



National Library of Canada

Cataloguing Branch  
Canadian Theses Division

Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0N4

## NOTICE



The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

**THIS DISSERTATION  
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED  
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Direction du catalogage  
Division des thèses canadiennes

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ  
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE  
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE**

THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE PLAYS  
OF JOHN PEPPER CLARK AND WOLE SOYINKA, AS RELATED  
TO THE IRISH DRAMATIC MOVEMENT, 1899-1939.

by

SIGA ASANGA

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate  
Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Ph.D. in English Literature.

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
OTTAWA, CANADA, 1978



A: Asanga, Ottawa, Canada, 1978

## Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	iii
Vita . . . . .	iv
Abstract . . . . .	v
Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter	
1. The Ibadan Ambience . . . . .	6
2. Escaping The Nightmare Of History: The Cultural Context . . . . .	53
3. Escaping The Nightmare Of History: The Literary Context . . . . .	93
4. Language And The Dramatic In Clark And Soyinka . . . . .	132
5. Stages In Rebellion: J.P. Clark . . . . .	185
6. Stages In Rebellion: Wole Soyinka . . . . .	222
Conclusion: . . . . .	272
Appendix A: Programme Of The National Theatre Company, Abbey Theatre. . . . .	278
Appendix B: Letter from Martin Banham . . . . .	280
Appendix C: Letter from Eldred Jones . . . . .	282
Appendix D: Letter from Ezekiel Mphahlele . . . . .	283
Notes . . . . .	284
Bibliography . . . . .	327

### Acknowledgements

In the course of writing this dissertation I consulted, and also received advice from Dr. Lemuel A. Johnson, Professor MacNamara, both of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Dr. Virginia Moseley, Dr. Michael J. O'Neill, University of Ottawa; Messrs. Martin Banham, Eldred Jones, Ezekiel Mphahlele, and Wole Soyinka; I hope I have used their suggestions satisfactorily. For painstaking supervision and encouragement, I am grateful to Dr. G.D. Killam from whose patience and helpful advice I benefited enormously.

I am especially grateful to the School of Graduate Studies for a fellowship which helped me to work on this dissertation.

## Vita

- February 11, 1940 -- Born, Foumbi, Baba II, Cameroon.
- 1957 -- Pupil Teacher, Basel Mission School, Bafochu, Cameroon.
- 1959 -- Teacher Training College, Batibo, Cameroon.
- 1962 -- Headmaster, Basel Mission School, Eka, Cameroon.
- 1963 -- Teacher Training College, Batibo, Cameroon.
- 1966 -- Cameroon College of Arts, Science and Technology, Bambui.
- 1967 -- Tutor. Teacher's College, Batibo.
- 1971 -- B.A. Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario.
- 1974 -- M.A. University of Ottawa.
- 1974-78 -- Doctoral Studies, Department of English, University  
of Ottawa.

## Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the theory and practice in the drama of John Pepper Clark and Wole Soyinka in relation to the ideals and the plays of the leading playwrights of the Irish Dramatic Movement--W.B. Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory.

The study reveals that a relationship exists between the Irish Dramatists and the two Nigerian playwrights, one which can be traced from the literary enthusiasm that flourished at Ibadan in the 1950's. The Irish writers were introduced at the University College of Ibadan mainly through the English Department in the 1950's. One-act plays by Lady Gregory and Synge were adapted by undergraduate writers and the practice of Yeats and Synge of working in archaic modes, also of exploiting attitudes and beliefs pertaining to archaic and rural communities were emulated by practicing writers.

In the 1950's Clark and Soyinka were still practicing undergraduate writers when they came in contact with the thoughts and plays of the playwrights of the Irish Literary Revival; immediately they recognized valid correspondences between their own aspirations and those of the Irish dramatists, affinities which provoked them to seek to place their own work in the context of their African background.

The study begins by examining the historical significance of the Irish Dramatic Movement in the perspectives of the study of modern drama. It is shown that Irish modernism differs from cosmopolitan European modernism in three ways: that all literature is national, that the basis and meaning of literary nationalism is found in the inspiration which folk culture gives to literature, and finally that writers must place their work in the context of the folklore of their own countries. These assumptions are central to and implicit in the thought and drama of Clark and Soyinka.

Evidently, their African background gave them a living folklore, linguistic resources, a living mythology, and a rich store of theatrical idioms. Like the Irish movement the Nigerian movement is an archaistic movement seeking to revive cultural modes of expression and to ensure cultural continuity. In the present study I have examined the use of archaic diction, primitive symbolism, the exploitation of beliefs, and modes of thought characteristic of rural or "primitive" societies and I have shown that these form a dominant element in their plays.

Three other motifs central to the revival trend have been examined --the tragic myth, and the comic and satiric techniques. Myth gave birth to a tragic vision of history and folklore gave birth to the revival of comedy and satire: humour, wit, word play, irony, parody, and other rhetorical categories of the linguistic materials of folklore are consciously exploited. The influence of the Irish playwrights therefore extended beyond undergraduate experiments. The conclusion is that whereas the revival of the tragic myth was central to the idea of a return to sources, comedy and satire evolved as a result of the playwrights awakening to the "shock of new material" caused by events of contemporary cultural history. At Ibadan in the 1950's as was the case in the Dublin of W.B. Yeats in the 1890's there was a coincidence between events of recent cultural history and the artistic temperament. One way of asserting the cultural role of the artist is through comedy and satire, the art of rebellion, revolt. But since the modes which are employed in tragedy and comedy are implicit in African folklore, the revival of the tragic and comic traditions are central to the idea of a literary renaissance adumbrated by Clark and Soyinka. The conclusion of the dissertation is that the plays of Clark and Soyinka are central to the spirit of the literary revival that flourished at Ibadan in the 1950's; and lastly, our knowledge of the Yeatsian attitude to drama as it relates to folklore will deepen our understanding of the theory and practice of Clark and Soyinka as well as provide fresh contexts for the study of modern drama in relation to cultural history.

## Introduction

This study is primarily concerned with the theory and practice of two African dramatists, John Pepper Clark and Wole Soyinka. Each of these playwrights epitomizes the post-independence writer who seeks to bring his career in step with contemporary African history. The plays of Clark and Soyinka, accordingly, have elicited critical interest in Africa and abroad, but the present study hopes to provide a fresh context from which their plays can be examined.

I propose, therefore, to study the plays of the two African dramatists in the light of their literary indebtedness to the principal figures of the Irish Dramatic Movement-- Lady Gregory, J.M. Synge, and W.B. Yeats. Clark and Soyinka were first exposed to the ideals and the plays of the Irish dramatists while they were undergraduates at the University College of Ibadan in the 1950's. In response to the mood of national awakening and cultural revival that characterized Africa in the 1950's, they found a bond between their own literary aspirations and those of the leading playwrights of the Irish Renaissance half a century before. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the extent and nature of the relationship, to establish the debt of the Nigerians to the Irish writers and to show how the Nigerians have eventually found their own way.

Some interesting and rewarding studies have been undertaken on the drama of Clark and Soyinka, a majority of which have sought models for the type of play written by these dramatists in the festivals and folk dramas of rural communities. Historically, then, criticism has shown the tendency of regarding African literature and the drama entirely as a tool of decolonization, a reaction to the European world; the result is that in general the idea of a return to sources has been unscrupulously abused.<sup>1</sup> Thus, "neo-Tarzanism" or what Soyinka

calls the aesthetics of "ethnic purism" or even the more eloquent "black aesthetics," when strictly adhered to tends to impose limitations on both the dramatist and the critic alike.

I do not, however, intend to deny the importance of festivals, masquerades, dances, mimes, and masques, nor fail to recognize the presence of what Soyinka calls an exclusive African "metaphysical world and its reflection in the Yoruba contemporary social psyche";<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge the rewarding contributions made by critics and the dramatists themselves to an understanding of the relation of the literary drama to African life. My only objection is aimed first at the trend in criticism of African literary drama which ignores the importance of the University College of Ibadan for the development of literary drama in Nigeria in the 1950's. Secondly, critics have failed to identify adequately some of the major decisions of identity taken by Clark and Soyinka when they decided to produce an indigenous literary drama informed by the character, subject, and style of the new nationalism.

Recent criticism has responded to Soyinka's call to the African critics's release from the "fascination" of "ethnic purism" and critics of African dramatic literature have begun to realize the need of placing African drama within a wider cultural context. In an article entitled "African Literature and Comparative Literature" (1969), Professor Charles R. Larson of Indiana University suggests that "the comparative approach to African writing seems the most logical and the most rewarding." He reasons that since "so many African writers have received their advanced education in European and American schools, the possibilities for analysing African literature by using comparative methodology are almost unlimited."<sup>3</sup> Even though Professor Eldred Jones of Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, agrees that Soyinka "has his roots in Yoruba culture," he also recognizes the additional fact that Soyinka's "experience extends far wider; his formal education and his working experience have brought him into contact with ideas from the whole modern world. This other

half of his experience is also represented in his work."<sup>4</sup> Critics thus recognize that "by keeping comparative dramatic techniques in mind, the critic can look at Soyinka's drama in relation to the drama in general as well as for its distinctiveness."<sup>5</sup>

I am, however, not engaged in the task of general or broad comparative studies; the present discussion is an attempt to place the drama of Clark and Soyinka beside a specific regional tradition of dramatists, who wrote in English, and its variants, and who have produced a body of plays of historic importance — the leading dramatists of the Irish Dramatic Movement.

