, when the Professor uses the same word.

his ludicrous dress and bearings, paves an anticipatory lightness of tone in the whole manner of its apprehension by the audience.

Almost a miracle [...] dawn provides the greatest miracle but this [...] in this dawn has exceeded its promise (The Road 8).

But when the same Professor uses the word 'wonder', the possibility of taking him non-seriously proves costly. In this case the word becomes illustrative of a non-conventional world-view.

PROF. Come then, I have a new wonder to show you .....a madness where a motorcar throws itself against a tree –Ggram! And showers of crystal flying on his broken souls.

Samson (*suddenly alarmed*). Wait! What was that about an accident? (The Road 36)

Samson, an important character in the play is like the audience naturally flabbergasted. Like his audience, he had taken the Professor literally. But his expectations are proved false. There is certainly a gulf between their worlds, between the use of language by one and that by another, which perforce also hoodwinks any fertile complacency. The two discourses, completely at odds with each other does not permit any normal osmosis of thought and unless human understanding itself is made to look out for newer modes of apprehension, straitjacket analysis of the semantic contours of language proves a lost foil.

PROFESSOR: I would say your problem is straightforward. You are in some kind of difficulty.

SAMSON: You have stated it exactly, sir.

Professor. In fact, one might almost say that you are about to pass through a crisis of decisions

SAMSON: Ah, I don't know that one Professor (The Road 180).

The words of the Professor, a complex variation of bombastic and inflated rhetoric "might almost say" and a pseudo professional lingo "a crisis of decisions", unhinges any recovery from Samson and his end, quipping conventional one liners are flat, indecisive and proletarian "Ah, I don't know that one Professor."

Moreover when Samson uses the phrase "that one"(The Road), he is to all certainty making an attempt to bridge the linguistic divide between Nigerian pidgin English and its standard colloquial manner. But the divergence between the Professor's linguistic apparatus and that of Samson, and indeed that of others grow incessantly while the Professor trail his own logic, indifferent to the effect of his own words.

Prof. How could you? You are illiterate. It is lucky for you that I watch over you, all of you (The Road 180).

The only response from Samson at this point is to go back again to his faltering convictions and remind the Professor to his original purpose: "Yes Sir, Er, about our problem Sir" (The Road 180).

There seems no end to this vaudeville routine, this quick fissions and recommencing of linguistic oddities.

SAMSON: Professor, what I mean is, how can a man cut off part of himself like that. Just look at him. He is not complete without a motor lorry.

PROFESSOR. He is not [*turns to stare at Kotonu*] What sort of animal is he?

SAMSON: Animal? I mean to say Professor! [...] Look Professor, the road won't be the same again without him.

PROFESSOR: He was a road mender too?

SAMSON: Sir? But I told you he is a driver (The Road 180-181).

The Professor's monologues appear idiosyncratic, not only because his logic is perceived from the straight forward Christian doctrine of Incarnation but due also to the common man's orientation to not look beyond surface semantics, the parole to seek out the langue, the subconscious blueprint of all repository wisdom. The Professor admits of the dangers in the Quest. But, he is willing to take a chance. True knowledge is not to be found in the ordinary ways of life. One needs to cross the demarcated line between life and death to break his way into wisdom.

The mad Professor obviously sees beyond mere literalness and though he is a maverick, his speeches, seen in the context of his discovery of the "Word" signifies his celebration of "death" as a precursor to all meaningful existence there is. This discovery made possible through refracting the mere literalness of the word "Bend" assumes its connotational suggestiveness in his uprooting the sign of "Bend" as a mere word with its associational domain in the parole. Soyinka uses a word to ascertain its silences, deconstructing so to speak the normative order, proposing a dialectics of separation while unhinging the truth of cardinal significance.

Besides, when the Professor speaks of the "Word" as discernible where the ascent is broken and the winged secret plummets back to earth, he is suggestive of the Ogboni thought on him. The ascent is the spirit's aspiration towards its maker.

Olorun the father, while the plummeting back to earth is the return to Ogboni, the earth, and the mother of all life. What this may forespeak is the interconnectedness of life and death for the Yoruba and is indeed a primal basis of all oriental thought and Eastern philosophies.

One way through which the cumulative experience of the Professor reaches its benediction and fruitfulness is then through the use of the metaphor, conjoining images and spaces divergent from one another to fish out meanings and semantic densities. The Professor's metaphors belong primarily to the world of the drivers and his figuration of the state of the road is a controlling strategy promulgative of the discrete nature of the human experience apart from its definition of the physical circumstances of life. But it above all resists assimilation into convenient scores of totalistic perspectives and so becomes perilous and insidious, tempting covert analysis.

Be the road! Coil yourself in dreams, lay flat in treachery and deceit and at the moment of a trusting step, rear your head and strike the traveler in confidence, swallow him whole, or break him on the earth (The Road 228).

The Professor alludes to the imagery of the snake in his final moments. He tells his listeners to follow a way of life that is profusely decrepit. It apparently projects treachery and deceit as valedictory to wisdom. Nonetheless, the Professor's words are an emissary to free will and the seductive torments of knowledge, encompassing evil. This riddle like apparatus in the linguistic contours of the Professor's speech is both perplexing and liberating, both for nullifying placid social expectations while streamlining new ways of seeing things.

Like metaphor, it is a presence of ambivalence. But as Sanda of the Beatification Boy says there is after all method in this madness and so logic of its own. But even in this play, there is this amalgam of the pidgin and the authentic prose, and while the setting of the play with its market places, its hustle and bustle of daily chores is completely African in its smells and sounds, the opening scene is itself a commentary on the hybrid nature of African economic and cultural life as seen by the dramatist.

Sanda the educated Nigerian with his passion for magazines and statistical data, is the quintessential liberal whose quotes from Shakespeare's *Lear* is juxtaposed with what he knows about the uneasy social parameters of his land.

BARBER. Those overnight millionaires then, how do you think they do it?

SANDA. Cocaine 419 swindle. Godfathering or mothering armed forces. Or after a career with police. Or with the Army, if you are lucky to grab a political post. Then you retire at forty --as a General who has never fought a war. Or you start your own church, or mosque. That's getting more and more popular (Beatification 240).

