

## The Philosophy of Wole Soyinka's Art

Dele Layiwola

### The Philosophy of Wole Soyinka's Art

Soyinka's theory of drama is constructed on reformulations of the terms of previous ritual approaches to drama and is most usefully discussed in relationship to the earlier theories which it modifies. The tradition of dramatic theory linking ritual and drama extends from the origin of western dramatic theory in Aristotle's *Poetics* to nearly all modern dramatic criticism in English, and has manifested a unique concern with discussing dramatic import in terms of audience affect. This concern with audience affect requires that the discussion of ritual theories of drama include analysis of the concepts of audience affect which have been developed by various theorists, as well as an examination of their concepts of ritual and drama.

—Ann B. Davis<sup>1</sup>

Both D. S. Izevbaye and Annemarie Heywood have written about the essence of speech and silence in Soyinka's writings. The former says of one of Soyinka's most imaginative plays, *The Road*, that:

The Road is itself a dramatization of the limits of language. So a stylistic analysis in which we examine the relationship of characters deployed down a linguistic ladder from Professor the talkative one to Murano the mute one would tell us only part of the story, not only in the usual theatrical sense in which visual items complement dramatic speech, but because in this play that which is heard is challenged by that which is seen.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar vein, Annemarie Heywood sees Soyinka's as a dramatizing imagination and that even his lyrics appear like voiced incantations or declaimed

---

Dr. Layiwola has been Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, where he is also the Editor of *African Notes*. He is presently a Commonwealth Visiting Fellow at the University of Ulster at Coleraine, Northern Ireland. He has taught in such fields as Theatre and Dance Studies as well as African Literature.

monologues.<sup>3</sup> Other critiques of Soyinka's works are hardly truer. There is, in fact, a sense in which his works conceive of language as a basis for action. There is a sense in which this seeps through his political blueprint because the pivot phrase on which his prison notes revolve goes thus: "The man dies in him who keeps *silent* in the face of tyranny."<sup>4</sup> In this regard Robert July had rightly observed that these are the words of a writer whose art puts great premium on action and who has always lived through his convictions.<sup>5</sup> A literary man of action has the theatre as his best medium.

Soyinka has chosen to dramatize much of African aesthetics on stage because a lot of it is found mainly in ritual and festival dances. Where the gods are involved, the mystical import has not failed to bear out those dimensions in his art; for he himself writes of these dramas:

They control the aesthetic considerations of ritual enactment and give to every performance the multi-level experience of the mystical and the mundane.<sup>6</sup>

That explanation of what constitutes the 'mystical as well as the mundane' is what this essay sets out to extract as Soyinka's philosophy of art. It is presumable that for any writer to attain full relevance, he must express a systematic philosophy of art and of life.

Let us also define that aspect of the Essentialist doctrine which clarifies Soyinka's work from the viewpoint of Western philosophy, since much of his writings are originally in a language other than African. This term Essentialism designates three distinct but related philosophical positions. The first has to do with the fact that forms and archetypes exist and represent the ideal copies of physical entities. In other words, the realm of nature subtends the essence of perfection to which all physical, imperfect things aspire. The second understanding argues that something is true in the nature of its definition. That is, there is a sense in which an entity possesses the form which its definition accords it. It is as real as its definition. For instance, a man can be two-legged if described as a bicyclist. The third position states that matter possesses peculiar essential qualities irrespective of what their description says. In other words, whether or not they are described or recognised, there are essences in matter which makes each thing or being exist as it is.<sup>7</sup>

These three positions of Essentialism have, since the beginning of this century, become the crucial concern of many modern dramatists and theorists; and in the case of Soyinka, it will be interesting to see how this three-pronged description of modernist writings merges into the tripartite of Yoruba as well as African cosmogony. This essentialist concept first emerges as the past, present

and future and also merges with the three cosmogonic outline of the day, namely: the morn, noon, and twilight. It is generally on the twilight of heroes and gods of the beginning that Soyinka expatiates in his well known epic poem, *Idanre*.<sup>8</sup> In all probability, *Idanre* constitutes Soyinka's earliest formulation of a poetic vision, if we are concerned with the systematic unfolding of his career considered as an oeuvre. My purpose in this essay will therefore be to establish that Soyinka's theory of art is based not so much on the concept of memory but on the distinction between the categories of archetypal time.

In the preface to the epic poem, *Idanre*, the following illuminating passage is recounted:

I abandoned my work—it was middle of night—and walked. *Idanre* is the record of that walk through wet woods on the outskirts of Molete, a pilgrimage to *Idanre* in the company of presences such as dilate the head and erase known worlds. We returned at dawn, the sun was rising just below the hut where we had sheltered on the outward journey. The palm-wine girl still waited, the only other human being awake in the vast prescient night, yet an eternal presence whose charity had earthed me from the sublimating essence of the night. . . . *Idanre* lost its mystification early enough. . . . As events gathered pace and unreason around me. *I recognised it as part of a pattern of awareness which began when I wrote A Dance of the Forests. In detail, in the human context of my society, Idanre has made abundant sense.* (My emphasis, pp. 57-8).

It is abundantly worthwhile to note this long walk at night with occasional draughts of palmwine over a fearful terrain where, according to him, strange feelings dilate the head and visions of the unknown go beyond a mere state of mind. He conjures images of obsession where the poet goes on a vast pilgrimage, alone, unto himself and needing no other. At the end of the passage, he recalls his own journey as reminiscent of the cyclic tracts of Ogun, his deity, when he experiences the mysteries of creation and of destruction.<sup>9</sup> For Soyinka, these two poles of creative versus destructive energies represent the quintessence of being and of existence. One other thing is of especial importance however—the poet discovers his career and voices consciously that his craft is now consummate. He says that the same pattern which inspired his first major play, *A Dance of the Forests* is also at work in *Idanre*. This shows that, in establishing a pattern or tradition of awareness, the philosopher and theorist has emerged. We will return to his concept of The *Ogunnian* hero later on in this paper.