The historical significance of the Irish Dramatic Movement has been convincingly attested by many scholars acquainted with the history of the movement. Una Ellis-Fermor, for instance, says:

The Irish Dramatic Movement is significant not only because of the place which, by intrinsic and historic interest, it holds in the panorama of the World's drama but because of the light which can be thrown on fundamental aesthetic laws by a body of dramatic art comparable with the great drama of other ages, yet belonging to a period recent enough for the modern interest in artistic processes to have full play.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Allardyce Nicoll in his English Drama 1900-1930: The Beginnings of the Modern Period, concludes that with respect to the influence which the Irish drama exerted upon the development of the English stage...it is only the earliest dramas, especially those which came within the century's first decade,<sup>7</sup> which have been of particular significance.

In this thesis I wish to show that an examination of the theories and practices of the two Nigerian playwrights reveals that in the process of formulating and defending their ideals about modern African drama, they seek inspiration from the practice of the writers of the Irish Renaissance, Lady Gregory, Synge, and Yeats.

The modern tradition in English drama which began at about the end of the 1890's and petered out at about the time of the death

of W.B. Yeats in the late 1930's can be conveniently classified into two major trends: the cosmopolitan and the regional. Lady Gregory, Synge, and Yeats differ from a playwright like Bernard Shaw in that they did not believe in a cosmopolitan literature. Yeats's conversion of J.M. Synge in the late 1890's to return to the Aran islands and "find a life that has never been expressed in literature"<sup>8</sup> started and perpetuated the regional trend in the modern English drama.

A number of factors distinguish Irish modernism from the cosmopolitan one: the conviction that all literature has a nationality, that the national character of the people can be elicited from its folklore. W.B. Yeats, for instance, argues that the literary awakening in Ireland which began after the death of Parnell in 1891 was nationalistic in character, and he urges Irish writers to recognize the fact that they were endowed with exceptional opportunities in the great mass of folklore by which they were surrounded. Irish writers could add a new beauty to the legends by bringing to bear upon them their experience of the literature of other countries.<sup>9</sup> I believe that the literary enthusiasm which began at Ibadan in Nigeria in the late 1950's was inspired by a similar awareness, and that the example of the writers of the Irish Dramatic Movement had a distinct influence on the African dramatists. The modernism of Clark and Soyinka can be defined in the context of the theories and practices of W.B. Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory.

To a majority of critics of African literature, those to whom the word "influence" connotes a writer's indebtedness to another in a way that the affinities can be seen as being synonymous with a lack of originality, the word still triggers an unlimited series of uneasy reactions. In recent years, writers and critics alike have begun to regard originality as a function of manner rather than of matter.<sup>10</sup> For example, Wole Soyinka thinks that a

distinct quality in all great poets does exercise a ghostly influence in other writers...The resulting

work is judged by its capacity to move ahead or sideways, by the thoroughness of ingestion within a new organic mould, by the original strength of the new entity.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, W.B. Yeats observes that "in literature if we would not be parvenus we must have a model."<sup>12</sup> In the light of these conclusions originality is what Soyinka calls "the original strength of the new entity." These critics and writers therefore recognize the fact that the study of influence is a way of placing a writer's work in the context of a literary tradition, and that influence is not synonymous with creative insufficiency, in fact it need not be positive, it could actually be a negative reaction to a precursor's work.

In selecting to follow this trail I am aware that no complete study has been done on this aspect of the drama of John Pepper Clark and Wole Soyinka. The present study has the value of modifying all that has been said about the indebtedness of Clark and Soyinka to European dramatic techniques, hence to provide another context from which their plays can be studied.

The first part of the study examines the basis and meaning of intellectual nationalism and it is shown that intellectual nationalism entails a recognition of the individual writer's folk culture and the letting of that collective consciousness inform and shape his own individual consciousness. The second part examines the actual practice of writers eliciting from folklore, an African world view. The last part considers Clark and Soyinka as dramatists by examining the various methods which they employ to make their work more theatrical.

## Chapter 1

### The Ibadan Ambience

J.P. Clark was born in 1935 of an Ijaw family in what is now known as Mid-Western Nigeria. The Ijaw inhabit the coastal region of the Niger delta bounded in the south by the historical Bight of Benin. The Niger delta country still retains its importance as a major commercial route for British, European, and Nigerian penetration of the inland regions, attested today by the heavy amount of shipping which still goes on to the present day. Even so, the inhabitants of the delta region of Nigeria, especially the ones who Clark represents in his plays, remain ironically detached from the contemporary social life of Nigerian towns like Warri and Burutu. Indeed, apart from the occasional intrusion of the sirens of river-going steamers, Clark's Ijaw communities remain as isolated and equally as "primitive" as were the Aran islanders of J.M. Synge at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Ijaw country which Clark describes in his plays therefore is located on the west bank of the Niger river in outlets of the main Niger delta region, a fact which accounts, partially, for the predominance of isolated clusters of small settlements.

Clark attended Government College, Ughelli in Warri from where he entered the University College of Ibadan in 1955 and graduated with a B.A. in English in 1960. In 1962 he also attended Princeton University on a Parvin Fellowship.

The University College of Ibadan was founded in 1948 and until late in the 1950's its degree program was that of the Colleges of the University of London. During the first decade it admitted such future writers as Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, as well as J.P. Clark. At about the same time, the Department of English had already employed scholars of international reputation

7

like M.M. Mahood, J.A. Ramsaran, Martin Banham, Geoffrey Axworthy, and D.E.S. Maxwell who succeeded Mahood as Professor. The influences of these scholars and the other European, North American, and African writers, critics, and teachers whom Clark calls deprecatingly "the scouts and promoters of new talent"<sup>1</sup> was felt on the work of the first generation of Ibadan writers. In fact, the Department of English played an important role in introducing European authors and literary movements, mainly through the enthusiasm of the teaching staff, to its undergraduate English majors. It so happened that in the late 1950's and during the early 1960's Ibadan became an important training place for creative writers and critics.

The importance of Ibadan in the development of modern Nigerian writing is noted by Professor John F. Povey in this way:

Wole Soyinka was one of that brilliant group of young students at the University College of Ibadan in the early fifties. It included Clark, Achebe and Okigbo. Who can assess what catalyst fermented the talents of this group?

Povey concludes that:

The fact remains that it is from this contact that much of Nigerian literature, perhaps even the impetus to much of the whole field of African literature in English, can be traced.<sup>3</sup>

The Ibadan Arts Theatre, then attached to the Department of English, had, at first, looked for plays which could be presented to an intellectual audience as well as the public in general. But when Geoffrey Axworthy and Banham, men who started the University College Dramatic Society, realized that plays possessing a dramatic content which could appeal directly to African audiences were not forthcoming, they turned to revivals of what one critic described as "stale old English or American plays with no dramatic content and without any bearing on the tastes of Nigerian audiences."<sup>4</sup>

In fact, subsequent adaptations of foreign plays by Axworthy, Banham, and their students developed into a "travelling theatre", a

kind of folk theatre described in the following passage by Martin Banham -- the practice did not last as Banham writes:

The University College Dramatic Society, harnessing the enthusiasm of Geoffrey Axworthy, decided to take the plays to the people as they were unable to come to the plays. This exercise in dramatic democracy was a great success. For three nights a band of touring players and stage hands went from hall to hall presenting three one-act plays in the dining halls. Apart from the initiative displayed it was also a most valuable example, for there is no other place in Nigeria that can boast of a well-equipped theatre for the presentation of its plays. This venture by the UCIDS illustrated that theatre is not a necessity, and that plays can be presented anywhere where an audience will gather, and without any use of extensive scenery or effects.<sup>5</sup>

I have hinted already that Martin Banham and Geoffrey Axworthy, the founders of the School of Drama, were Professors of English Literature who happened to have developed an interest in experimental theatre. The following passages cited from the writing of Geoffrey Axworthy, like the passage cited above from Martin Banham, show that their enthusiasm to introduce their undergraduate students to a sense of theatre produced visible and lasting results. First, Axworthy explains that initially he had one main objective in mind:

My own starting point was the problem of teaching dramatic literature to students who had never seen a theatre; and a concern for the way these works were being taught in many schools -- not as something written to be acted and enjoyed, but to be dissected and memorized, together with footnotes.<sup>6</sup>

The second, exciting, thought was that

a live Nigerian theatre might one day come into being. We brought drama out of the classroom on to the stage; we organized courses for teachers; and we sought to prove that, given the right kind of play at the right price, a mass audience for drama existed throughout the country.<sup>7</sup>

After nine years, Geoffrey Axworthy revealed that his predictions were sound and he could already see some of the results in the presence of an Arts Theatre:

The existence of this theatre, with all its defects, in a large University, given even a little organisation, was almost bound to produce an outburst of dramatic activity. In nine years Ibadan audiences have been offered plays of all types and periods; ancient classics --Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plautus, --six plays of Shakespeare --Johnson and Molière, Gogol, Ibsen, Tchekov, Shaw, Synge, Obey, Fry, Arthur Miller, Brecht --Soyinka's Swamp Dwellers, Lion and the Jewel, Dance of the Forests-- and Ogunmola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard.<sup>8</sup>

The demands put on Martin Banham, Geoffrey Axworthy, and their undergraduate students to produce a drama whose subjects, characters and styles would be relevant to African audiences are demonstrated by the practice during this same period of writers of promise like Clark and Soyinka, who emerged out of the Ibadan atmosphere of creative and experimental theatre with an outstanding record of good and relevant plays.