Sanda employs images of the army, church and the police to comment on the lecherous middle class who have lost all principles in the wake of the country's freedom. The rapidity with which religious and political symbols are made to bear the moral and human burnt infecting the entire country, suggests large-scale loss of values and the quick sliding of culturally accepted institutions. The Barber returns Sanda's verbal quips with strong negative or positives and knows of the political corruption infecting the country. The minstrel's songs are again African in their inspiration and build up. But their satirical overtones, with music, coming from the

barrel of guns, juxtaposes guns with the eye in an obnoxious reminder of the impeachment of human innocence through mechanical gadgets. Through a subsequent follow-up of animal imageries, hens and eggs, itching back and scratching the rather perverse and obscene nature of human exploitations are rendered quick and fast.

Soyinka's manner of narration also incorporates the proverb, which as an extension of the metaphor ties an old saying to a new context thus producing a valid cryptogram for the real life experience. In this model of the proverb, the dictum, is equated with art, which curiously, is distinguished from the experience to which it brought to bear upon. The level at which the change takes place in the process, is generally placed outside the literary act itself, that is in reality. But the drama creates a social world of its own kind and the proverb in consequence is a reflection on that reality. In Achebe, the narrator highlights his own presence with a gratuitous aside and distances the reader from the action. In Soyinka, and particularly in his dramas, the proverbial wisdom incorporates the audience and does not refer to them as if they are foreign to the speaker.

So when Mama Put in the play The Beatification of Area Boy says that "Shells have no name to them" and that "a dead man has no name" (247), she lambastes those who have ruined her family and her society through violence. But, she is taking all her listeners to her viewpoint. Hence her extensive use traditional wisdom where misfortunes are equated with disease, "But that proved only the beginning of the seven plagues"(247), is not resisted by the audience, but accepted as a possible version of the social and moral violence, which has made their lives so disgusting and unpalatable.

But the most significant of linguistic processes is to be figured out in the application of the Creole which is what the characters like the trader uses when communicating with his audience. It has to be borne in mind, that the use of corrupted English and impure grammatical structures, is Soyinka's way of controverting the essential claims of Negritude. It is at the same time his way of speaking against the exclusivist tendencies and the fears of acculturation, which looks upon the presence of the English language in Africa, as being absolutely other, and necessarily threatening the native tongues. Soyinka, however does not refuse to cross or mix. In short, the line between the two apparent opposites is, *mutatis mutandis*, a heady mix that conjoins without violence the two racial groups, Europeans and the Africans, a postmodern celebration of doubleness and an apparent embarrassment that blurs the line of demarcation.

For Wole Soyinka then, the albino and the bat represent the special spiritual force of those who are different from the others. At times such figures are also given as 'abiku', another favorite of Soyinka's --the one who will not stay, the child who dies and is repeatedly reborn only to die again.

The application of creolised English becomes reassuringly pleasing and even vibrant in the feisty color and gaiety of African life it proposes, a celebration of the nation's spirit of energy that stayed buoyed despite the aggravating spoils of social and economic life in post-colonial Africa. So when the cyclist explains his reasons for using his favored vehicle this is what he has got to say:

CYCLIST. Na in make I go borrow my brother's bicycle self because man no fit trust public transport again. You wait for bus all day and then, when one molue finally arrive eh, then Somalia war go begin. Shirt and trouser

wey you done wash and iron to blow employer mind or scatter girlfriend in sense- (Hisses)-e become like rag for second hand bosikana (food -shack) market.

TRADER: Oh, na me you dey tell tory? Na drama for that bus stop -(Points)- everyday, every morning going for work or evening time after work. Everyone for oneself, man or woman, old or young, nobody cares. One third body inside, one leg outside, reminder under luggage and other people's body .I done see big man -e fat plenty -dam squeeze am so hard, e` shit inside in trousers. (Beatification 256)

The protean variations of linguistic reference, the shuttling back and forth from creolisations to standard dialects, perforce shatter expectations, all the more why the play seem to suggest that its characters are always up to something and the African social world far from being a closed universe with type rules is a constantly changing presence, and its laws, are as enigmatic as nature itself .The best manner of this exemplification is the linguistic reportire of the Barber and the Trader both of whom, offer their individual reference points from which to look upon such a modern convenience as the bicycle.

TRADER. I thought it was a case of an optical illusion

I don't recall a journey in a time -machine.

There is something fishy here, or else a miracle

To see a Lagos body on a bicycle (Beatification 258)

The stringency of the play's narrative patterns, uncompromising in its moral and humanistic ethos, expectedly vigorous in pulling offenders down, entertains

The image of people pressed against each other in a public place is ludicrous. If the pressure is great, the volume will be less. This is only a Pressure People can even shit in their trousers because of such pressure. There could be no better way than proclamations coming from one of law's own men.

Judge. Don't be so parochial, man! The majesty of the law discriminates, but is impartial. It recognizes neither friend nor foe, strangers or relations. Majesty! Ma-jes-ty (*Beatific smile*)(Beatification 288)

But more importantly, the songs incorporated in the plays, as it is done herein inverts subtle military logic and commands by subverting the very structural status quo of left-right indented into a different parameter. It builds upon the accepted paradigms for music and cohorts satire with the finer logic of observations, and its poetic cadences inbuilt into them is subversive and startling in so far as the logic of structure is itself a commentary on the irrationality and vacuity of man's moral vision. Contradictions of the expected inarguably enfeeble normative solicitations and so force realizations of what is least feasible –

Prisoner 1. My friends come gather round

[.....]

A Pendulum to mimic.

The ruling minds are static

But the balls are swinging frantic (Beatification 293, 294 295)

Adjustments on the social front are matters of physical dynamics; the associations of dig and sound appear unnatural for conjoining reminiscences of agriculture and by covert extension, graveyards functions carried on stealthily. Juxtaposing imageries of static minds with frantically swinging balls are perversely sexual.

It is not the expression, or so it is established, but rather an interpretation of the expression, done conventionally, that is dismissed as absurd or vacuous. Confronted with sentence patterns such as these, it is imperative to go for 'nonce-interpretations' and dismiss literal analysis for figurative ones. Yet there is nothing in the definitions of these words that exclude their occurrence in the context. That ruling minds should be static, and not unsettling or fuzzy is not a factual impossibility. Again, the left and right movements of the waist are its deviation from normal positions. But, they indicate flexibility of the body muscles and a healthy physique. In the case of society, such adjustments in moral principles not only become forced, but in fact unwanted and so avoidable. The juxtaposing of the "Left" with the "Right" brings images of political organizations that take up antipodal moral positions depending on their closeness to power and money. But the word Left has other connotations also, and especially in the case of Africa, highlights the emaciated financial prowess of the masses.