*Idanre* represents the mysteries of Ogun in its seven phases<sup>10</sup> as the archetypal model of heroic existence from its birth through the inevitable process of dissolution. Ogun, after all, created the path of awareness through which other gods began the journey into the cosmic realm, when our world was still inchoate and unformed. In the present dispensation, it correlates with the twilight of dawn, with all its formless shapes and presences, and the semi-conscious state of sleep. The Yoruba phenomenon which informed this has been the story of *Atunda*, otherwise termed *Atowoda*. The story of *Atowoda* is a curious one, itself deriving from the Yoruba myth of origin. It was reported that the archdivinity, at the very beginning, had the name Orisa (i.e. one to be revered and worshipped). Along with the god of divination and wisdom, Orunmila, he descended into the primeval void to begin the processes of creation as directed by Olodumare, the Supreme. Orisa procured himself a slave from Emure market to be his helper. This slave was called *Atunda*. Three days after he was bought, he asked the permission of his master to cultivate a piece of virgin land not far from the house, on the summit of a cliff. *Atunda* worked hard on the land and impressed his master. Somehow *Atunda* became envious of his master and contrived to murder him. Now his master was wont to visit the farm once in a while. On one such occasion, when his master climbed the steep hill, he heaved a heavy boulder down the hill as his master was just in place. The result was devastating; the arch-divinity (Orisa-nla), once whole in his usually snow-white garment, was shattered into four hundred and one fragments.<sup>11</sup> The four hundred and one fragments today constitute the entire pantheon of the Yoruba as they were re-aligned and put together by Orunmila, the agency of divination and of wisdom.

This myth has its various ramifications and implications but this is not our concern here. Suffice it to say, however, that Soyinka conceived of the dissolution of the arch-hero as one great night of tragic becoming. The anguish sustained by the god and his followers, and his own soul-shattering experience was subsequently recreated in the passion plays of Sango and Ogun; the latter being Soyinka's recurrent subject in later plays. Now this is how *Idanre* recounts the first moment of tragic drama precipitated by the confrontation between the reprobate child and a god.

As the first Boulder, as the errant wheel  
of the death chariot, as the creation snake  
spawned tail in mouth, wind chisels and rain pastes  
Rust from steel and bones, wake dormant seeds  
And suspended lives. I heard

The silence yield to substance. They rose,  
 The dead whom fruit and oil await  
 On doorstep shrine and road, their lips  
 Moist from the first flakes of harvest rain—  
 Even gods remember dues. (*Idanre*, 65)

When the god has paid his due, he is appropriately mourned and thereafter re-assembled from fragmentation and exported in a new form. It is only then that triumphal joy follows and cosmos is reinstated over chaos. Hence by the law of Gustave Cohen: every religion spontaneously produces drama and each religion reveals the drama and theatre embedded in its own structure.<sup>12</sup>

The archaic phase of most religions generally tended towards a trilateral purpose—chaos, cosmos, and rejuvenation—either latent as in meditation, or active as in ecstasy. This is why tragic dance or performance returns man to the natural world with greater resolve and accommodation. The concept of the Yoruba cosmos from which Bolaji Idowu and Wole Soyinka abstract the model of the revolutionary slave, Atunda, is thus one aspect of a tripartite concept namely:

Akoda  
 Aseda  
 Atunida (Atunda)

Akoda is the primordial void of creation; Aseda is the first act of the creative endeavor, whilst Atunda is the revolutionary response which recreates or remoulds nature and its elements. It is this third phenomenon which the first slave rebellion crystallized as a destructive, yet re-creative act. Purposeful action, as both creation and destruction, becomes a veritable leitmotif in Soyinka's most profound art. To this theme we shall return shortly, but first his representation of Atunda, the first revolutionary in the annals of 'mankind':

Rather, may we celebrate the stray electron,  
 defiant of patterns, celebrate the splitting of  
 the gods canonization of the strong hand of a  
 slave who set The rock in revolution—and the  
 Boulder cannot Up the hill in time's unwind . . .

All hail Saint Atunda, first revolutionary/Grand  
 iconoclast at genesis—and the rest in logic  
 Zeus, Osiris, Jahweh, Christ in trifoliate/pact

with creation, and the wisdom of Orunmila, Ifa  
Divining eyes, multiform

Evolution of the self-devouring snake to spatials  
New in symbol, banked loop of the 'Mobius Strip'  
And interlock of recreative rings, one surface  
Yet full comb of angles, uni-plane, yet sensuous  
with Complexities of mind and motion. (*Idanre*, 82-3)

Orunmila, the god of divination and vision, we would recall, put the bits and pieces of the fragmented god-head, hitherto his leader, together and carried them to a town from whence He was redistributed to the various corners [diaspora] of the world in its four hundred bits, and as part of the same godhead.

The question is, by now, more than pertinent—why does Soyinka now represent the act of rejuvenation as a mobius trip, a loop, a ring, or a cyclic medal? In the sixth canto of *Idanre* from which we just quoted are found these lines which I repeat:

Evolution of the self-devouring snake to spatials  
New in symbol, banked loop of the 'Mobius Strip'  
And Interlock of re-creative rings, one surface  
Yet full comb of angles, uni-place, yet sensuous  
with Complexities of mind and motion.

It is true that so much of geometry is recounted in these lines, there is much reference to the ancient symbol of a looped snake devouring its own tail. In various sections leitmotif references to the same phenomenon are recorded variously:

. . . the creation snake/spawned tail in mouth (p.65)  
Opalescent pythons oozed tar coils  
Hung from rafters thrashing loops of gelatine  
The world was choked in wet embrace  
Of serpent spawn, waiting Ajantala's rebel birth. (p.67)

. . . Palm  
And pylon, Oguns road a 'mobius' orbit, kernel  
And electrons, wine to alchemy. (p. 85)

A partial conception of this is represented by Hezzy Maduakor as cyclic determinism. He writes:

When these images are endowed with some degree of motive energy, they confirm Soyinka's myth of the turning world; in other respects, they emphasize his conviction that human life and history are destined to follow patterns of repetitive cycles. Very often the pattern is a tragic one.<sup>13</sup>

However, the matter is slightly more than this. The recurrence of images appertaining to cyclic and geometric orbits in Soyinka's mythography is representative of all creative consummation either as fragmentation and replication or as optimism and infinitude.

It is interesting to note that the origin of tragic drama which began as the passion of gods and heroes often reflects in such dramas the essential fragmentation of the psyche through hubristic overreaching. It reveals that tragedy, like creativity, is both a process of consummation as well as of destruction. Thus, it is interesting that Soyinka's pet deity, Ogun, uses the primal implement of ingenuity to clear the road for his compeers to begin the creation of the world. The same ingenuity he uses to destroy lives at the war of Ire.<sup>14</sup> Obatala, the deity of creation and aesthetics, creates the beautiful as well as the ugly. Sango of Oyo discovers fire through which avenue he burns down his own kin. As Soyinka himself puts it:

Every creative act breeds and destroys fear,  
contains within itself both the salvation  
and the damnation.<sup>15</sup>

Soyinka thereby uses *Idanre* (the numinous mountain and the epic poem) as the symbol of the first primal crag and boulder from whence Atunda fragmented the first godhead. The first godhead is therefore the first tragic hero. Sometimes an excuse is found for this kind of *sparagmos* by saying that Obatala (a transformation of Orisa-nla) drank wine and became tipsy; so his creative imagination faltered, his hand became unsteady, and therefore he created defects into human bodies. Ogun also partook of the potent draught; he was inspired to treacherous anger and drew blood. These are all tragic rites of passage caused by a headlong collision of mind with matter.