Thus, during his years at Ibadan, from 1955-1960, Clark was the editor of the Department of English poetry magazine, The Horn, and also a beginning writer. In the essay "The Beginnings of Nigerian Literature in English" Martin Banham, who had originally been instrumental in the starting of The Horn, recognized Clark's talent as a University writer of some promise.<sup>9</sup> Although the success of the undergraduate writers at Ibadan was initially unsatisfactory, Martin Banham in the essay already cited above, notes:

It is very risky to suggest that amongst any of the writers represented at this level [in Nigerian Student Verse] there was an author of promise for the future, but Pius Oleghe and Miss Minji Karibo, for instance, could well develop into good writers. Another University writer, J.P. Clark, may well develop into an author of note. It is worth observing here that the two most noted young

Nigerian writers, Soyinka and Achebe, are both ex-Ibadan men, though Soyinka completed his studies at Leeds.<sup>10</sup>

Professor Banham expressed similar hopes for the growth of a Nigerian drama: "It is also true of the Drama, for the University College [of Ibadan] looks like being the place from which most young playwrights will emerge."<sup>11</sup> As it turned out Professor Banham's predictions about the place of the University College of Ibadan for the development of Nigerian drama were sound.

Upon graduation from Ibadan, Clark became a co-founder of the Mbari Writers' and Artists' club in Ibadan. He also recorded and transcribed the ancient Ijaw epic, the Ozidi saga, and reworked the English version into a play, Ozidi.<sup>12</sup> Clark's reputation as an important poetic dramatist is closely linked with his experiences at Ibadan and with his work in the Ijaw country, in poeticizing the lives of the fisherfolk of that particular sector of the Niger delta.

Wole Soyinka, the other dramatist who concerns us in this study also seeks to place his writing in the context of the folk culture and the contemporary experience of a particular people -- the Yoruba. He was born in 1934 in Abeokuta, a predominantly Yoruba town. Yoruba, the name of the people is also the name of their language; it refers as well to the people who live in the greater part of South Western Nigeria and westward into Benin (Dahomey). Conservative figures reveal that the Yoruba of Nigeria, alone, number about eleven millions. Ibadan, with over half a million inhabitants, is one of the largest cities in tropical Africa.<sup>13</sup>

For centuries, Yoruba society has had a highly urbanized political structure, and the people themselves reveal a keen interest in word play, sarcasm, broad humour, irony to the extent that satire and sophisticated wit are common virtues of Yoruba folk speech. Soyinka's work, for instance, reveals a remarkable predilection for humour -- fantastic and macabre -- word play, parody, and mimicry.

Although a large body of traditional poetry has been translated into English,<sup>14</sup> a fact which confirms my assertion that a comic and satiric tradition exists in Yoruba folk speech, the original culture has also been affected by a number of external influences: Moslem and Arabic influences, and the Judaeo-Christian tradition from western Europe.<sup>15</sup> These three mainstreams of contemporary culture constitute a single cultural background for the work of Wole Soyinka. The Yoruba themselves exhibit no signs of anxiety in the way they respond to other worlds whose concepts happen to be alien to their own; instead they embrace the world with a characteristic feeling of confidence described by Wole Soyinka as the Yoruba philosophic attitude of accommodativeness.<sup>16</sup>

Soyinka attended Government College Ibadan. He spent the years 1952-1954 at the University College of Ibadan, and went to Leeds University, England, in 1954 where he took an Honours B.A. degree in English in 1957. Professor John F. Povey thinks that the commitment of Leeds University to an interest in Commonwealth and African literature distinguishes it from other English provincial Universities.

He says:

Soyinka was one of the early students from Leeds who demonstrated that the University was taking an active interest in Africa. Leeds, which not so long ago seemed a very unremarkable provincial University located in the industrial areas of Yorkshire, is now an acknowledged leader. Under the dynamic drive of Norman Jeffares, its School of English is deeply committed to an interest in Commonwealth, and especially, African literature. Criticism and creativity are both supported when in a single year Leeds have Professor Eldred Jones of Sierra Leone as visiting professor and East Africa's first promising novelist, James Ngugi, in residence. Perhaps Soyinka's success gave some support to their decision.<sup>17</sup>

Even though the period which Soyinka spent in England coincided with a number of developments in the English drama he recognized that the aspirations of leading English playwrights whose plays he had seen or read did not correspond with his own ideas about the African drama.<sup>18</sup> When he finally graduated from Leeds he joined the Royal Court Theatre where he served as a play reader for a while before returning to Nigeria in 1959. Indeed, during the 1950's, the Royal Court was an extremely active spot in the theatre world: Kenneth Tynan in his Review of the English Stage 1944-1963 points out that besides the revivals of Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Shaw, and O'Neill, newer playwrights like Brecht, Brendan Behan, Arnold Wesker, John Osborne, and Samuel Beckett were important features of the modernism of the 1950's in London.<sup>19</sup>

But a closer look at Soyinka's thought and work shows that contrary to what a critic like John F. Povey thinks, the Royal Court experience did not enlist Soyinka as "part of the opposition to the established popular hit theatre."<sup>20</sup> At this point in his career Soyinka knew where his strength lay: this was in the mass of material in the African folklore; what he needed, as he himself said, was the patience to look for "inspiration among countries with approximate traditions and a longer professional history."<sup>21</sup> Some years later Soyinka revealed to Brian Lapping of The Guardian, 13 September, 1965 his admiration and preference for the content of Synge's plays rather than for absurdists and post-World War Two British dramatists. Brian Lapping reported that even though Soyinka originally went to London "to study the working of the theatre" he did "not feel greatly influenced by any European playwright." But

Only J.M. Synge ("The Playboy of the Western World") excited Soyinka by his content, and this Soyinka agrees may have been because Synge sympathetically mocks Ireland as Soyinka does Nigeria.<sup>22</sup>

First Soyinka was an aspiring writer who sought "professional" inspiration from a precursor "with approximate traditions and a longer

professional history.<sup>23</sup> Soyinka did not therefore evolve an independent style nor did he only discover Synge incidentally. The point has been clearly stated by Joseph Bruchac, who says that

Soyinka's early devotion to the writings of J.M. Synge, another writer who used a second language while living in a culture affected by a colonial presence to forge new directions in theatre, is obvious in many aspects of Soyinka's plays.<sup>24</sup>

Like Clark, a few years later, much of the literary inspiration of Soyinka must be attributed to the historical significance of the singular achievement of the writers of the Irish Dramatic Movement, and the popularity enjoyed by the latter in Departments of English Literature on College campuses since the 1950's. The University experience, as will be shown later, was crucial for the development of Clark and Wole Soyinka as literary playwrights.

The Irish Dramatic Movement began in 1899 as a literary movement with the purpose of founding a theatre that would produce the plays of Yeats, Edward Martyn, and George Moore.

We propose to have performed in Dublin, in the Spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so to build up a Celtic and Irish School of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England, and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism.<sup>25</sup>

The group launched two plays, The Countess Cathleen and The Heather Field by Yeats and Martyn respectively. As it so happened, after 1900, the ideals of the literary movement were to be promoted entirely by a second triumvirate: J.M. Synge, Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats. Frank O'Connor, a contemporary of Yeats, notes that

although Martyn and Moore were made converts by Yeats, "their zeal did not last." The defence of the ideals of the literary movement was left to the "asceticism" of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory to accomplish.<sup>26</sup>

Lady Gregory turned out to be the principal writer of one-act plays, and, as Allardyce Nicoll observes: "during the earliest days of the minority drama movement in England her playlets were more widely read and followed than those of other Irish dramatists."<sup>27</sup> In African Universities her one-act plays enjoyed a similar fortune: Professor Mahood notes the predominance of the "one-act addiction" among practicing dramatists; and Anthony Graham-White thinks that "With the recent exception of the absurdists" the playwrights of the Irish Dramatic Movement "have been almost alone in taking the one-act form seriously." He also notes that "at the University of Ibadan and at Makerere University in Uganda two of the first plays to be written by students were adaptations of one-act plays by Lady Gregory and Synge respectively."<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, she deserves the place of importance I have reserved for her in the present study.

The first of the second triumvirate to die was J.M. Synge in 1909, yet his position as a leading dramatist of the movement has hardly been contested. Paul.M. Levitt, in an introduction to a bibliography of published criticism on J.M. Synge, notes that most of Synge's critics have focused on five subjects:

As a matter of fact, until the 1950's there were at least five subjects that most Synge critics never failed to mention: (1) Synge's Prefaces (Playboy in particular), (2) Synge's Language, (3) The Playboy of the Western World, (4) Riders to the Sea, and (5) the story of how Yeats directed Synge to go to the Aran Islands.<sup>29</sup>

Even after the 1950's Synge continues to retain his place as the artist of the Abbey Theatre.