From Zia with Love, interrogates dictatorial hegemony, with its overriding violence and massacres of human life and liberty and stretches the limits of dialogic language. The resultant anxiety it defines, confabulates to set in a continuum the misapplications of rule the world over. Its images are those of blood and sweat, of prisoners heckled and beaten up in dingy confinements, the uneasy sounds of bayonets and military boots, of a social world whose logic is one of smokescreen manipulations, of advance and retreat under cover, of unsure glances thrown at each other, while its dialogue combines Soyinka's usual fascination for the Creole with those of his European dialogic emphasis.

Soyinka's tandem use of Yorubic vocabularies, and cultural symbols, producing a continuous osmosis between European spoken forms and the native tongue,

heightens through unconventional entry points, the balletic balance of tension, of a culture, which while conscious of the colonial eavesdropping of its social and economic configurations, has kept alive a normative linguistic nationality through allusions to myths and idioms of its own. A pertinent instance of this conjugality, of language as a midwife between the prescriptive values of Europe and the tentative, though less magisterial forms of Yoruba tongue is when Miguel invites the Warder of his prison house to deliver a communiqué to his mother and the Warder's response is an exciting cocktail of available forms, suggestive of the blacks and the whites sharing the one topographical and geographical landscape of Africa.

WARDER. Look, you people, I no know if you get interest, but er [...] *(Nods towards Miguel)* [...] e' look like to sat you get the means to do something for yourselves. *(He digs into his pocket)*[...].

DETIBA. What is that?

WARDER. You hear of bandufu before? (Zia 144)

In Soyinka's plays, Yoruba proverbs extend the range of the metaphor. It puts ancient wisdom to new contexts, thereby producing a valid cryptogram for a real life experience:

SEBE: One does not get to know the forest by climbing only the trees in his village. The learning process is what keeps us afloat and alive, Commander. (Zia 153-154) 54

Foucault conceptualizes the need to augment tradition and individual talent in his views of transition: "our sentences spring out of the uniqueness of our precarious existence, using words that are older than all memory"(Order 90).

But, for Mudimbe, the real nature of the African social life is a midway between the inherited episteme of the West and traditional African life, between an underdeveloped past and developed future, where past loyalties, forged in forsaken villages, are in the process of dissolving. In Soyinka, neither the past nor the present is of unqualified good or evil. Also, his present is not a diffused space characterized by "marginality" (Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa* 4).

That the present is important needs no surer guarantee in Soyinka's play since the language of purity and exclusion, is opposed by the figures of mixing and contradiction, best summed up as paradoxes, and oxymorons.

We see this clearly when the Wing Commander, together with Sebe and other attendant militia, pens a chorus forewarning anyone who messes with the army and overhauls their consignment. The commander sees the action of the army in and through a series of constructs:

WING COMM. State assignment / For state consignment / State machinery /  
For state chicanery (*Zia* 156).

The confluence of "assignment" with "consignment," "machinery" with "chicanery," turns poetic logic into a social aberration. The rapidity with which social particulars alternate is to undo precisely what it claims to achieve- the wisdom of verse for a detached look at what is real. The audience is as much responsible for a sabotage of the present misrule, as is the author. Soyinka merely drives a wedge between the audiences' smooth vulnerability to appearances and the incubus that lies beneath.

The Dance of the Forests, one of Soyinka's most ambiguous looking plays, says Derek Wright is the "most uncentered of works" (*Revisited* 81) and combines dance

and dialogue, music and mime .Its language has large polyphonic shifts from an elevated Shakespearean English, for the timeless mythologized world of the forests, to earthy, vernacular invective for Murete and Rola to gnomic incantation in the final numinous masque.

The opening formality of the play befits the occasions surrounding it –the “Gathering of the Tribes”, and the “Welcome of the Dead”- means of effecting a communion between different levels of existence, the living the dead and the unborn:

Only such may regain

Voice auditional as are summoned when their link

With the living has fully repeated its nature (Dance 4-5).

That there is much that is pompous in it is beyond doubt and a quick reference of what results from this hauteur, the rising of the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, as victims of man’s past cruelties underplays the fallow seriousness of tone, immediately setting off a parallel between a callous official line and its relational human impetus. The Dead Woman’s response to so much high falutin verbal artillery is a devastating echoing of Lear’s:

What is it to them from whom I descended-if that is why thy shun me now

(Dance 80)

The Woman’s linguistic operation is one of abstractions, and quite rightly so for she is a spirit after all, a fact none knows better than she herself.

The world is big, but the dead are bigger {...] (Dance 80).

Demoke the artist is one with the operations of fire, carving and smelting. “But I

wish to be saved from death by burning. Living I would rather not watch my body dissolve like alloy. There must be happier deaths”

ROLA: Like what.

DEMOKE: A Fall from a great Height (Dance 19)

The continuous tense in which the verbs of actions are manifest, contradicted and opposed through the difference between the long vowel sounds and their short consonants work to mirror the dilemmas of Demoke's self between an act of being and moving, and by continuity belonging to the world of the spirit, and one that ends with a break which would be ending in probably the same result. As an artist cohabiting a mundane and metaphysical world, his choice of words are in perfect bondage with his mental self and act of becoming which dovetails a recognition of the material base of art and the supernatural inspiration of creation.

Like the Yeatsian artist whose travails in the animist world is a recognition of the human contortions involved in living and the scorching nature of the libidinal energy as suffocating, the spirit world is an acknowledgement of the need of the artist to carve out of the flesh the involved in living and the scorching nature of the libidinal energy as suffocating, the spirit world is an acknowledgement of the need of the artist to carve out of the flesh the embalment of the divine.

But similarly coalesced within the ambit of its image making syncretism, is Soyinka's deferential, the fourth stage, holding in its volcanic maelstrom, the potential transudation of materiality into the spirit. Proverbs, and their reflection form another crux for the movement of transition between an old wizened world and its modern application. Proverbs install cultural distinctiveness into writing and acts as a interweaving interpretative mode where the reportage is in standard English

though a simultaneous movement along the continuum in the dialogue of the characters is favored. Language in this process undergoes a stage of becoming. It may also be said that there is a social contest here for which the language variation is synecdoche. For the predominant discourse signs are the emblems of power that is monumental, patriarchal, and supports an officially sanctioned nationalism. But Soyinka's use of variation and syncretism halts such a monist and official nationalism.