*Idanre* particularly belongs to the classification of Soyinka's art of the grey phase: those works inspired by the profundity for myth and the cosmos, as opposed to his more comic, lyrical models. If we look through the various poems in the *Idanre* collection, the word *grey* is recounted on no less than a dozen instances. This is climaxed by the last stanza of 'Post Mortem' thus:

Let us have all things of grey; grey slabs  
grey scalpel, one grey sleep and form  
grey images. (*Idanre*, 31)

What else could be more grey? It is in this first collection also that we find the greatest word-play on the concept of rings and cycles.<sup>16</sup>

The dissolution of the first deity, Soyinka believes, is the realm of pathos. This is the plastic state of self re-creation, the elegant reflection of the white elderly god, Obatala. The drama theorist believes that the actual combat of the will by which consciousness enters into active self re-creation is the province of Ogun. Ogun is an 'actor,' veritably daring, therefore the actual mover and innovator of mimesis. The dismemberment of the original deity was not self-advertent; so he is absolved of all guilt. With the iron god, the act of spilling blood, of dismembering his victim in the process of liberating it cannot be absolved of guilt. Drama is therefore the realm of acting; of re-creating and of mimesis. Whether this aspect of Soyinka's theory is completely objective is, in a matter of degree, a different issue. Nothing, of course, is absolute. We can only adapt to the echelon of hierarchies. In this respect the first casualty, Orisa-nla, did not wholly survive his primordial accident in the hands of the traitor, Atunda, hence he neither suffered anguish nor eventual recreation. In common parlance, he was instantly transformed. On the other hand in Ogun's inadvertent murder, he goes through the consequences of anguish, of self-flagellation, of spiritual atonement and conscious re-assemblage. Thus Soyinka has written appertaining to this theme:

The drama of Obatala is prelude, suffering and aftermath. It symbolises firstly the god's unbearable loneliness and next, the memory of his incompleteness, the missing essence. And so it is also with the other gods who did not avail themselves, as did Ogun, of the chance for a redemptive combat where each might recreate each by submission to a disintegrating process within the matrix of cosmic creativity, whence the will performs the final reassemblage.<sup>17</sup>

This will seem most plausible even in terms of the structure of classical dramatic action as plotted by Aristotle. If we assemble the gods in an aesthetic mould, Ogun always puts the finishing touch. This is perhaps the relevance of what Bolaji Idowu writes:

As the master-artist, it is Ogun who gives the finishing touch to the creative work of Orisa-nla. When Orisa-nla has finished the moulding of the physical man, it is left to Ogun to take charge of the work of circumcision, tribal marking, tattooing, or any surgical operations that may be necessary to keep man in good health.<sup>18</sup>

Here Idowu tells the concrete story, Soyinka does the abstract theorizing.

In the realm of dramatic action, there is no doubt that incessant conflict and geometric as well as ideational action are the propelling forces of events. What drama does is to try a resolution of actual or impending conflict. It is thereby



plausible that an archetype with a most unstable, unpredictable temper and comportment will most likely fuel dramatic action and attitude. Any misgivings therefore, that Soyinka chooses Ogun of all the deities in the Yoruba pantheon? His theoretical outlook has appropriated the temperamental, stormy outlook of another active god, Sango, for the same reasons of dramatic worthiness. Rage, anger, temper, blind action as in classical notation of the tragic hero, become tragic flaws for the god and hero in Soyinka's drama. On this he writes:

In tragic consciousness the votary's psyche reaches out beyond the realm of nothingness (or spiritual chaos)

. . . through areas of terror and blind energies into a ritual empathy with the gods, the eternal presence who once preceded him in parallel awareness of their own incompleteness . . . —the tragic victim plunges into it in spite of ritualistic earthing and is redeemed only by action.

Without actions, and yet in spite of it he is forever lost in the maul of tragic tyranny.<sup>19</sup>

Now that we have gone through the intuitive process of acting in theatrical motivation, through what levels or in what concrete hierarchy does the actor and the stage stand? Whether or not it is acknowledged, the conscious actor stands in a certain intuitive relationship to his props in dramatic action. Soyinka's framework of the stage is made up of four zones: the three states of matter—the solid, liquid, and gas. The fourth is the medium of ether; an intractable, intangible phase of experience. Let us analyse and define them thus:

1. *The Past* of the ancestors which can also be extrapolated to contain pre-existence, history, legend, fulfillment, concretions, creation and failure.
2. *The Present* of the living which stretches the imagination through present action, creativity, actuality and events.
3. *The Future* of the unborn which encapsulates hopes, aspirations and dreams.
4. The intractable *fourth stage* which is the resolution ground for imaginative action, dreams, comas, twilight, the loss of consciousness and the split moments just before a birth or just before a death. Even death and mythologies are aspects of the fourth area of experience. Because that fourth area of experience is intractable and fluid, Soyinka employs a suffusion of adjectives to map it out. Obi Maduakor abstracts them from Soyinka as they appear in *Myth Literature and the African World*:

1. the womb of origin or of universal oneness (pp. 30 & 153).
2. the territory of essence ideal (p.1).
3. the unconscious (p. 153).
4. the matrix of cosmic creativity or of essence (p. 153).
5. the creative cauldron of cosmic powers (p. 145).
6. The deep black whirlpool of mythopoeic forces (p. 153).
7. The source of creative and destructive energies (p. 154).
8. The transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and becoming (p.142)<sup>20</sup>

The scientific analysis is best understood in the following terms: first, that matter is made up of three stages or dimensions of varying density. It is thus pertinent to observe that any physical entity, be it living or mineral matter, is three dimensional. Soyinka, through his crucial, analytical essay, "The Fourth Stage,"<sup>21</sup> has discovered a fourth stage of etheric matter within the African worldview. It certainly is true that this phase has always existed, the problem being that it had hitherto not been analysed in literature or in philosophy as Soyinka had done. The understanding of 'the fourth stage' is therefore the understanding of Soyinka's lifelong pre-occupation with creativity. Once the fundamentals of the four stages of existence are applied, the so-called abstraction in Soyinka's thinking evaporates. The residue is then a clear understanding of what he had represented in contemporary thought as the collective unconscious of the African aesthetic and racial attitude. So much for the delineation of matter. Now we will turn to the dynamics of performance in Soyinka's writing.