Lady Gregory died in 1932, and before the death of W.B. Yeats in 1939 the major histories of the movement had also been written.<sup>30</sup>

Although Yeats is known principally as a poet, in areas remote from Dublin, in Africa, for example, the study of the Irish Dramatic Movement has always adopted criteria suggested by W.B. Yeats:

We three alone in modern times had brought  
Everything down to that sole test again,  
Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.<sup>31</sup>

W.B. Yeats was known abroad for his poetry, the development of a vision of history which was actually a reflection of Yeats's attitude to tradition -- both oral and written. In Africa, he is best known for these two areas of his work. For instance, Professor Echeruo, one of the first generation of Ibadan student-writers remembers that, in general, the writings of the student writers were modelled on some Georgian writer. W.B. Yeats was often mentioned among the most favoured modern English poets. He then concludes that their recognition of poets like Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Auden, meant that there was a "surer sense of judgement among" his own generation of writers, "a definite preference for strength, complexity and originality in poetry."<sup>32</sup>

In fact, in 1965 when centenary papers on the art of W.B. Yeats, written by scholars in many parts of the world, were collected and edited by S.B. Bushrui and D.E.S. Maxwell, the late Christopher Okigbo, poet and friend to both Clark and Soyinka, contributed a panegyric on Yeats: "Lament of the masks: W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939," in which he employed the techniques of Yoruba praise poetry, Oriki, to represent Yeats as the "Arch-priest of the sanctuary;"

Who transformed a desert into a green pasture  
Who commanded highways to pass thro the forest--  
And will remain a mountain  
Even in your sleep...<sup>33</sup>

Yet, at Ibadan, Yeats is known for more than just the fact that he "transformed" the literary "desert" of Ireland "into a green pasture"<sup>34</sup> -- Yeats stabilized the image of the poet as a cultural fact, to the extent that in a situation where the political nationalist is no

ironist, the poet is. It is therefore not surprising that aspiring writers like J.P. Clark who tend to emphasize the aspect of the poet as "an image of heroic self-possession"<sup>35</sup> are inclined to model their methods and manner on W.B. Yeats: For instance, in the collection of poems written about the Nigerian Civil War Clark quotes Yeats, the poet for having said, "We have no gift to set a statesman right."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Soyinka believes that only one who possesses the poetic sensibility, the Ogun-man, is capable of standing above contemporary events in a way that his intellectual self-possession enables him to unify multifarious experiences.<sup>37</sup> I should like to point out something from the lines quoted from Okigbo's poem, one that concerns the present study, or which is central to my inquiry: the younger poet's interest in enacting a method adumbrated by Yeats and the other leading writers of the Irish Literary Revival, what one critic calls the "working in archaic modes." This practice involves, as we have seen in Okigbo's poem, the "use of archaic diction and orthography, of archaic allusions, of archaic subject matter."<sup>38</sup> The practice is central to the belief that the poet is a professional who has inherited not only his role but equally the techniques, methods, which have been used by other "bards." In the dramas of Clark and Soyinka, working in archaic modes takes two forms: "exploiting the attitudes of an archaic" or rural society,<sup>39</sup> the use of phrases, poetic lines, as well as whole passages and stanzas drawn directly from some African traditional, oral, literary source.

Finally, another aspect of Yeats's criticism that popularised his work abroad was Yeats's vision of history enacted in dramatic poems like "Leda and the Swan," "Among School Children," and "The Second Coming", and especially the attempt to codify his intuitions into the philosophy of A Vision and its ~~interweaving~~ gyres. Yeats's cyclic consciousness of time had greater impact on aspiring writers like Clark and Soyinka than did the contents of his plays. For instance, the persistent intrusion of the theme of frustration in the

plays of Clark and Soyinka is based on the awareness that history is essentially tragic. Like Yeats, Clark and Soyinka are fascinated by ruin and destruction. As a result they invoke circular images, folk prototypes like Abiku to symbolise the frustrations of man's destiny. It will be shown, below, that the cyclic consciousness of time, the fact that history is not progress alerted the Africans to the fact that man has lived many times, and this awareness forms the basis of tragedy and comedy in the plays of Clark and Soyinka. This is shown as the dramatization of the theme of guilt, family curses, and the fascination with the use of mythic and legendary archetypes.

But of greater importance, and as a result of the preceding discussion, Yeats, the myth-maker is also important for being the forerunner in the use of myth as a method to represent the "architecture of the world."<sup>40</sup> The important point was that Nigerian writers were acquainted with the important aspects of Yeats's studies in the 1950's while they were students at the University. They were aspiring to start a literary tradition which would take its sustenance from the oral culture of their own people, and like Yeats and his contemporaries of the Irish Renaissance they were starting everything anew. Another consideration is that Nigeria like Ireland was a colony and like the Irish writers, the Nigerians did not wish to reproduce the colonial image of themselves; hence they adopted cultural and intellectual points of reference different from the cosmopolitan, colonial ones. For instance, the colonialist, in order to justify his presence argues that history is progress, and as a gesture of cultural assertion, the cultural nationalist rejects this idea of history as progress; instead he begins to defend the authenticity of things that are deep in the past of the race. As I have already noted in the preceding pages, Vivian Mercier has also noted this archaistic tendency in the Irish Literary Revival and he argues that it is central to the thought of the Yeatsian generation. "From its beginnings," Mercier says, "the Literary Revival was a consciously archaistic movement, as any 'revival' must be to justify its name."<sup>41</sup>

The tendency, then, for the cultural nationalist is to reveal an almost religious devotion to certain places, mythic and legendary heroes and heroines, and a belief in certain recurrent themes like treachery, culpability, and genetic inheritance. Soyinka's devotion to the image of Ogun is a case in point. Like Ogun, his patron god, he celebrates his victory over contemporary chaos (history) in the following words: "Rich-laden is his home, yet decked in palm fronds/He ventures forth, refuge of the down-trodden."<sup>42</sup> Intrinsic to his theory and practice is the strong belief in the existence of "a true, an authentic African spirituality, a religiosity...a Black Metaphysical out-look." Thus, in spite of his sojourns abroad, he has not been alienated from these spiritual and "demonic sources of" his "African Strength." Like Yeats he defends an African world view which, he argues, is based on "a cyclic consciousness of time."<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, while recognizing Yeats's position as a great writer and innovator, Soyinka feels that the romantic aspect of Yeats's work, his experiments with the occult, for instance, have been unnecessarily emphasized by critics. Soyinka refers derogatively to "the way in which the dotty excursions of W.B. Yeats into a private never-never land are reverently exegetised."<sup>44</sup> Evident from Soyinka's negative remarks concerning Yeats's "dotty excursions" into a romantic landscape is the fact that like Synge, the first convert of Yeats, Soyinka is a satirist, who wants neither the "purely fantastic...spring-dayish cuchulainoid" play, nor the purely folksy type of play. Like Synge, whose satirical techniques he admired, he wants "reality" which is neither modern nor unmodern.<sup>45</sup>

Both Clark and Soyinka knew and actually appreciated more than an aspect of the thoughts of the Irish dramatists during the formative period while they were University students. In Nigeria, the attraction of the Irish writers has not been restricted to the late 1950's, it has actually persisted into the 1960's and the 1970's. During the 1967-1968 academic session at Ibadan, Dapo Adelugba, a lecturer in the Department of Theatre Arts, Ibadan, says a school of Drama

Acting Company was formed; of the twelve international pieces it produced five were plays taken "from the Anglo-Irish National repertoire, Synge's Riders to the Sea and Lady Gregory's The Work-house Ward, The Rising of the Moon, The Travelling Man, and The Gaol Gate."<sup>46</sup>

In 1971 Synge is discussed publicly at Ibadan, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth, which the School of Drama celebrated "with two Synge plays at the Arts Theatre -- The Tinker's Wedding and In the Shadow of the Glen -- and two lectures entitled 'Synge and the Ireland of his Day' and 'The Relevance of Synge in the Nigerian context.'"<sup>47</sup>

There exists, therefore, fundamental or basic reasons to account for the attraction of the Irish playwrights to the Nigerian Writers. In general, critics of African drama agree that the Nigerian drama conforms to the Irish in a number of ways. First of all, most agree that nationalism and a common colonial experience, for example, is responsible for the widespread "attraction of Irish dramatists" in Africa. Professor Mahood, for instance, says that the "national dramatic movement in Ireland (England's oldest colony) has been a natural source of inspiration to African dramatists."<sup>48</sup> She further says that this attraction is occasioned by the tendency with writers in Ireland and Africa to turn the literary movement into part of a cultural renaissance. She writes:

If a dramatic renaissance does, in fact, take place in Africa in the next half-century, future scholars are likely to discover that, in common with the European renaissance, it is the intensification of something that has always existed.<sup>49</sup>

Another critic, Anthony Graham-White, thinks that while influences on African dramatists "naturally vary with the dramatists' reading, one influence has been remarkably pervasive, that of the playwrights of the Irish Renaissance."<sup>50</sup> He then suggests that:

The attraction of the Irish dramatists has been two-fold. Like the African writers, they were

asserting indigenous values against British cultural domination, and -- in part because of this -- they incorporated the images and speech rhythms of their own people into their works.<sup>51</sup>

The defense of indigenous values, values antithetical to those of the colonial world, and the deviation into a selection of forms of poetic languages practiced by Synge, Lady Gregory, and Yeats, were major forms of attraction to the Nigerian playwrights. And like the Irish writers, Clark and Soyinka hoped that the retreat into their individual societies would help to keep their literary careers in step with political nationalism. In the actual process of returning into folklore Clark discovers and indeed gives validity to thoughts expressed by Yeats in connection with folklore:

The implication is not that one group of people borrowed this and that property from another but there can and in fact there do occur areas of coincidence and correspondence in the way of living among several peoples separated by vast distances and time, and who apparently are of distinct cultures, practices and persuasions....It is a matter of correspondence and coincidence. Yeats observed this to be true, seeing in every Irish beauty a potential Helen full of havoc to the race.<sup>52</sup>

Clark discovers these archetypes in his own society from his acquaintance with Yeats's methods. But the passage also reveals a number of things regarding Clark's methods: Clark has read Yeats and found a valid correspondence for Yeats's theories about the importance of folklore for the development of an indigenous literary tradition. The passage also reveals that Clark is returning to his roots as an educated man who knows what he is looking for. This is a result of the fact that as a literary man he has acquired the "additional benefit of a wider choice of practice and models," a privilege denied less sophisticated folk playwrights like Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola, and Hubert Ogunde. Finally he began his career from the cosmopolitan culture of Ibadan but when he retreated into Ijaw country he did so as a person trained in the arts and could interpret his material with "a surer

sense of judgement,"<sup>53</sup> to use Professor Echeruo's phrase, than did his less sophisticated compatriots in Nigeria.