DEMOKE. Let me anoint

The head and do you, my master trim the bulge  
 Of his great bottom. The squirrel that dances on  
 A broken branch, must watch whose jaws are open  
 Down below. Thrice I said I would behead it  
 Where my feet would go no further. Thrice,  
 Oremole, slave, fawner on Eshuoro laughed...  
 I plucked him down! (Dance 27)

The movement of this verse, along point and counterpoint, creates an apparent balance though the markers of a slide or an eruption of tension creeps incrementally, until the verse itself can no longer hold the antithesis and ends abruptly in "I plucked him down". But even here, the language forges ahead to combine an African wisdom with the linguistic conventionalities of European drama.

For Catherine Belsey, one of the traits of the interrogative text is the absence of an unified subject of enunciation with whom the reader can easily identify (Critical Practice 91). Barring the unusual use of a narrator, as in Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge (1955), it is the norm of the theater not to have a protagonist serving directly as the subject of enunciation because no one character can say "I"

exclusively. On the other hand, audience identification with various characters is natural, and eventually a hero or a villain can be treated in a more or a less sympathetic fashion, thus inviting more or less of the audience's sympathy.

Soyinka's splitting of the subject is central to the issue of change. In this process, the illusion of an unified subject is dismissed as because the social order of which the narrator is a part is no longer a stable one and the experience presented is a complex summation where the discursive patterns of each identities merges, contradicts and confabulates similar or discrete other identities. For Soyinka, none of the discourses presented is complete in its authenticity and the reasons why they should be taken for granted is therefore dismissed completely.

Besley's formulation of Lacan's approach to the subject conveys the essence of Soyinka's patterns for his reader, clarifying the manner in which the Nigerian dramatist fashions his discursive polyphonies to elicit a narrative matrix out of an equal participation.

It is this contradiction in the subject –between the conscious self, which is conscious in so far as it is able to feature in discourse, and the self which is only partially represented there –which constitutes the source of possible change. The child's submission to the discursive practices of society is challenged by the existence of another self, which is not synonymous with the subject of the discourse.

The source of possible change in Soyinka's work then is tied to the form of the interrogative text and the way it discounts the narrative subject in formulating the only possible counter to experience. The plurality of Soyinka's world is the reason for this and by extension all experience is a grit to the writers' mill. Obviously, the

social and ethnic world of which the writer is a part is responsible for such an articulation of difference.

To return once more to the text, Demoke's narrations are acceptable for the hesitancy, and discomfiture it presents of a man seeking to convince and speaking to one such as the audience, who is also eager to hear of Oremole's culpability. But if Demoke is lacking in equanimity, the proselytizations and catechisms of the Dead Man do not lack conviction and his future sojourn on this earth proves his prophecy true. When he addresses the Court Physician he has this to say:

Unborn generations will be cannibals' most worshipped physician. Unborn generations will, as we have done eat up one another. (Dance 49)

The present is a legacy of the past and so none better or worse for it, and a air of certainty to the Dead Man's perambulations is however the answer of the Court Historian

War is the only constancy that past ages affords us [...]. The cause is only the accident, your Majesty, and war is the destiny (Dance 50).

The arguments of the historian cannot be taken at its face value. Its ambivalence is proven when the historian takes up contradictory positions; now condoning war for its blood shed and then ascribing to its violence as opposed to the conventional beta noire it is often made to be in antiwar protests – a fact established through historical allusions, which rendered through the refracted vision of the historian takes on an aesthetically sound position. Subjective art with its fundamental absence of truth absolutes is a human construct. It lampoons linear aesthetic formulations as professing undiluted factual perspectives.

I have here the whole history of Troy [...] the magnificence of the destruction of a beautiful city [...] Would Troy, if it were standing today lay claim to preservation in the annals of history if a thousand valiant Greeks had not been slaughtered before its gates, and a hundred thousand Trojans within her walls?  
(Dance 51)

A last word must be said about Soyinka's performance stylistics in The Dance, because it remains one of the most demanding of his plays. Soyinka's challenge in the play was to provide settings and sceneries, which could affect transitions from one world atmosphere to the other in the most seamless of manner. That Soyinka was able to do this may be ascertained from the following facts.

The formal elaboration of the opening scene, that of the "Gathering of the Tribes" and the "Welcome of the Dead", instantaneously confirms the importance of the celebrations while a separately lit back scene affords an easy transition to the voluptuous rapture of Mata Kharibu's court, its epic splendour and gargantuan gorgeousness.

Even the sceneries confirm to Soyinka's evolutionary dynamics of play constructing; the forest presents drab natural imageries. Its sound effects are those of beaters and engine noise; supernatural and mysterious for the timeless worlds of the spirits which is coextensive with the former but charged with mystery, power, and significance.

The characters chosen from four different planes of reality appear as themselves in many instances. But they have to invariably put on necessary costumes, make-ups and even gestures to indicate that they belong to other spheres and are therefore

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cross boundaries, which is the nature of their change.

In the mundane forests, one meets three orders of beings: present day humans; two revenants who are instantaneously recognized as such and in certain scenes, Murete the tree imp, who belongs to the spirit world. The numinous forest show other variations of the spirit world –the revenants as ghosts, and as incarnations and a few other spirits who put on masks. The other forest dwellers are symbolically garbed. Their movements are abstract and not well defined, which is the way as it should be since their physical dynamics cannot have an equal conformity with the exactness of human behavior. Yet their movements occur at a deeper level of metaphorical insight- through dance and other choreographed movements, characterized by kinetic distortions. Their motions are slow normally, but acquire speed and velocity when the occasion is of conflict and agitations.

The intention of such presentations is to elicit from man a tortured awareness so that new beginnings are made and initiated. From such an insight alone might spring evolution, the only guidance to be offered by the guardians of the earth.

The title Opera Wonyosi, a play first performed at the University of Ife's convocation ceremony, plays on the meanings of the word 'opera' which in Yoruba and English means 'the fool buys'. Modelled on Bertolt Brecht's The Threepenny Opera, (1928), and John Gay's The Beggar's Opera (1728), the intention of the play is ironical and plays on the foolish assumptions of the rich who bought themselves expensive laces when the nation was reeling under severe financial and infrastructural constraints.