In all avenues of creativity, matter must always be (set) in perpetual motion of conflict and complementarity analogous to procreation which is dependent on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual conflicts with only periodically intervening reconciliations. Inevitably, Soyinka turned to the analysis of Greek literature and art as had been done by Friedrich Nietzsche. The great antithesis which generated the efflorescence of Greek art and creativity is characterized by the temper of their two artistic deities, Apollo and Dionysos. Apollo is the creator-god, the shaper into plasticism of all forms whilst Dionysos is the governor of other non-plastic art; music and its attendant poetry. These two gods represent simultaneously for the African, Obatala, who like Apollo is the god of creation; and Ogun the chanter of poetry, the god of creativity and of destruction, analogous to Dionysos. While Obatala is a gentle and serene agent of creation; a suffering spirit, Ogun is a vigorous inspirer of war and metallurgy. Their two disparate tendencies therefore clash to generate other modes of creative

perception; and are gorgeously reconciled by that medium of beauty—art. This is why it has always been my own opinion that every true art, religion, or worldview must, of necessity, generate a plastic as well as a performance model. Nietzsche characterizes these two opposing models in art as both the province of dreamland and of drunkenness. In other words, it is not difficult to see why the consummate artist, the poet, is both a dreamer and drunk; a creator and a revolutionary; a builder and a destroyer, a genius as well as a lunatic. The difference in the emphasis of each polarity is a matter of degree. Most of the dramas of Obatala, both in Africa and the new world,<sup>22</sup> portray the creator deity in antithesis to its fiery brothers Ogun and Sango. Even in the primordial dismemberment of the original deity, he holds no malice neither against his slave, Atunda, nor against the arrangement of the world that made such treachery possible. We see him in sculpture always as a serene, reassuring, almost perfect presence.

In Soyinka's lyrical drama, *Death and the King's Horseman*,<sup>23</sup> the tragic hero, a highly individuated medium, is supposed to carry himself through the will of music on to a higher place of being. In thus expecting some bliss or ecstasy, he hopes to rise to a level of consciousness higher than that of his environment whence the explosion of rapturous joy brings himself both dismemberment as well as re-creation for other roles.<sup>24</sup> The tragic hero, Elesin Oba, drifts around the normative imperatives of his role, but in failing recognizes the true phenomenon of communal sacrifice, seeks an easy exemption and an alternative. This manifests outwardly as changing history and colonialism. Inwardly, the genuine cult of his own cosmos recognizes this as a failure of the imagination which makes him an unworthy, therefore incapable, element of sacrifice. He thus evades a certain 'dark' area of experience which lies between dream and drunkenness. This collapse of an unprepared imagination is similar to what Nietzsche describes as:

. . . a stupendous awe which seizes upon man, when all of a sudden he is at a loss to account for the cognitive forms of a phenomenon, in that the principle of reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to admit of an exception. Add to this awe the blissful ecstasy which rises from the innermost depths of *principium individuationis*, and we shall gain an insight into the being of the Dionysian . . . and, if your imagination be equal to the occasion when the awestruck millions sink into the dust, you will then be able to approach the Dionysian.<sup>25</sup>

In a bad failure precipitated by a misunderstanding of an historical process, a beneficial democratic element of ancient theatre, the chorus, inaugurates the ideal which is about to be called into default. In Soyinka's play, the chorus of initiate dancers of nature forces—largely women—call Elesin into the imperatives of his roles. However, there is something to say for the changing role of the chorus in modern drama, so we will return to it shortly. But the point is wont

to be made that one of the instances which serves to show the boundary between ritual and theatre in Africa is that point where the chorus stepped aside for the isolation of roles between individual characters and the rest of the community.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), *The Road* (1965) is conveniently Soyinka's most profound tragic play. As in the former play, *The Road* is dramatized in the market place, but in a secluded section of the market place. The spare part store of Professor, a schizophrenic personality, is also the favourite haunt of semi-skilled labourers who seek employment as bus drivers and conductors in the new, but quickly expanding, metropolis of Nigerian cities. It is the lair of semi-felons, thugs and layabouts, and it is the rendez-vous for uniformed accomplices and politicians. This is how Biodun Jeyifo aptly puts it:

In the public 'motor parks' of Southern Nigerian cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Onitsha, and Owerri, in the shanty-towns and 'red light' districts of our new planless urban make shifts, and in the seedy, festering outskirts of the 'Sabongaris' of northern cities, there shall we find the habitats and the haunts of the characters of *The Road* . . .

The basic sociological factor which has produced these 'wretched of the earth' is an all too rapid urbanisation which has, to date, not been accompanied by a commensurate pace to what, in other societies, constitutes the basic motive force of modern urbanisation: wage labour. In other words, urbanisation without industrialization, this is the sociological factor behind this phenomenon.<sup>27</sup>

Soyinka starts from the basic premise that the Road is the physical road over which people walk, the road to wealth and to misery, to travel as well as to death. From here he elevates the road to the level of a metaphysical phenomenon—a lone, serpentine being leading as tracks to the unknown. The only man who nearly understands its secret in the play is the professor, part mad, part sane and full of philosophical aphorisms. (The point of my analysis is not to trace the references of Soyinka's characters as James Gibbs often does).<sup>28</sup> The layabouts and drivers constitute the acolytes to the priestly figure of Professor, but more importantly, they constitute the immanent all-pervading chorus of the play.

The Road in Soyinka's theory of tragic action is a passage, a metaphysical vent, and because it is also conceived as a serpent, it can strike and inflict death. That is why he appropriates the prayers of Yoruba mothers to travellers: 'May you never walk when the road waits famished'.<sup>29</sup> Being a priest of the Road, Professor finds 'food' for the road. This he does by removing all the traffic signs at bends and corners so that unwary drivers would crash into the rocks and gullies, and the spare parts from the wreckages provide wares for his spare part store which he terms AKSIDENT STORE. Professor creates tragic sport for Ogun and the rather bloody dividend goes to his own pocket. As a humorous

diversion, Professor Soyinka is now on the road to replace the squiggles and road signs that his fictional character had removed. Unlike Professor however, he makes no gain from the same!<sup>30</sup> In the play, the context is suffused with all the paraphernalia of passage—church music, palm wine, the mask of egungun etc. The sun sets on Professor in the same mood with all his acolytes around him as he gasps through the last of his philosophic passages, evoking ghosts and apparitions:

. . . Dip in the same basin as the man that makes his last journey and stir with one finger, wobbling reflections of the two hands, two hands, but one face only. Breathe like the road. 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 traveller in his confidence, swallow him whole or break him on the earth. Spread a broad sheet for death with the length and the time of the sun between you until the one face multiplies and the one shadow is cast by all the doomed. Breathe like the road, be even like the road itself. . . .<sup>31</sup>