Similarly, Eldred Jones suggests that the attraction of the Irish Dramatists for Soyinka has been caused by Soyinka's recognition of the fact that both groups were drawing their inspiration from identical oral sources of their individual traditions. These "similarities of background between Irish writers and Soyinka"<sup>54</sup> encouraged Soyinka to adopt a sophisticated approach to the use of folklore similar to the one practiced by Yeats. Jones writes:

Soyinka's dream for Nigerian theatre is similar to that of Yeats for Irish theatre. It is to produce a theatre which has its roots in the Nigerian tradition and speaks to Nigeria and the world through that tradition. The playwright therefore has to find a way to induce the world to accept that tradition.<sup>55</sup>

The immediate recognition of the thoughts which Yeats expressed with respect to the importance of the oral tradition to the development of a literary tradition therefore gave additional importance to African oral traditions. For instance, when Soyinka returned to Nigeria, and together with a group of friends they formed a semi-professional acting group, The 1960 Masks:

The group wished to revive interest in specifically African culture by encouraging and creating a drama that derived from traditional and indigenous forms. There was no intention of producing a popular theatre. Such needs could be left to the robust vernacular humour of Ogunde's Concert Party. Rather Soyinka sought deliberately to initiate a new drama which would utilize the resources of the English language but would draw its emotional sustenance, not from abroad, but from the continuing cultural tradition of his own country.<sup>56</sup>

The group produced Soyinka's independence play, A Dance of the Forests in 1960. Soyinka is noted for saying that a "central concern" for him has been "to transmit through analysis of myth and ritual the self-apprehension of the African world."<sup>57</sup> Like Yeats, he believes that the choice of dramatic literature is a deliberate one because

it is only from the myths, legends, and folk tales of a people that its writers can elicit the self-apprehended world of the particular race of people. For instance, Yeats says that the Irish Literary Revival signifies "the renewal of belief" in "old faiths, myths, dreams -- the accumulated beauty of the ages."<sup>58</sup> He then argues that only by eliciting from the materials of folklore of a people, "its loves and its hates, its likes and its dislikes," can aspiring writers hope "to mould and perfect national feeling -- the life, the ideals, and the legends of Ireland...that which they would not find anywhere else."<sup>59</sup> Therefore, a national character can be elicited from the materials of its folklore. This, then, is the point at which Soyinka immediately recognized similarities between his own aspirations and those of the Irish writers.

Hence, critics and writers of African literary drama who happen to see affinities between Irish and African literature take it as a matter of fact, as did Yeats half a century ago, that folklore, the people's literature, serves as a repository of a people's wisdom. The premise forms the basis of Yeats's belief in a "conscience" of the race and the representation upon the stage by writers of the "deeper thoughts and emotions" of Ireland; all were based on the premise that the racial essence can be elicited from folktales, myths, and legends. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that scholars in Africa and abroad have recognized the growing need of applying comparative methods to the study of Irish and African literature. The studies of Thomas Melone on Achebe and Yeats, Professor A.G. Stock on Achebe and Yeats, Catherine L. Innes on Achebe and Synge demonstrate the fact that fundamental affinities exist between the aspirations of the Irish and African writers.<sup>60</sup>

Even though the studies by A.G. Stock, Catherine L. Innes, and Thomas Melone have not been directly concerned with the drama, they point to the fact that there was a tendency among the first

generation of African writers in the 1950's in Ibadan to identify with, and actually adopt methods of interpreting existing folk material in ways similar to those practiced by the writers of the Irish Dramatic Movement. Thus, the attraction of the Irish writers to both Clark and Soyinka seems more fundamental than the incidental excerpts can reveal. An important aspect of this general literary awakening is that the writers seek to place their work in the context of the world view of their own national territory. The Irish example happened to represent the "first time the word 'national' was used in connection with the stage in...the 'English-speaking world.'"<sup>61</sup> As we shall see, the impact of the "national" aspect of the Irish Literary Revival on Clark and Soyinka was enormous.

Andrew E. Malone argues convincingly that the founding of the literary movement in Dublin was part of a general European revolt against the conventional theatre of the day. He says: "The stimulus towards an uncommercial, artistic theatre may be traced back through London, Berlin, and Paris to the general European craving for liberty and reality on the stage."<sup>62</sup> If we were to look at remarks made by Bernard Shaw, a contemporary of Yeats who was also an ardent supporter of the new desire for novelty in the theatre of the 1890's, in connection with Yeats's verse plays, Mr. Malone's thesis will, in general, be acceptable. Shaw, for instance loathed Yeats's emphasis on chanting or "cantilating". He thought there was "no novelty, no nothing but nonsense" in Yeats's defence of poetic speech. Shaw, accordingly, dismissed Yeats's experiments terming them "fresh artificialities and irrelevances and distractions and impertinences."<sup>63</sup> Shaw, however, failed to relate Yeats's novelties to the oral sources from which most of Yeats's fables were taken.

Even though Mr. Malone's observation may be true to the character of the revolt in general, he fails, like Shaw in the criticism of Yeats cited above, to take into consideration the "Celtic and Irish" aspect of the Dublin movement contained in the original

manifesto of 1899. In the passage quoted from Lady Gregory's Our Irish Theatre the original founders of the Dublin movement promised to "bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland."<sup>64</sup> From 1900 onwards a major characteristic of the literary movement in Dublin, the national aspect of it had already superseded the mere "craving for liberty" and novelty for its own sake in the theatre. The writers, actors, and linguists deliberately wished to obtain coincidence of visions with popular aspirations.<sup>65</sup> The Celtic and Irish aspect became a determining factor, for the continued survival of the literary movement. For example, in 1899 George Moore, Edward Martyn, Bernard Shaw, and W.B. Yeats had all written plays. Moore, Shaw, and Yeats had actually patronized J.T. Grein's Independent Theatre in London: Moore's The Strike at Arlingford and Yeats's The Land of Heart's Desire had been produced by Grein's Independent Theatre in 1893 and 1894 respectively.<sup>66</sup> Although he remained a supporter of the new drive for life in the theatre, Shaw did not sever his connections with the English middle-class audience, a section of cosmopolitan society for which he acted as the interpreter of Ibsen and from which he drew inspiration for his own work. A basic tenet of the Dublin movement was the fact that writers chose to retreat from the cosmopolitan scene, and began to emphasize instead the Irish element in their plays.

In 1899 Edward Martyn defined the nature of the Irish literary drama as "plays proposed to be acted are of a more literary nature than are usually acted in the theatres, and are not expected to appeal to a popular audience." Even so he notes that the plays are to be "exemplifications of Irish life."<sup>67</sup> In 1901 George Moore who "had early advocated the establishment in London of an equivalent of Antoine's Theatre Libre" and had been "on the committee of J.T. Grein's Independent Théâtre" regretted that he could not speak Gaelic.<sup>68</sup> During the early life of the Dublin movement, Moore, Yeats, Martyn, Lady Gregory, and Synge worked closely with Dr. Douglas Hyde, the leader of the Gaelic League.

From the beginning of the Irish literary movement there was an intricate practice of working together; for instance, Yeats's play, Cathleen ni Houlihan, first performed in 1902, is based on the story of the legendary Cathleen ni Houlihan, who "was Ireland herself...about whom so many stories have been told and for whose sake so many have gone to their death."<sup>69</sup> When Maud Gonne, the leader of the Daughters of Erin, appeared upon the stage as Cathleen ni Houlihan, not only was she acting "magnificently," she was actually re-enacting history. The transformation of Cathleen ni Houlihan from the old woman of Yeats's original ~~dream~~ into "a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen"<sup>70</sup> is made effective and dramatically persuasive by Madd who symbolized vision and action.

Professor Robert O'Driscoll observes accurately that after the death of Parnell in 1891 cultural and political nationalism "had an urgent need of each other's vitality and vision."<sup>71</sup> For instance, in 1901 Dr. Douglas Hyde said that the "aim and object of the Irish Literary Theatre was to embody and perpetuate Irish feeling, genius, and modes of thought." Similarly, Yeats also said that the aim of their movement was to preserve the "distinctive soul" of Ireland.<sup>72</sup> Thus, in 1901, the Irish aspect of the general European revolt had already taken on an independent, national, character, and was able thereby to advance beyond the craving for novelty for its own sake. First, Irish writers sought to locate a specific locality with which the "distinctive soul" of Ireland could be identified, and the quest led writers like Synge and Lady Gregory to emphasize the exploitation of attitudes of a rural environment -- Irish folklore, Irish folk speech -- in their plays. Synge says in connection with originality and the importance of the Irish background, the sense of place, in the drama:

No personal originality is enough to make a rich work unique, unless it has also the characteristic of a particular (time) and locality and the life that is in it.<sup>73</sup>

Not only did Synge insist on his Irish background, he and Yeats actually criticised adversely Bernard Shaw's John Bull's Other Island for its lack of a "geographical conscience."<sup>74</sup> A basic tenet of the Irish writers is the discovery not only of the writer's place in a particular rural or archaic locality, but also of actually utilising existing, living, folk material in their separate territories, and the folk idiom was then reworked into the drama.