Like the Brechtian original, which incorporated songs and music, composed by Kurt Weil, this play, with a dash of "peppery relevance", (Relich, Critical

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Perspectives 128) the play is also a fable about Nigerian expatriate racketeers and "security advisors" in the twilight days of Bokassa's Central African Republic. The play is also a fable about Nigerian expatriate racketeers and security advisors in the twilight days of Bokassa's Central African Republic.

Like in Brecht's Opera, Soyinka's play involve songs. The play infact opens with one, entitled "Mack the Knife" (Opera 303), and originally rendered by Louis Armstrong. But in Soyinka's case, it use has been adopted to the Nigerian context and has the same qualitative reference as used in the original-acerbic words and haunting tones, witty, ironical and satirical references that allude to the moral and social perversions brought forth by the oil boom in the Nigeria of the day.

To speak a cliché, the common perceptions about beggars are that they beg. Soyinka extends and stretches this perception. The word in the play defines all of social upstarts and indeed the entire nation, which beg for a piece of action. But the other song of Mack the dagger wielder is even more starkly glum in its imagist contours -shark, teeth, razors, dead bodies, plague, Closed File, wraith, marble headstone all conjure to put up a world, that is inhuman, violent, and diseased. The phrase "Night flows dark and silent" equates night with oil and later with plague-the latter term is not merely a name for a disease, but a generalized reference to all perversions. Words used in this double-barreled sense interleave the play.

But a reading of the play also reminds one of Dryden and his work 'Mac Flecknoe.' Dryden entertained reasoned argument, refined technique, and invective to put public offences in perspective and amend vice through corrections. Soyinka too hits at public nuisance. His characters express spontaneity with perfidy. Anikura's demarcation of his political hinterland through heaps of garbage and clearly evident geographical divisions is proof enough of the pus infecting the body

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politic of the nation. But it is Anikura's stark formality and gravity of utterances that align him with the official line and in his own world, Anikura is only a image of the true looters, the bankrupt politicians who have done the country waste. He carries with him the authenticity of a Presbyterian Pulpit besides a Baconian practical sense and his forewarnings are not for others. But garbed in benevolence its purpose is to induce fear in the listener. At other times it is humor all the way.

ANIKURA. Our job is to induce charity in others [...]. You will be issued standard bowls [...]. You deposit the money, press a button and the false button opens and the coins fall in. It opens only one way. Don't try to tamper with it.

AHMED. As if I would dream such a thing.

ANIKURA. You will. But don't try to make your dreams come true. Or you'll find yourself doing the Cripple-and that won't be make-up either (Opera 309).

In the chorus "Big Man Chop cement: Cement chop Small Man", (Opera 311) the atmosphere is of deep physical exertions and sexual innuendoes –muscles, bloody labor and silver lining, a cacophony of congested chests as opposed to decongested ports, musical accessories in the dying accordion, feline delinquencies, "the cat is on the ball", fun that is a mere waste, dark insidious nights-the end of which is in the ships lying spent as symbols of human felony and overall spiritual depravations. The physical landscape involved in the picture is of material profusion –"twelve inches platform [...] the sky-scraping geezer"(Opera 312). But, juxtaposed with the material dandy who is "easy come, easy go". (Opera 312) it is also a summation of the moral emasculation of the African people that characterized the continent after the end of historical colonialism.

“This song sung by Anikura’s beggars is not meant to be sung naturally” says Etherton. “Instead the play stops, the people come on the stage, and the song is sung as a number in a pop concert” (Performance 272). The song addresses its message of to the audience. It however works as a double-edged sword: first as a commentary on the greed of the cement tycoon and then besmirching the limited greed of the laborer. But its use of words that can only be understood in Nigeria viz-“suzies” (406) for dashing woman, “Udoji,” (406) name for the Nigerian wages review commission are examples of linguistic appropriation, which as Bill Ashcroft says in The Empire Writes Back “are cross cultural because it negotiates a gap between worlds” (39). Language in this sense becomes a contested space in which the process of abrogation and appropriation takes place besides providing a ground for the interweaving of a heterogeneous linguistic continuum.

Language being a material practise, determined by a complex of social, economic and national conditions, is no longer acknowledged for itself in post-colonial literary practise. The notions of centrality and authenticity are questioned further and the so-called privileging of the margins becomes impendent. Language therefore exists not before the fact, nor after the fact, but in the fact. And to this end, an expression of the hybrid nature of the African and specifically Nigerian experience becomes coterminous with truth and the validity of life as lived.

Soyinka’s own language show that he made good use of a wide spectrum of linguistic cultures and negotiated a series of decisions concerning the pattern of language use. Soyinka’s listeners appreciate polyglossia and are ideally multilingual. An appropriate use of this language use is a metatheory, which as Ashcroft says, “takes linguistic variation as the substance rather than the periphery of language”(Ashcroft, The Empire 47). In doing so, the practise and the demonstration

evinced a way in which post-colonial orientation can confront received theoretical forms. To quote Ashcroft once more:

Where traditional theory posits the ideal speaker in order to deal with a language, which is grammatically consistent, a 'standard' language, which can be approached with the use of consistent and coherent structures, polydialectal theory reveals that the performance of speakers, with all the variations that must be taken into account, is the true subject of linguistics. (Ashcroft, *The Empire* 47)

This use to which language is put specifically and deliberately disturbs its attendant assumptions, particularly its binary structuration. This abrogation has also a political undertone to it since it subverts the assumptions on which the ceaseless pattern of conquest and domination has formed the fabric of European political discourse. Language used in this manner allows it to be understood. But it projects a semantic equality with what is given as the dominant discourse. In employing language in this manner, the work of language seizure is accomplished. But the adopted vehicle neither overwhelms nor transmutes the dominant discourse as given though such a way of making experience discrete symptomatizes the text, reading through its features the social, cultural and political forces that traverse it.

It may then be said that Soyinka's English is not tied to the imperial center in so far as it furthers the concept of difference through the curious tension of cultural revelation and silence and this makes it possible for him to construct his sense of a different place. Though like Achebe and others Soyinka does not favor parenthetical translations of individual words, for example, 'he took him into his obi (hut), he also does not intrude into his text which is after all inadequate. Soyinka leaves certain words untranslated, thus necessitating the relevance of returning back to them again

and again and actively engage with the horizons of culture in which these terms have meaning. Obviously, the meaning of the words are furnished at the end of the work and the reader can easily refer to these if he wants to, he still needs a knowledge of the culture and also a appreciation of its values to decipher the different codes it embodies.