So the Road which made professor is the same that murders him . . . because it is the centre of his being, as Mircea Eliade puts it:

The road is arduous, fraught with perils, because it is, in fact, a rite of the passage from the *profane to the sacred*, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to the divinity. Attaining the centre is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation; yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring, and effective.<sup>32</sup>

There have been very serious criticisms of Soyinka's often dense, metaphysical arsenal where commonplace elements take on the armour of myth and archetypes. These critics are largely of the second generation of Nigerian playwrights, and critics. But even when they are academics from outside Nigeria, they are usually those of Marxian materialist persuasion. We will be able to examine two critical statements from Biodun Jeyifo and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o here. In an article first conceived in 1977 and later published in a collection of sociological essays on African drama, Jeyifo had cause to write of *The Road*:

Soyinka has a deep, abiding penchant for mythology, metaphysics and mysticism. As an illustration of this point, it is enough here to cite only the preface poem to *The Road* which, by the playwright's own avowal, should be of help in our attempt to penetrate the formidable metaphysical substructure of the play. Rather than do this the poem further entwines us in more imponderable phenomena and idealities.<sup>33</sup>

In the same essay, Jeyifo believes that there is an under-current of class war brooding in the play but which Soyinka's metaphysical emphasis suppresses. He believes that the road, rather than being a metaphysical symbol of an inner experience, is an avenue of labour relations and materialist pursuit because the people ply the road to make a living. The touts, drivers and motor park layabouts are, therefore for Jeyifo, materials for a revolutionary vanguard.

Eleven years before Jeyifo made this point, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o had made a similar point in a talk he gave at the Africa Centre in London. The year was 1966 but the essay had also been included in his collection of essays published in 1972. Here his comments are rendered verbatim, and at length:

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 are (apart from the artists) cynics, or sheer tribal reactionaries like Baroka. The cynicism is hidden in the language (the author seems to revel in his own linguistic mastery) and in occasional flights into metaphysics. Soyinka's good man is the uncorrupted individual's lone act of courage, and thus often he ignores the creative struggle of the masses. The ordinary people, workers and peasants, in his plays remain passive watchers on the shore or pitiful comedians on the road. Although Soyinka exposes his society in breath, the picture he draws is static, for he fails to see the present in the historical perspective of conflict and struggle.<sup>34</sup>

Another Nigerian critic, in fact, made a wholesale dismissal of myth and metaphysics. At a conference in Ibadan in 1976, Femi Osofisan wrote that:

. . . the worldview which made for animist metaphysics has all but disintegrated in the acceleration caused by colonialism, of man's economic separation from nature. However one may regret it, myth and history are no longer complementary, and to insist otherwise is to voice a plea for reaction.<sup>35</sup>

This dissension to Soyinka's archetypal theories is significant and could not have been otherwise because these criticisms belong to a school of historicism rather than a metahistorical kind. The historical materialist sees man in history, the metahistorical idealist sees man above history. It is therefore possible for man to interpret human relations in the nature of models, myths and archetypes. It is my opinion that art mediates between these two schools of thought and we will show in the conclusion to this paper, how the extremes of each school arrives at a surprisingly similar stereotype on the dialectics of history. For one thing, they both espouse a kind of deferred idealism which borders on hope or a kind of eventual utopia.

There is the need for a foray into two of Soyinka's festival plays before we sum up this paper. The first is a *A Dance of the Forests* (1963) and the other is *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973). *A Dance of the Forests* is in some way an interpretation of history as a continuum, a formalizing of imaginative connectedness in sequential spheres. The characters consist of the dead which represents the past, the living community which is the present; and the depiction of the future as represented by the Triplets and the Half-Child. Besides this, the fourth area of existence is represented by various categories of forest spirits and their essences who prophesy. On another level, the playwright shows that there is a concrete continuum between the life of the past as in history and the life of the present. Hence all those in the court of the ancient King, Mata Kharibu, are re-incarnations of their ancient selves and they are made to pay the price of their misdeeds in their previous lives because the consequences of those deeds have adversely affected the present. Even the artist, Demoke, with the tacit support of his patron god, Ogun, had contrived the murder of his apprentice, Oremole. This is how a critic represents it:

All this is to say that Demoke (the artist and carver), far from being a new spirit of creative energy, is in fact, a guilty, haunted man, the old spirit of death in new clothing. He is, in a way, similar to the ancient emperor Mata Kharibu who sends the warrior, one of his ablest soldiers, to ignominious death for daring to criticize him and for querying the justice of a war fought to acquire the trousseau of a faithless woman . . .

Thus a structure of crimes is built up in *A Dance of the Forests* implicating not only the living and the dead but also . . . an important god, Ogun . . .<sup>36</sup>

What interests one so much is the way in which history is conceived as a cycle, complete in itself but having a ripple effect which, in a realistic sense, is linear and continuous. This reveals that the way in which traditional man conceives of time or abolishes it has effects that ultimately go beyond him. Hence the message of Soyinka's most convoluted play as supposed once again by Oyin Ogunba:

But there are already signs that the future cannot be a rosy one, because this community cannot simply leap into glory from a background of such darkness and crime, the past will continue to haunt the present and the future until there is a proper atonement for the crime of the community, ancient and modern.<sup>37</sup>

Soyinka's festival dramas seem to hinge themselves on the validity of one or another concept of time: cyclic time and linear time. *The Bacchae of*

*Euripides* seems to revolve on such a level of conflict between mythic time and historical time; between manhood and godhood. What, for instance, would be the purpose of a mortal ruler, Pentheus, when he chooses to foolishly confront the god of wine in his own season? Dionysos had blessed Athens with a flourishing vine and the religious ecstasy of his followers sweeps through the land, infectious as a plague. Pentheus, the ruler of Thebes, forbade such a wild festival of the vine and would maintain order in the land. The same ecstasy he wishes to cure possesses him and he becomes the wild goat chased and dismembered in the fields.

Poor Pentheus; the phenomenon of abolishing profane time through a possession ritual was alien to him so he queried on what the concept of time meant in such religions:

PENTHEUS: . . . was it in truth-defining *day* or was it by *night* this inspiration came to you.