Two areas were exploited: folklore and language. W.B. Yeats asserts that "Our movement is a return to the people," and it begins "where our art is most unlike that of others, with the representation of country life." Two programs were involved in the idea of the return to the people -- the identification of an "authentic" image of Ireland and the eliciting from folklore, a world view which they defended as being Irish. The first one of identifying the true image of Ireland required that country life should be represented not as a form of picturesque and local colour; instead writers were required to immerse themselves into the "deep knowledge of the life of the people."<sup>75</sup>

Lady Gregory says:

I first saw Synge in the north island of Aran.  
I was staying there, gathering folklore,  
talking to the people, and felt quite angry  
when I passed another outsider walking here  
and there, talking also to the people.<sup>76</sup>

The resulting "People's Theatre" Yeats says is "not an exploitation of local colour, or of a limited form of drama possessing a temporary novelty, but the first doing of something for which the world is ripe."<sup>77</sup>

An important aspect of the novelty of the Irish Literary Movement was the belief that the writers were discovering "a life that had never been expressed in literature" in a manner acceptable to the playwrights themselves. And very important for Yeats too is the fact that he saw this movement as the beginning of a literary

revolution which would eventually displace colonial and cosmopolitan literary culture. He says:

We have been the first to create a true 'People's Theatre,' and we have succeeded because it is not an exploitation of local colour, or of a limited form of drama possessing a temporary novelty, but the first doing of something for which the world is ripe, something that will be done all over the world and done more and more perfectly: the making articulate of all the dumb classes each with its own knowledge of the world, its own dignity...<sup>78</sup>

Not only did the Irish writers discover the peasants, Irish folklore, legends and myths; they also set out to defend an Irish world view. This idea of "making articulate of all the dumb classes each with its own knowledge of the world, its own dignity" led to the discovery of the language of the peasants. Some years later, in "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre," Yeats recalls that "it was only gradually that we came to understand that finer than the literature itself was the wonderful speech of the people."<sup>79</sup> The immediate result of this discovery was that not only did they retreat from the social realities of Dublin they also abhorred the naturalistic "dialect of Dublin." Yeats, in collaboration with Lady Gregory, wrote The Pot of Broth, employing "speech that purported to be of real life" in a peasant cottage. But the "first use of Irish dialect, rich, abundant, and correct, for the purpose of creative art was in J.M. Synge's Riders to the Sea, and Lady Gregory's Spreading the News."<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the discovery of folk themes and a form of speech "full of extravagant images" and "prolonged beautiful words" forms a distinct characteristic of the novelty of the plays of the playwrights of the Irish Dramatic Movement.

The conclusions of Yeats were also supported by Lady Gregory. With respect to Synge's discovery of the dialect speech she says: "It was the working in dialect that set his style free." And in connection with her own plays she also says "With a little pride" that she was "the first to use the Irish idiom as it is spoken, with

intention and with belief in it."<sup>81</sup>

The practice of the Irish playwrights of deliberately choosing to immerse themselves into the world view of their own people meant that they were also embarking on a program of criticizing and actually endeavouring to displace the cosmopolitan world view and its dramatic styles. The Irish writers, in this case, actually found themselves in the defensive position of having to validate their own cultural heritage; for example, a sympathetic critic of the Irish drama like T.R. Henn posed a problem which is often presented by all those who happen to find themselves in the position of actually recognizing the aesthetic value of a drama based on peasant subjects. He asks

whether drama based on Celtic legend could ever approach, in contemporary relevance and significance, that which had established itself on Biblical and classical foundations. A drama based on Celtic sources would be liable to become factitious, in spite of all literary attempts to implant it in the book of the people; and, if it were so implanted, there remained the question whether the language of its representation should be in the English poetic tradition, or in some such variants of the illustrious vulgar as were evolved by Synge and Lady Gregory.<sup>82</sup>

This being the basic point of departure which cultural nationalists whether Irish or African must confront, a major characteristic of the "national" side of the literary movement is for them to take advantage of the opportunities which their individual cultural backgrounds offer. An important task for the Irish writers was, in trying to create a national drama, to dissuade future writers from reproducing the picturesque stage Irishman and the naive peasant inhabiting an idyllic landscape. The task became ironically the beginning of the split between political nationalism and literary nationalism, exemplified by the fights at the Abbey Theatre about Synge's The Shadow of the Glen, The Playboy of the Western World and Yeats's The Countess Cathleen. Yeats and his friends in the Abbey Theatre argued that the persistent intrusion of the troll called the stage Irishman upon the Dublin stage was part of a colonial dramatic style which must be attacked and defeated. Yeats said that it was

"all part of English decadence and "worn-out conventions of English poetic drama."<sup>83</sup> He says:

A nation is injured by the picking out of a single type and setting that into print or upon the stage as a type of the whole nation. Ireland suffered for a century from that single whiskey-drinking, humorous type which seemed for a time the accepted type of all.<sup>84</sup>

In Our Irish Theatre, Lady Gregory says that their primary objective had been the "destroying of that scarecrow." She writes:

A part of the new National movement had been, and rightly, an attack on the stage Irishman, the vulgar and unnatural butt given on the English stage. We had the destroying of that scarecrow in mind among other things in setting up our Theatre. But the societies were impatient. They began to dictate here and there what should or should not be played.<sup>85</sup>

In order to obtain their objectives of replacing the type of the stage Irishman with a variety of types, the Irish writers had to adopt a different attitude towards their material. One way of doing this was to eliminate anything that had to do with cultural points of reference which were colonial -- English. For instance, opinion-ridden Dublin was considered by Yeats as an extension of English literary taste:

A community that is opinion-ridden, even when those opinions are in themselves noble, is likely to put its creative minds into some sort of a prison.<sup>86</sup>

This was a justification for a retreat into the peasant world, in order to employ the "living speech" upon which a good literature can be founded. Therefore, the return to the book of the people entails disengagement from cosmopolitan world views.

A number of factors contributed to the success of the program: the first was the availability of folktales which Yeats said "had the advantage of possessing archetypes rooted in the cultures of various countries," and the second was the discovery of the talents of Synge, Lady Gregory, and Willie and Frank Fay:

Mr. Synge alone has written of the peasant as he is to all the ages; of the folk-imagination as it has been shaped by centuries of life among fields or on fishing-grounds.<sup>87</sup>

And "Lady Gregory alone writes out of a spirit of pure comedy, and laughs without bitterness and with no thought but to laugh."<sup>88</sup> One critic has noted that in reviewing the comic and satiric tradition, Synge did not direct his satire at the conventional butts; all "his four comedies are, in a sense, satires upon rural Ireland," unlike the "class-conscious Gaelic poets and satirists, Synge sympathizes with the underdog and the outcast, be he tramp or tinker, parricide or blind beggar. It is the respectable citizen who is exposed to ridicule." By choosing deliberately not to side with the "'normal' people and established society against the neurotic, the criminal, and the social outcast,"<sup>89</sup> Synge obtained his originality.

Not only were the Irish playwrights willing to identify for Ireland a unitary cultural backdrop, they also endeavoured to defend it. They, for instance, wanted "something absolutely uncontentious, non-political, and non-sectarian,"<sup>90</sup> and Yeats also wanted to see all the Irish cultural agencies subsumed under the one idea of a national dramatic movement. In The Politics of Irish Literature Malcolm Brown says that, and I take to be appropriate for my discussion, the Irish literary movement was a "loose fraternity of Dublin and Cork writers who hoped to put their careers in step with Irish history."<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the cultural movement was part of a larger national awakening and the leaders of the literary movement hoped to achieve coincidence of vision with the other nationalist agencies. But instead of representing the image of Ireland demanded by popular nationalism, the playwrights proposed that "Ireland's purest essence was located in the peasants' primitive beliefs in holy wells and fairy thorns."<sup>92</sup> Similarly in their exploration of Irish folklore, Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory discovered variety and also an entirely new way of apprehending the world. Irish myths gave Yeats the mythic archetypes

he needed for his tragic poetic drama and the legends and folktales gave Synge and Lady Gregory an unlimited number of social prototypes which they needed for their peasant comedies and tragedies.

Even though the literary movement in Dublin began as part of a general European revolt against the conventional theatre of the day, the Dublin movement eventually achieved coincidence, if only **partially**, with Irish cultural renaissance. It was this latter aspect of the movement, the idea of wanting a national literary movement from folklore, that gave it the additional title Irish "national" renaissance, its historical significance derives as much from this aspect as from the merely literary nature of its aspirations.

In the preceding pages I have indicated that during the early phase of the literary movement in Ireland, writers aspired to achieve coincidence of vision with popular aspirations of nationalist agencies like the Gaelic League and the Daughters of Erin, but it should also be pointed out that such a trend was possible, until the artist emerged and began to assert his individuality, by first revolting against the mask imposed upon him by popular nationalism in Ireland. It so happened that the stronger the personality of the artist, the wider became the gap separating him from popular nationalism. Thus, for a while the playwrights chose to stand aside from the main currents of nationalist aspirations; this new position being represented by Seanchan in Yeats's The King's Threshold and by J.M. Synge in his own life as a writer..