Frantz Fanon describes the dialectic of language between the colonized and the colonizer bleakly. According to him, "the colonized is raised above jungle status [in the eyes of the colonizer] in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (Post-Colonial Web).

Fanon, who rejects the codified colonizer-colonized relationship, advocates total rejection of the standards of the colonizing culture including its language. Fanon believes that "a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language" (qtd. in Rusell, Postcolonial Web). Fanon reasons that he who has taken up the language of the colonizer has accepted the world of the colonizer and therefore the standards of the colonizer.

Soyinka on the other hand uses the English language. But he negotiates a space between a pure European expression of the form and an Africanized structure of it. Language in his case becomes a means of crossing the bridge between communities and men. To take an example from Death and the King's Horseman, one can take the case of Elesin as a cue. Elesin, the communal hero moves between an outer apprehension of the world and an inner experience of his mental parameters. In this case, he exemplifies a mobile consciousness: which is a pregnant congruence between the inwardness and outwardness of the worlds of the text. In other words, this is an encounter between the inward consciousnesses of the protagonist(s) clashing with the outer world of the text. This collision of worlds makes the drama

problematic and complex. It at once provokes the question, which is 'is the tragic actor really responsible for his tragic outcome', how is his destiny determined? Finally, what would have happened if the outer world had not clashed with his inward one? With these forms of chaotic structuring, Soyinka's narrative is much in line with a poetics that initiates a narrative culture incongruent with the tradition set up by the African nationalist narrative tradition. One could easily say that Soyinka's plays tries to grapple with various forms of consciousness. Like other avant-garde narratives of its time, it writes down a history never written before in the literary circles of sub-Saharan Africa. It is transgressive and self-asserting in the Artaudian manner of Artaud, who in his *The Theatre and Its Double*, speaks of a violent poetics likely to shake the audience from its lethargic state.

Wole Soyinka's achievement as a dramatist and a playwright can be accounted to many reasons: that he is a fine storyteller; he initiates a fundamental *raison d'etre* on sacrifice, turning the balance off from individual commitments to communal needs. His language too has been much talked about, as one that blurs the distinction between the polarities of experience and the like. At the same time, he has been found to be excessively difficult to understand at moments. Obscurity is a charge often leveled against him. Equally difficult has been his mythic architecture of the fourth stage, the conjugality between the living, the unborn and the dead, and above all his expression of a definite African sensibility, with its advocacy of the imagination and the intuition over that of intellect or reason. Less interest is obviously shown to understand the dramatist's unique human vision, his literary corpus as an evidence of his commitment to a mingled vision of life.

It needs no argument that for an artist venturing into a postcolonial space, literature becomes a social act. This is more so since the blurbs of oppressions today are very much real as it was when barbarism was made to look civilized. For an artist, the need to negotiate between opposite viewpoints- European vs. Non European, reason as against imagination becomes pertinent. One of the responses of those who have suffered from the evils of colonialism has been a negative one- a cocooned life in the innocence of their cultures.

For such people, knowledge was a one-sided affair. It behooved no osmosis with things beyond the periphery of the known. In the meantime, the experience of a postcolonial writer has been multifarious. Some of his brethren have been educated in the universities of the West. There, they have known and become acquainted with what Europe had to offer in terms of literature, social life and also progress. Coming back to their homelands, most of these writers have chosen to devote them to writing – taking up

genres that suited their interests and liking. With many writers, the responses to their country's misfortunes have been one of outright disgust. Armah, Achebe, Okri and Thiong'o and indeed many others have suggested the building up of an African homeland free from the scars of colonialism. But, they have mostly devoted to writing about an Africa that is profusely bleeding and mangled by the oppressive forces of colonialism and neo colonialism. They suggest that if Europe had manifested itself upon Africa, Africa too should respond in kind. In Achebe's Things Fall Apart, for example the conflict between the nations' past and its present is one of disaster. The community breaks down before the onslaught of the technologically advanced West and its imported religion, Christianity. Paganism is outsmarted as insufficient. The social milieu instigates violence, manifested in and through people's social and communal lives. But, the issue of taking the oppressor, heads on, remains confined to defining a traditional purism- that did not help matters truly.

With Thiong'o, the effect of colonialism is recognition of the white man and the need for negotiating with him. But, trained in the Universities of the West, Thiong'o has also known the strategies of his opponents. His use of Kiswahili to denote resistance marks his belief in the resources of Kenya, to ultimately strengthen itself against future projects of imperialism.

Thiong'o decided long back that he would not write in English. His decision was prompted by his understanding that his countrymen were without any sufficient knowledge of the language of the colonizer. Writing in an adopted language would also negate his responsibilities as a writer in a postcolonial space.

In most of his novels though, Thiong'o complains of the failure of the project of democracy and this he locates in the deficiencies of his own people. But, he does not give enough importance to the fact that it is not enough to stay alone. For a nation colonized, a

decision to rely solely on native resources becomes extremely dangerous. Historical colonialism has ended paradoxically in neo-colonialism-economic sabotage, political interference in the affairs of the third-world nations by the countries of the first world. The creation of a multi polar world needs a myriad vision. There has to be a dialogue between different regions of the world. Literature must concert its resources to eschew the mentality of the oppressor vs. the oppressed, the dominant vs. the dominated, and the civilized as opposed to the barbaric has been the reason for so much of hostilities in the world today.

The fact of race, which was originally crucial, thus becomes increasingly less important. Other than anthropological characteristics, there are such things as reason, justice, the true and the beautiful, which are the same for all.

In Soyinka's own drama Death and the King's Horseman the dramatist brings Olunde, the Black man and Mrs. Pilkings together, so that the fourth stage that he had talked about in his Myth, Literature and the African World, has an actual objective manifestation. The audience is given an opportunity to watch the play enact opposing viewpoints-of the Pilkings, who decry Elesin's adventure as mere hoax, and Olunde's, who views the would be sacrifice of his father, as the Europeans look upon the chosen death of a captain of an English ship, when he decided to stay with the vessel at the point of its blowing up. But, Olunde also explains to Mrs. Pilkings that he does not disparage the West on racial grounds. Rather, he honors an Englishman's courage and sense of duty for the latter's country. But, he finds it hard to admit the European's desecration of things they do not understand- Mr. Pilkings's description of Elesin's would be act as mere "excuse for making a noise"(167) and Mrs. Pilkings' putting on a Yoruba costume merely to entertain a prince.