DIONYSOS: How does the earth take seed? By *night* or *day*? When heaven opens forth and, swarms and probes earth's thirsty womb, do you ask Did her 'inspiration' come by night? or day? And when the grape begins to swell, its purple juice pounding on the tender skin or at the sight of the bursting udder of a cow. *Do you wait to date and time* Her 'inspiration' or simply fetch the milkpail? Do you demand of earth the secret of the rise or Tread the grapes and say a prayer of thanks to heaven? (Emphasis, P. 267-8)

Contrary to Pentheus' intellectual analysis of time, an archaic man who believes in the intuitive category of seasonal or cyclic time rather describes what he feels, not how he knows. One of the leaders of the rite says:

. . . At the sound of flutes, Whole  
Galaxies have fallen in my cupped hands  
I have drunk the stars . . .

And yielded to the power of life, the god  
in me.

And this is what this day we celebrate  
our feet at the dance are the feet of men  
Grape-pressing, grain-winnowing, our joy  
is the great joy of union with mother earth  
And the end of separation between man and man. (265)



It is this pronounced dichotomy between the historical and the archetypal man that will presently warrant our discussion of the problem of historicism in Soyinka's works.

### Soyinka's Art and the Problem of Historicism

It is already clear in the discussions of Soyinka's works as well as the criticism so far levelled against sections of his works that the kernel of his philosophy is based on the models of traditional civilizations—be it Yoruba, Dogon, Zulu or Athenian. Traditional, or the so-called archaic civilizations are based not on historicism or on the materialist conception of history, but on mythic or metahistorical models in history. In this respect, he runs headlong into the modern man whose attitude towards history is linear rather than cyclical. Traditional philosophies abolish the dread and terrors of history—wars, famine, disease, catastrophes—by establishing archetypes for them and transcending them in eschatological theories. In the words of Mircea Eliade:

the man of the traditional civilizations accorded the historical event no value in itself; in other words, he did not regard it as a specific category of his own mode of existence.<sup>38</sup>

Much of Soyinka's playwrighting falls largely in the mode of traditional explication and archetypes, although it does not altogether exclude particular historicity on particular instances.

On the other hand, the thorough-going historical man; that is, the modern man, not only chooses to often exclude the sublime patterns and models of myth but also prefers to creatively confront and engage them in material practice. In effect, he is more rigorously scientific and derives more concrete material results from his explorations and experiments. It is for this reason that Soyinka's more vociferous critics are found among those of historical materialist persuasions. Those critics would like to see his characters engage in more combative activity with their environment, rather than 'dialogue' or philosophize over them. Though their view is not necessarily sacrosanct it nevertheless represents a point of view, having serious consequences on what must be the new directions in the development of dramaturgy in African playwrighting. It will be recalled that Ngugi observes that the ordinary people, workers and peasants in Soyinka's plays, remain passive. Since these categories of the dramatis personae often constitute the chorus in traditional dramas, then, new African dramas of materialist persuasion must find a new role for the *chorus*. This, in purely dramaturgic terms, means the incorporation of group roles in the body of the play or the de-emphasizing of them. The reason for this anomaly, if that is what it is, is that African writers are transferring from an oral to a written medium and new forms

of textualisation demand new techniques. This is what, I believe, Mineke Schipper means thus:

In Oral literature the portrayal is dominant whereas in written literature the text is everything.<sup>39</sup>

The formidable thrust of Soyinka's language itself imposes an ambivalent outlook on his works, and consequently the extreme individuality of the major characters in Soyinka's works probably result from a certain heightened abstraction in the level of the written medium. This aspect of what Ngugi and Jeyifo have criticized is represented by Anthony Appiah as "the difference between search for self and the search for a culture."<sup>40</sup> Appiah supposes this to be a tension, or rather, a dialectic between the authorial 'I' of a textual exegete and the 'we' of oral narration. He puts it in the context of print technology and media:

One aspect of the situation is the growth both of literacy and of the availability of printing. This generates the now familiar problem of the transition from fundamentally oral to literary cultures: and in so doing it gives rise to that peculiar privacy which is associated with the written and persistent text, a privacy associated with a new kind of property in texts, a new kind of authorial authority, a new kind of creative persona. It is easy to see now that, in generating the category of the individual in the new world of the *public published* text, in creating the private "metaphysical" interiority of the author, the social-historical situation tears the writer out of his social-historical perspective—the authorial "I" struggles to displace the "we" of the oral narration.<sup>41</sup>

Though eloquent and convincing, one supposes that Appiah's view here confuses the engagement of the writer with his text (in itself a 'metaphysical' link) with a purely empirical category—how a writer sees or interprets his character in role models. But it is useful to cite Appiah at length because his thesis is another genuine representation of a point of view that is historicistic in the sense of Pierre Macherey's approach to text as occupation.<sup>42</sup> Even more relevantly, Appiah's point insinuates a deconstructionist reading of Soyinka in that he brings an unprecedented emphasis to bear on the interplay between:

- (a) the author, text and language as portrayed by Derrida and;
- (b) the reader, text and language as portrayed by Lacan.<sup>43</sup>

Sufficient, however, to say that most indigenous oral performances of Africa bear a somewhat vertical emphasis on the intuitive improvisational role of the performer and on the simultaneity of his language. This then tended to emphasize a somewhat rarified medium of referential focus since there is no

horizontal line of concrete, fixed text. The performer's skill is therefore based on an internalized *ad lib* formulaic. This is the pure context of the two performers: Elesin Oba and his Praise Singer in the play, *Death and The King's Horseman* where Soyinka chooses, rightly or otherwise, to emphasize medium rather than history. We know that performance must, of necessity, be based in a historical context even when the framework is largely mythical or archetypal. What Soyinka has done, more in his most important, more complex works, has been to try and capture the essence-ideal of history in one dialectical, sometimes contradictory moment. He seeks to find more permanent models for the explanations of phenomena: situations and foibles such as human beings have not been able to overcome. What he elsewhere terms "the recurrent cycle of human stupidity."<sup>44</sup> For him, in being able to find trans-historical explanations for these flaws of mankind he might find a long term, 'eternal' explanation for them. This aspect of his sensibility is clearly proffered in the interview conducted in 1974 by John Agetua while he was in self-exile. For instance, Agetua asked him:

In your most recent works there co-exists philosophical pessimism and a certain confidence—not optimism: confidence in the spirit rather than in man, in nature rather than in the universe, in action rather than in results.

Soyinka replied:

Another word for it as used by a certain critic is ambivalence. For me the word I prefer to use is the reality of nature. You must know of course about my fascination with the symbol figure of my society—Ogun. He represents this duality of man; the creative, destructive aspect. And I think this is the reality of society, the reality of man . . .

In the same interview, Soyinka affirms thus:

Inevitably, I think every work belongs to a given moment. But then it transcends this because the idea, the values, which they project are ultimately universal and external values. There are always ephemeral events which must be taken care of but I think that even these events are tackled in the context of a larger vision, a larger direction.<sup>45</sup>

Without a shadow of doubt, this is the traditional, meta-historical aesthete at his utmost.