The irony implied in the voice of the questioner in the following lines quoted from a poem by Yeats portrays the situation well:

Did that play of mine send out  
Certain men the English shot?<sup>93</sup>

The note of uncertainty contained in these lines could hardly have suited the tone of Cathleen ni Houlihan (1902); in Yeats's poem knowledge comes to the artist as it did to Leda in "Leda and the Swan".

through an indifferent process. Since the chances open to the poet to achieve coincidence of vision with popular nationalism are unavailable he chooses to remain an ironist, and must retreat not only into folklore but also into the self where alone lies the salvation of ideals -- to borrow Soyinka's words. But in the event he begins to seek symbols like Cuchulain, the kind of "vast symbolism" which as Yeats says can transform the poet into "the spectator of the ages."<sup>94</sup>

Out of the retreat into the self arises the development of the historic imagination and the artist's most potent tool is the use of myth as a method of unifying experience. T.S. Eliot, for instance, thinks that the use of myth as method is one of Yeats's contributions to the modern literary tradition. The mythical method, Eliot says,

is a method adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious....Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method.<sup>95</sup>

Convinced that from "that great candle of the past we must all light our little tapers," Yeats used myth as a way of actually popularizing the flashback in drama and poetry alike. The result of his use of myth "to put those tumultuous centuries into tale or drama,"<sup>96</sup> is that Yeats revolted against the naturalistic style of contemporary drama and chose instead a poetic form of drama based on heroic legend. (pp. 134 and 154 below).

During the late 1950's and the early 1960's the literary situation in Africa conforms in many ways to the example of literary Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century. Clark and Soyinka, for instance, like the Irish dramatists were attempting to start a literary tradition whose power would be taken from the oral tradition and the folk culture of their own people. In doing so they were also attempting like the Irish writers half a century ago to perpetuate a world view radically different from the cosmopolitan, colonial, attitude to the world; and the nationalist anti-colonial world view was obtained by simply foregrounding the more primitive aspects of their cultures.

In 1958 Geoffrey Axworthy, who was the driving force behind the dramatic activities at Ibadan was looking for plays other than European revivals to produce at the new Theatre Arts, met Soyinka in England and the latter offered him the manuscripts of The Lion and the Jewel and The Swamp Dwellers, two plays written during Soyinka's stay in England. The two plays were eventually presented at Ibadan, directed by Geoffrey Axworthy himself and Ken Post, at the Arts Theatre in February 1959.<sup>97</sup> First, students' reception was enthusiastic. Soyinka's example "was a challenge to write their own plays, for Wole Soyinka had done his first two years of undergraduate work at UCI (University College of Ibadan)." The following year the students "picked up the gauntlet flung down by Wole Soyinka's plays of the previous year." It was then that they "turned the dining halls of the various halls of residence into "theatres" and presented three plays by the members of the Club as after dinner entertainment," in March 1960.<sup>98</sup> Secondly, Soyinka's plays were accepted instantaneously as "African plays"; for instance, in a review published in Black Orpheus, No. 6, November, 1959, a certain Sangadore Akanji writes:

The first performance of two African plays at University College Ibadan was really an important event in the literary history of West Africa. West Africans have produced quite a few novelists so far, and a large number of poets, but all attempts at serious drama, even in the French territories, have been rather immature. There has evolved in recent years a tradition of musical plays, mostly in the vernacular, some of them extremely valuable, but there had not been any drama in the Western sense at all. Now here at last is a young West African dramatist of promise.<sup>99</sup>

Even though these two first plays had been written while the author was in England, yet the psychic states of the communities represented in these plays are deliberately located in Nigeria and specifically, within Yoruba culture.

Furthermore, the idea that the first "two African plays" written by Soyinka constituted "drama in the Western sense" was echoed by reviewers and critics alike, who found a bond between the two plays and those of the writers of the Irish Dramatic Movement. For instance, Gerald Moore thinks that The Swamp Dwellers is the "least substantial of Soyinka's plays" because it "exhibits a surface prose realism"...which, however, "extends beyond its apparent theme of rural decay. The immediate impression is of a play of gloomy peasant realism." Moore then suggests that:

It is perhaps the characterization of the Blind Beggar which makes this play vaguely reminiscent of J.M. Synge's rural comedies. In Synge's The Shadow of the Glen, an unknown Tramp likewise erupts upon the lonely lives of Dan and Nora Burke as night is falling. And The Well of the Saints actually offers us a Blind Beggar (also a sacred figure in Yeatsian mythology) in the person of Martin Doul, who finally rejects the gift of sight and pursues his own proud and separate way.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to similarities caused by the use of folklore and local prototypes, Moore finds affinities in Soyinka's use of language.

It is natural that the example of Synge should have appealed to another poet seeking to bring into dramatic literature in English the life of an alien people whose culture, language, fundamental values and rhythm of life differ radically from those predominant in English drama itself since 1660.<sup>101</sup>

Even so the similarities are not only occasioned by coincidence, they are actually willed. He thinks:

And like Synge before him, Soyinka is already striving for an arrangement of English which, whilst comprehensible to all users of that tongue, will continually suggest another language, another world of sounds, lying beyond it.<sup>102</sup>

Gerald Moore's conclusions cited ~~above~~ hint at three main areas which are at the core of my own inquiry: the recognition of and the use of folk and mythical prototype, the intentional deviation from standard English language forms and usages; the perpetuation of a world view that is radically antithetical to the colonial

world view. Professor Mahood, another early critic of the plays says that:

The Swamp Dwellers was written when he was still a student at Leeds University, and savours a little of the Honours School of English; the influence of Synge and other Anglo-Irish dramatists is strong but all who saw it on its first African performance at Ibadan in 1959, were struck by the maturity and sophistication that placed Soyinka far ahead of dramatists like Henshaw and Edyang.<sup>103</sup>

As it turns out—most critics acquainted with the plays of Soyinka agree with Professor Mahood that the attraction of the Irish dramatists has been peripheral to the growth of Nigerian drama. More so because in the 1950's aspiring writers like Soyinka and Clark were still students in their formative days; and lastly, the expansion of theatre facilities in Nigeria have witnessed remarkable developments, the objection can be raised that interest in the idea of a literary drama with models in the Irish drama has waned. Actually scholars acquainted with the plays of Clark and Soyinka tend to support the view which relegates the affinities between Irish and African playwrights to undergraduate exercises. Martin Banham notes in a letter to me dated 28 November 1974 that "there are some similarities of feeling between the early plays of Wole Soyinka and some of the plays of the Irish Theatre," and he concludes, "in a sense I would go for Lady Gregory before Synge, if I had to."<sup>104</sup> Similarly in her conclusion, Professor Mahood feels that the influence of the Irish dramatists shows only in the early plays of Soyinka: "The Swamp Dwellers" she says "Savours a little of the Honours School of English."<sup>105</sup> But it has been shown by persons who have been acquainted with their development that the discovery of the Irish dramatists made a much greater impact on the development of these two Nigerian dramatists than has been hitherto recognized and that its impact extended beyond their early student experiments.

Let us begin the discussion of the implication of these conclusions with respect to the development of Clark and Soyinka by

examining other opinions made by those who witnessed the first productions at Ibadan of Clark's Song of a Goat and Soyinka's two plays, The Lion and the Jewel and The Swamp Dwellers, Clark's Song of a Goat, written immediately after leaving the University, was launched by the Mbari Club of Ibadan in 1961. In a review of the Ibadan production, one reviewer, Robert G. Armstrong, notes that it "is a relief to find a Nigerian work which is not in large part a reaction to the European world."<sup>106</sup> Similarly reviewers of Soyinka's first two plays produced at Ibadan all wished to account for the originality and objectivity of the plays. In a review article entitled "Three Views of the 'Swamp-Dweller'," one of the reviewers, Professor Mahood, suggested that

Plays of this lineage are not about particular characters performing particular actions in a particular time and place; they are about some emotional experience of great weight, and their character, setting, plot and language are the modes of expression of that experience. Their validity is not to be tested by 'realism'--their resemblance [sic] to people, places, events and speech in everyday life -- but by their power to evoke that central experience which is the play's theme.<sup>107</sup>

Professor Mahood's definition can be applied with justification to Clark's plays, but also of greater significance for this discussion is the clarification which she further makes: she argues that even though plays "of this lineage" may be given African settings they are "written for an audience reared on Yeats and Synge." "Yeats and Synge," she adds, "have helped us to a new insight into the poetic drama. Derivative as it is, The Swamp-Dwellers [sic] is in a sound tradition, and must be viewed in relation to that tradition and to yet older poetic plays, many of them, like it, in prose."<sup>108</sup> Even though the original idea of beginning careers as playwrights found expression in "literary and derivative" forms, what Clark calls "our current exercises and experiments," the practice of these authors points to the contrary attitude of first, desiring to place their

careers in step with Nigerian and contemporary African history, and second, wanting to transcend the merely literary aspects of the drama, what Clark terms "overall speech and plot or lack of it." Clark suggests that an important way of obtaining coincidence with his society is to wed the "ancient constants"<sup>109</sup> of African traditional theatrical idioms, rituals, music, dance, mime, drum, linguistic resources like imagery and the various traditional poetic forms, to wed these with the contemporary literary style. Like Yeats, Clark believes that the writer must bring his knowledge of a foreign literary tradition to bear on the resources of his own folklore. As Clark notes in the passage already cited above, "Yeats observed this to be true, seeing in every Irish beauty a potential Helen full of havoc to the race."<sup>110</sup> Like Yeats, Clark also discovers in the folklore of his own people women who "were victims of brief tragedy and in wild passion."<sup>111</sup> The discovery of valid correspondences in the folk culture of "peoples separated by vast distances and time"<sup>112</sup> gives to each separate culture its authenticity.