Mrs. Pilkings' sense of right is challenged when examined from a source, which has both assimilated the wisdom of the Yorubas and has trained under an English surgeon, in England itself. Awareness is no longer limited to political consciousness, but is turned towards her, with the result that she is left ill at ease with the inherited patterns of searching. The representation of reality turns from an unproblematic one to being a problematic and finally self-contradictory.

Olunde is Soyinka's true rebel. He has crossed the divide between a semantic over dependence on his own linguistic forms and by extension on his own communal glories to a recognition of the 'other'- European forms and discourse and so for him the rites of passage is no more a problematic suffering, and his death an apparent ambivalence, is the culmination of this sense of wholeness, the final triumph of a sense of completeness, of life lived to the full and ended in an calm acceptance of what is most abhorred, the nullity of a mere act of living physically.

Soyinka however dramatizes the agony and despair of Elesin's failure to do what is asked of him in a manner that reminds of Bakhtin's carnivalesque and Brechtian alienation. The setting of the drama, which also involves a marketplace, is an open space. But, it is also a space characterized by sounds and laughter, allowing for the interfusion of communal memories through the praise chants of the chorus and the noises of the market itself.

Elesin's tragic dilemma, his failure to die for his people, that are again important parts of the play's evolving dialectics, accrues not only from the intervention of the white man. It is as much the result of his own moral and psychological lapses; his desire to impregnate a woman of his choice, his love for what the earth, with its material trappings, confer to the living man.

In writing a counter discourse to the dominating parlances of the oppressors, Soyinka however, makes sure to point that his own people too has to continuously reinvent and shape themselves up in accordance with the truth of tradition and the thought currents of the present hour. Any sectarian belief in the one-upmanship of cultural ethos is liable to be misplaced as it has the arrogance of cropping back an essentialism of its own kind.

In The Strong Breed, Soyinka criticizes a callous and literal translation of ancient customs of a society, the Yoruba ritual of oro sacrifice. This ritual is observed on the eve of a 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. This form of communal behavior is also well known in Greece, Rome and the Orient. But, all agree, that the act of expiation should be self-willed. It should carry conviction into the heart of death and so embolden life. But, Eman, who is selected for this role in the play, is a stark outsider. Infact, he had only come to the village to escape being a carrier of his own community. Moreover, it was only in corrupt practices of the ritual that the carrier was killed. In all cases, expiation involved a symbolic receipt of agony for the people.

Eman, despite being prompted by Sunma does not escape from the village that has chosen him carrier. His tragic drive, to accept his fate, accrues from his astonishment at a twisted application of an ancient practise, which is why, he provocatively tells Sunma, that her hatred for Ifada, the boy originally selected to be the carrier is unnatural:

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

The action of the play would then consist of a protest against social perversions. He puts up for scorn all social institutions that do not allow man to be free. Soyinka's arguments of a hybrid universe offer, by alternative, a model of discourse than any puerile configurations based on national, cultural or racial groupings can likely sustain.

This is why his art ensures a common participatory ethics where all humanity may take part.

As a man of letters, Soyinka makes his dramas the vintage ground of a community presence- there are the readers of his plays, the onlookers, and the critics who take part in listening to what his characters speak, act and do on the stage which by the way articulates the dimensions of their social and political universe and by implication the states of all humanity suffering from the misrule of the times, the ignominy of exploitation that is the same irrespective of the color of the skin it may emanate from. It is important to understand the social relevance of literature.

Even in his *Jero* plays, Soyinka presents a society encircled by crooks, hoodlums and a whole circle of frauds. But, *Jero* is not the only rascal in the play. There are the politicians and Chume too, who are morally and spiritually deplorable. Soyinka presents the culpability of all his characters on stage through dialogues, lighting and horseplay-- the first stage direction of the play for example showing *Jero* in grand demeanor, while his confrontation with his old teacher, suggests a moral order in total disarray. But as in other plays, Soyinka uses African drums to perfection here as well.

After *Jero* eludes the waiting *Amope* through the window of his house, the stage directions show a boy playing a drum, begging for alms. As the boy comes near *Amope*, she turns almost at once. The boy flees from her. But he also plays a note of insult meant for *Amope*. In adding drumbeats to the play at this point, Soyinka alludes to the fact that in his country, street urchins often go through the streets with a drum begging for alms. "But, their skill is used for insults even without provocation"(12).

But, drums also enlarge the acoustic corpus of the play. They complement dialogues. At the same time, they denote the virtuoso of the drummers who could play both for

ensnaring the audience into the mental agony of a protagonist's struggle with himself as in Death to promoting a satire on human perfidy as in Jero.

Soyinka's dramas obviously have a social role. This fact becomes increasingly evident when the present social order requires a renewed observation, analysis and a dramatization for change. In the context of Africa, this has remained a predominating manifesto. African writers are aware of the need to mediate the past and the reestablish the past to offend, de-center and de-familiarize the hegemonic narratives of European domination. These talks of a renewed call for the past appear to unduly legitimize tradition without an acknowledgement of the disturbances of the present hour. At times, such emphasis look novice and at best avoidable. The onuses to reinterpret Africa from an Afrocentric viewpoint emerges out of diverse considerations and involve a many layered desire- to figure out the limitations of Africa's own traditions, being one of them.

Soyinka's credit in projecting the African milieu cannot again be defined through negatives. He does not present suffering and unmitigated sorrow as the end product of his aesthetic contemplation. Instead, there is an ample hope and a belief in the future which carries with it new life and germination. Soyinka's hero does not proclaim nor establish a narrative sequence of univocal subjectivity. The co-ordinates of reality-space and time – are not given relative to the protagonist. The act of remembering does not serve to contain the full repository of experiences. Instead, there is in all the works by Soyinka, the crisscrossing of memories, and remembrances-a greater intensity of tension and conflicts allowing for the plays to have more disturbing consequences, and the resolutions, which they offer, is beyond the normal accessibility of harmony. Soyinka's texts are open-ended. They do not demarcate between the past and present in absolute terms. The past is again not culled as it had been. There is no proclaiming of loss. The outcome of each story is also not predetermined from the outset. They are rather the

synecdoche on the larger issue of human crisis, and invite the readers to join in the act of liberation-an unending struggle, which must be carried on over and over again.