The fact cannot be gainsaid that the action and antics of Soyinka's characters in his plays with more modern referents do not fail to bear out the astral fatality and the cyclicity of his essentialist aesthetic. To go back to his play, *Madmen and Specialists*,<sup>46</sup> there is no greater delineation of fatalism in the

odds and bits of human figures who thrive on the futility of their own drudgery as when they speak and sing and play their antics:

(By the roadside is a group of mendicants—CRIPPLE, GOYI, BLINDMAN AND AAFAA. They pass time by throwing dice from the gourd rattle. The CRIPPLE has just thrown the dice).

AAFAA: Six and Four. Good for you.

CRIPPLE: Your turn, Blindman (gives the dice and gourd to BLINDMAN).

BLINDMAN: Five and Five, Fat chance of that (He throws).

AAFAA: Three and two, born loser, what did you stake?

GOYI: The stump of the left arm.

CRIPPLE: Your last?

GOYI: No I've got one left.

BLINDMAN: Your last. You lost the right stump to me yesterday.

And so in a game of dice, they gradually stake away what is left of their anatomy—eyes, fingers, stumps etc. Towards the end of the play, these deformed mendicants, victims of a holocaust, chorus what their whole philosophy is—the philosophy of AS:

MENDICANTS: Practise . . . As was in the beginning, as is, now and ever shall be, World without (p.73).

Thus they maintain the cyclicity, the cycle victorious of the archaic, trans-historical man. But the disillusionment and pessimism at the very end of the play is almost analogous to that of the modern man since the archaic man abolishes time with regard to optimism, but not here:

OLD MAN: (his voice risen to a frenzy) Practise, practise, practise . . . on the cyst in the system . . . You cyst, you cyst, you splint in the arrow of arrogance, the dog in dogma, tick of a heretic, the tick in politics, the mock of democracy, the mar of marxism, a tic of the fanatic, the boo in buddhism, the ham in Mohammed, the dash in the crisis-cross of Christ, a dot on the I of ego, an ass in the mass, the ash in ashram, a boot in kibbutz, oh how dare you raise your hindquarters you dog of dogma and cast the scent of your existence on the lamp-post of Destiny you HOLE IN THE ZERO OF NOTHING.

The Play concludes on the lyrical notes of the song:

As it was in the beginning  
So shall it be in the end.

The pessimism and the angst of the modern man in Soyinka's works show that his traditional models are not static and unchanging. For instance, his Ogun mediates between the ancient forge and the modern, industrial furnaces. He also appropriates tractors and automobiles! In whatever ways these may be termed anachronisms, we see the attempts of a traditional archetype making efforts to adjust to the dictates of the modern world. The ancient man trying to confront the forces of history. Robert Armstrong's description of a modern instance is succinct:

The cult of Ogun is highly elaborated in Yoruba country and shows amazing vitality among people directly concerned with modern technology. In 1974, for example, the drivers of the Ibadan University Motor Transport system performed a sacrifice to Ogun in the presence of the Vice-Chancellor and a dozen or so of the other high officials of the University. One of the drivers who came from Igara, an Igbira (or Ebira) town in the North-Western extension of Bendel State, was a particularly enthusiastic participant in the dances that followed the sacrifice of a dog.<sup>47</sup>

In that ritual moment of 1974, modern men commemorated the return of a medieval event in a theory of cyclic ideology represented as religion and as faith.

Modern man, whether or not he likes it, is a subject of historical time though he cannot completely sever his ties from the concept of periodicity. This is always represented as hope and the wish for change or relief. Even Marxian dialectic foresees a time when all fluctuations between the base and superstructure will eventually lead to a classless society. Then Communist Utopia will have come. However, one of the greatest problems of historicism itself is that it has not precluded its hope for a Utopia, a static point in history to which both the theory of archetypes and Religion also eagerly aspire. Hence it is also tied to faith, a meta-historical phenomenon which has sustained most traditional thought systems through the ages. In the opinion of Eliade, it is not ours to cast value judgements upon a certain mode or thought but that:

In our opinion only one fact counts: by virtue of this view, tens of millions of men were able, for century after century, to endure great historical pressures without despairing, without committing suicide or falling into that spiritual aridity that always brings with it a relativistic or nihilistic view of history.<sup>48</sup>

The theory of the archetype as a way of interpreting history and coping with time and the terrors of existence had thus survived and nurtured traditional aesthetics to the present day. In actual fact it is because much of Eastern Europe held on to it for so long that it became the prime target of most revolutionary ideologies. Once a model (whether traditional or communist) had become a faith,

*sui generis*: unto itself a grand mythical category, it precipitates its own destruction and renewal. This is no contradiction in terms, it only shows that history as a modern concept is linear in the sense of a chain. [See figs. 1 and 2] It consists of a long line of smaller cycles. A deliberate neglect of this peculiar fact can only lead to sterile cyclicity and stagnation. This is the reason that the same Eastern Europe that had been nurtured on the most conservative forms of Communism for nearly a century suddenly became its greatest latterday revocatories. In conclusion, ideology and history seemed to hold the phenomenon of Time and not necessarily Memory as their common referent. This does not give room in any way for pessimism, it can only emphasize the attention we have hitherto classified into the concept and categories of TIME.

Figure 1. The Ontology of Historical Time

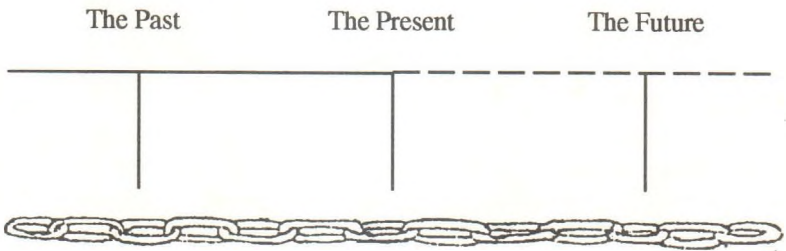
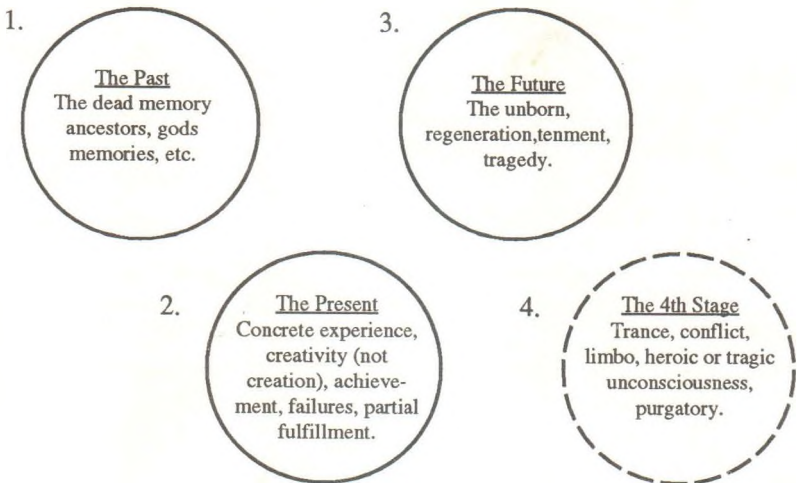