Soyinka sees this crisis beyond the accepted ones of blacks vs. whites. While he celebrates heteroglossia, that orchestrates voices at many levels, he allows the suppressed humanity to speak, through many a counter and rivulets, igniting what may be sounded a multileveled symphony. Soyinka's world is certainly not the closed one of an epic. It is not monologic. This is why there is place in his dramas for openendedness, indecision and indeterminacy.

Soyinka while accepting the conventions of the past is undeterred by the precedent of the earlier times to conceive the future as incompatible with tradition. Infact the Nigerian employs the codes of European logic, shows himself aware with so much of modern Western societal patterns and forms of government-dictatorship, democracy, the press and the like, acknowledges what is beyond dispute as the acceptable logic of culture. But, his admission of them is on his own grounds. One proof of this individualism of choice is in the interpellation of male and female narratives-to avert the triumph of the cliché by a process of transformation. However, a proper dynamism and movement is to be detected in the revolt against authority- a revolt nurtured and propelled by the youths against the old who represent false conventionalities.

Any reading of Camwood on the Leaves, is to be undertaken on the dualities between the new and the old-here turned unto itself- for while the son stands up for an ethic of freedom guaranteed by the past, his father, the inconsiderate priest of a Christian parish, goes by the book which nullifies the instinct and blasphemies Nature. The son who stands for what is acceptable in the past is not the one to make any compromises. He is not willing to sacrifice his position for the traditional veneration accorded to age here represented by his callous father. At an extreme moment of crisis, the son decides to go

against his father. In killing the old man, the young man deconstructs the myth of the father, as the benevolent lawgiver in African society to show that what is old is not always synonymous with what is acceptable. The son's action may also be accepted on another count: the tradition of Nigeria, that negates giving any finality to object, masks, statues, or even social roles. This model reverses the usual portrayal of Africa as bound up by hierarchies and restores a priority to the elements of change.

Moreover, Isola's act in killing his father cannot be argued from a usual Oedipal perspective. This is despite the fact that Isola's mental universe retains a tortured awareness of his father and a loving recognition of his mother. Soyinka's credit lies in making the events of the play hobble between the sub-conscious worlds of dreams in Isola, to his actual remembrance of Erinjobi in his day-to-day interactions with the latter. The final denouement of the play therefore would be artistically and poetically inevitable.

Soyinka's dramas therefore contests the dominant set of power relations. It contests the machinery through which power also seeks to contain its opposition. In the dramatist's creation of a new world, the stereotypes of questionings are abandoned. It is not about any simple opposition to the hierarchy of misrule any longer. The dialectics of resistance incorporates something beyond resistance. It is necessarily complicit in the apparatus it seeks to dismount. At the same time, it empowers the ordinary man to have pride in his own cultural past.

Soyinka recovers a reality beyond the taint of colonialism. In his quest to create a new social order, he dissolves the grounds, which would allow for the hierarchy of social configurations to stay. He shows the reverses inherent in the play of power. Power, he shows emanates from a fundamental weakness. It is the result of fear- of change, up-starting stasis, of oneself unable to cope with the new change. The essential ground of much signification is ambivalence at the heart of truth definition. The structural construct

of dominance is a temporality of pre-established notion- of tradition-people, the Reason of State, High Culture for instance. Soyinka's dramatic tentativeness does not merely draw attention to the subject of dominance, of hegemony as a cultural project, but inscribes so many of our so called own people as complicit in the suffering we go through. The problematic closure of much of his texts questions therefore the totalization of any culture. It leaves new grounds for exploration constantly alive.

If the aesthetics of Soyinka is new, it is because, unlike the tragic dramatists of Europe, he is not willing to put the entire prerogative of change upon the hero. The hero in Soyinka's plays does not act out movements that are beyond common apprehension or conduct. Soyinka's actors are a part of the audience and the audience, incorporated with what happens on stage. The protagonist acts, as the audience wants them to.

This is also the reason why the audience of the playwright's theatre is implicated for social disarray. In Opera Wonyosi, the chorus "Who killed Neo-Niga?" (342) is followed by the stage directions that come as under:

*During this chorus, two MEN cross stage bearing a plain box-coffin inscribed on one side: BODY OF 1001<sup>ST</sup> UNKNOWN VICTIM. They re-cross the stage revealing other side of the coffin inscribed: GIFT OF TAI SOLARIN TO A CONSCIENCELESS RACE (343)*

People in Africa and infact in all coerced societies have a responsibility to their societies. They must choose the right man to govern their country. For Soyinka, the aim of an artist is to dishevel audience's moral platitudes and disturb their status quo.

But, for Soyinka, an essential talisman of his art was the recognition of a universal catalogue of metaphors. All human social organizations value the importance of the

interconnectivity between Nature and human psyche. It suggests that man must remain unified with the roots of his being. By this is not merely implied his language etc, but his social and political universe, and above all his emotive and cultural world where all that is a part of has to be honored and preserved to allow the communications of significances. By this token man is himself a part of a total order of being. Drama and literature largely must recognize all men. It must have an equal place for all of us.

It is important to challenge imposed boundaries. Reality, often lie between two order of images. The Professor's call in the play, The Road, to be like death, seem a sacrilege even by the greatest stands of libertine art. It would be blasphemy to cut life short and celebrate death as such. But the Professor's words have meanings beyond normal expectations. By itself, it suggests an attempt to look at life, beyond its shores. At a preliminary go, it also behooves man to discount his ego, identity, and traditional suggestions and then to encounter reality without preconceived definitions. It is to be armless before reality and know truth without prior assumptions.

Soyinka's achievement as an artist is then that he looks at reality from all sides. He gives the colonizer credit for what the latter achieves in the homeland of Africa-dignity of labor, organization of forces to supplant and encounter the forces outside, its solidarity and communal life. But, he also encourages the colored man to appreciate his own beliefs and honor his brethren for what is due to them- dignity and an equal life, an honest appraisal of participatory reason, a trust in ancestral memory to drag a presently culpable political regime to be replaced with a humane one.

**CHAPTER - VI**  
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