Figure 2. The Ontology of Archetypal Time



## Notes

1. Ann B. Davis, "Dramatic Theory of Wole Soyinka" in *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka*, edited by James Gibbs (London: Heinemann, 1981) 147-57 (147).
2. D. S. Izevbaye, "Language and Meaning in Soyinka's *The Road*" in *African Literature Today* no. 8 (London: Heinemann, 1976) 52-63 (53).
3. Annemarie Heywood, "The Fox's Dance: The staging of Soyinka's play" in *African Literature Today* no. 8 (London: Heinemann, 1976) 42-51 (42).
4. Wole Soyinka, *The Man Died* (London: Rex Collings, 1972) 18-19.
5. Robert W. July, "The Artist's Credo: The Political Philosophy of Wole Soyinka": *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 19, 3 (1983) 477-498 (478).
6. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 2.
7. *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: PAN Books, 1984) 112.
8. Wole Soyinka, *Idanre and other Poems* (London: methuen, 1974).
9. See Karen McCarthy Brown, "Systematic Remembering, Systematic forgetting: Ogun in Haiti" in *African's Ogun* Edited by Sandra Barnes (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989) 65-89. Brown Urges that "the constructive and destructive uses of power is central to the character of each of the many different ogou" (70) see also Adeboye Babalola, "A Portrait of Ogun as reflected in Ijala chants". In Barnes ed. 147-72. He argues that Ogun symbolises universal contradiction. (147).
10. Ogun has seven designations. See Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, 1975) 88-9.
11. Bolaji Idowu 56-60.
12. Benjamin Hunningher, *The Origin of the Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang. 1961) 43.
13. Hezzy Maduakor, 'Cyclic Determinism' in Soyinka's *Idanre* *Ufahamu* vol. viii No. 1 1977, 175-85.
14. See also Wole Soyinka, *Ogun Abibiman* (London: Collings, 1976) 22-23.
15. See Wole Soyinka, "And After the Narcissist?" *African Forum* vol. 1 no. 4 (1966) 60.
16. Hezzy Maduakor, *Ufahamu*.
17. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* 153.
18. Bolaji Idowu 87.
19. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* 146.
20. Obiajuru Maduakor, "Soyinka as a Literary critic" in *Contemporary Nigerian Literature: A Retrospective and Prospective Exploration* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1985) 97-8. Reprinted in *Wole Soyinka: An Introduction to His Writing* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1991) 296.
21. See "The Fourth Stage" in *Myth, Literature and the African World* 140-60.
22. See Ulli Beier, *A year of Sacred Festivals in one Yoruba Town* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine special edition, 1959) 12-25. Obotunde Ijime, *The imprisonment of Obatala*, English adaptation by Ulli Beier (London: Heinemann, 1966). Compare also Zora Seljam, *The Story of Oxala* (London: Rex Collings, 1978).
23. Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (London: Methuen, 1975).
24. Benjamin Hunningher 41.
25. Fredrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans WM. A. Haussman (New York: Gordon, 1974) 25-7.
26. Compare, for instance, Mineke Schipper, *Theatre and Society in Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982) 3. See also Benjamin Hunningher 24.
27. Biodun Jeyifo, *The Truth, Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama* (London: New Beacon Books, 1985) 14.
28. James Gibbs, "The Origins of A Dance of the Forests" in *African Literature Today* no. 8 (London: Heinemann, 1978) 66-71.
29. Wole Soyinka, "Death in the Dawn" in *Idanre and other Poems*.

30. Professor Wole Soyinka was nominated the inaugural chairman of the Federal Road Safety Commission in Nigeria in 1987.
31. Wole Soyinka, *The Road*, in *Collected Plays 1* (Oxford: UP, 1973) 228-9.
32. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen series XLVI (Princeton: UP, 1974) 18.
33. Biodun Jeyifo.
34. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o "Wole Soyinka, T. M. Aluko and the Satiric Voice" in *Homecoming* (London: Heinemann 1978) 55-60 (55).
35. Femi Osofisan, "Ritual and the Revolutionary Ethos: The Humanist Dilemma in Contemporary Nigerian Theatre," paper read at the First Annual African International Conference, University of Ibadan, July, 1976, 8. subsequently published in *Okike* no. 22 (1982) 72-81.
36. Oyin Ogunba, *The Movement of Transition: A Study of the Plays of Wole Soyinka*, (Ibadan UP, 1978) 80.
37. Oyin Ogunba, 86. Compare also Robert W. July "The Artists' Credo. The Political philosophy of Wole Soyinka." *The Journal of African Studies* vol. 19 number 3 (1981) 477-98. (479).
38. Mircea Eliade 141.
39. Mineke Schipper 6.
40. Anthony Appiah, "Soyinka and the Philosophy of Culture" in *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives*, edited by O. Bodunrin (Ile-Ife: Ife UP, 1985) 250-63 (251).
41. See Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London, 1978)
42. See also David Forgacs, "Marxist Literary Theories" in *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*, edited by Ann. Jefferson and David Robey (London: Datsford, 1983) 145-51.
43. See Elizabeth Wright, "Modern Psychoanalytic Criticism" in *Modern Literary Theory* 131. See also Barbara Johnson, "The Frame of Reference" in Geoffrey H. Hartman ed., *Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text* (London: 1979) 147-71.
44. Wole Soyinka, "The Writer in a Modern African State" in *Art Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture* (Ibadan, New Horn Press, 1988) 15-20 (20).
45. John Agetua, *When the Man Died: Views and Interview on Wole Soyinka's Controversial Book* (Benin: Privately published, 1975) 39-41.
46. Wole Soyinka, *Madmen and Specialists* (Ibadan, Oxford UP, 1977).
47. Robert Armstrong, "The Etymology of the Word 'Ogun'" in Sandra Barnes ed., *Africa's Ogun* (29).
48. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return* 152.