Basically, the adoption and perpetuation of the "Yeatsian" attitude to folklore by Clark and Soyinka resulted, as we shall see, in the revival of the tragic and comic and satiric spirit in the drama: myth, legend, and history provided material for the revival of the tragic spirit in the drama, and the contemporary social situation offered ample opportunities for the comic and satiric temperament to thrive. Actually, already existing in African folklore were the rhetorical devices of humour, wit, word play, fantasy, a sense of the grotesque and the macabre which the comic and satiric temperament could harness for the purposes of social criticism. It can be argued with justification that the return to their African background -- a living folklore and a living speech -- was an asset to Clark and Wole Soyinka, one which invigorated their drama. The question of influence is actually one of method and manner of treatment of the inherited material. Aspiring writers like Clark seek inspiration from older traditions like

the Irish which happen also to possess approximate conditions.

I have already noted the importance, for the development of Clark and Soyinka, of the presence of the Arts Theatre at Ibadan and the enthusiasm of Geoffrey Axworthy and Martin Banham in starting a popular theatre. Their experiments evolved into a popular theatre, a kind of travelling theatre described by Martin Banham in the passage quoted above. In fact, Geoffrey Axworthy himself reports that the Arts Theatre has been "the most active and influential in Nigeria. The existence of this theatre, with all its defects, in a large University, given even a little organization," he said, "was almost bound to produce an outburst of dramatic activity."<sup>113</sup> But the very fact that the Arts Theatre at Ibadan was going "folksy" became a cause for alarm to the literary playwrights like Clark and Soyinka. It is true that as young aspiring writers Clark and Soyinka benefitted in more than one aspect from the enthusiasm generated by Axworthy at the Arts Theatre for a theatre of relevance, but the two Nigerian playwrights started and defended a literary drama. Soyinka deplores the situation in the following words:

What one must regret is the atmosphere of sterility and truly pathetic preciosity that it seems to breed. For it must never be forgotten that the opera was written for a certain society; recreating that society in Ibadan, causing 'an opera expectation' in attitudes is sheer retardation.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, in spite of Axworthy's good intentions in hoping "that a live Nigerian theatre might one day come into being"<sup>115</sup> from Ibadan, literary playwrights like Soyinka and Clark sought inspiration from other models. When Soyinka formed The 1960 Masks he "sought deliberately to initiate a new drama which would utilize the resources of the English language but would draw its emotional sustenance, not from abroad, but from the continuing cultural tradition of his own country."<sup>116</sup>

Soyinka's discovery of the potentialities of Yoruba folk material and the use he could make of these existing idioms of the traditional African theatre and linguistic resources began with The Swamp Dwellers and The Lion and the Jewel, two plays written immediately after he graduated from the University. Soyinka has also persistently defended an African metaphysical (anti-Manichean) world view distinct from the European (Manichean) world view. Like the Irish writers at the beginning of the century Soyinka's theory of the literary drama is based on two premises: the literary drama is written for a special limited audience, but the drama takes its power from the emotions, feelings, and patterns of thought of the Yoruba people. Even though he began his career in a cosmopolitan social order he tends, at least in theory, to recognize and defend values pertaining to a social order that is different from the cosmopolitan one.

Similarly, Clark's development in the three plays, Song of a Goat, The Masquerade, and The Raft, shows a strong attachment to the sense of place. From the start, then, he also recognized the importance of representing the life of characteristic Ijaw communities in his plays.

Even though in practice Clark and Soyinka demonstrate an awareness of the need for a wider context for their works, in theory they are prone to emphasize the retreat into folklore as a basic tenet of their own literary aspirations. To a large extent, therefore, the "neo-Tarzanist" leech has been nourished by the writers themselves. In his essay, "Aspects of Nigerian Drama," Clark demonstrates convincingly the relationship existing between contemporary literary tradition and the traditional African idioms of the folk theatre. He concludes that the roots of Nigerian drama go beyond the University of Ibadan, they lie "deep in the past of the race."<sup>117</sup>

Similarly, in his essay, "The Fourth Stage," Soyinka listens to the "voice that bids us return to our own sources."<sup>118</sup> In an interview in Seattle he acknowledged that the first step he took as a writer was a "complete immersion" in his "traditional world view and values of social cohesion."<sup>119</sup> These assertions concerning the playwrights' return to his sources raise a number of issues, some of which the playwrights themselves have made an attempt to tackle. These issues concern the writer's attitude to his sources and bring us to the major concern also of the present study: similarities in circumstances existing in the Ireland of Yeats and in the Africa of Soyinka. The questions with which Clark and Soyinka were confronted are similar to those which Yeats and his Irish friends tackled; whether African subjects could provide, independently of European myths and legends, material for a tragic drama. There was existing in African villages sufficient evidence of masquerades, rituals, festivals, masques, and trick plays, which tended to enforce in the minds of critics that African dramatists had necessarily to use these idioms of traditional African theatre.

Clark and Soyinka had first to recognize the existence of these traditional idioms, and secondly they were also obliged to define and clarify their own relationship as literary dramatists to the inherited material. Clark, for instance, maintains that his plays derive their inspiration from the particular cultural experience of a characteristic people; secondly, he sets out to defend the aesthetic value of the plays; insisting that the aesthetic value of his drama transcends ethnic experience. During Clark's stay at Princeton University in 1962 he objected that an entirely "black production" of Song of a Goat ignores the fact that the play expresses a basic human experience. An important aspect of Clark's theory, then, is the strong belief in the universalism of folk culture.

I have pointed out that Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory were faced with a similar problem of trying to dissuade writers from

reproducing the picturesque ethnic buffoon known as the stage Irishman. Clark and Wole Soyinka were faced with a similar task: to replace the image of the "native" in European literature by introducing in the place of "the native," a variety of types.

J.P. Clark, for instance, argues that the comic stage African was the creation of European fantasists and a continuation of the European representation of the "native" in their literature and drama. Clark criticises the language assigned to Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*, approves of the levels of language which Chinua Achebe assigns to the characters in his novels.<sup>120</sup> He also criticises adversely modern English drama for having lost its driving force and retreated not into folklore but into the "kitchen sink." Implicitly, kitchen sink drama compares unfavourably with his own drama which he argues is founded on "tragic passion as the Greeks knew it, and as only primitive people today, like Garcia Lorca's" and his, "may know it."<sup>121</sup>

Clark's way of retrieving the distorted image of the African forms part of a general program of returning to his sources; an orientation very similar to the practice of the Irish playwrights.

Clark says:

...before the poet begins playing any role in Nigerian society...he has to recognize himself. He has to find himself really, within his society first, before he knows what role it is really he is playing; because in the search for images, in the search for the most apposite expression you often find you are going back to your people, which means you are going back to your roots.<sup>122</sup>

Not only did Clark and Soyinka employ linguistic resources and literary material of African folklore in their drama, they actually sought to identify and immerse themselves in the experience of characteristic African peoples -- Ijaw and Yoruba worlds. In Soyinka's latest play, Death and the King's Horseman (1975), Elesin is made to say, "if I lose my way/The trailing cord will bring me to

my roots." Again in another passage he says, "Pleasure palls/Our acts should have meaning,"<sup>123</sup> that is in the context of the people. Clark's plays are all set in the creeks and all deal with the lives of what he calls "ordinary Ijaw persons."<sup>124</sup> Clark shows no particular awareness of the lives of peoples living outside of Ijaw country. Similarly, Soyinka's career takes its inspiration from the Yoruba way of life; the myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, praise poems, and rituals used by these dramatists are not "national" ones: instead one hears of Ijaw and Yoruba myths, folktales, masquerades, and festivals. These arguments are similar to those made by the Irish dramatists half a century before, to whom the "archaistic" motive was a fundamental aspect of their theory of the literary drama.

This brings us to an important question, the relation of the idea of return to roots defended by the two Nigerian writers and that supported by Negritude. It has generally been argued that the phenomenon of cultural nationalism whether Celtic or African has always been a reaction to colonialism.<sup>125</sup> For instance, Gerald Moore suggests that without "some understanding of Negritude", at least in its historical importance, it is impossible to see any shape in the poetic events of the continent over the past twenty years."<sup>126</sup> This is a true observation, because, until 1957<sup>127</sup> when Negritude was introduced at Ibadan mainly through the work of Ulli Beier and Janheinz Jahn in the journal Black Orpheus, the intellectual climate at Ibadan was not as exciting and stimulating as it was after 1957. Negritude, the literary ideological movement, the basic tenets of which were decolonization and the defense of what Senghor calls the sum total of "African cultural values,"<sup>128</sup> was a movement working towards achieving global black consciousness.

In 1958, in an editorial in The Horn, Clark described Negritude "as a most compendious word" which "stands for...that new burning consciousness of a common race and culture that blackmen in

America, the West Indies, and Africa are beginning to feel towards one another."<sup>129</sup> Clark was impressed, however, by the "basic concept" and took it as a point of departure, approving of the whole idea of a racial consciousness; but beyond this he knew little or nothing of its programs.

What, therefore, is the relationship between Negritude, some of whose tenets happen to be the defense of African cultural values, and the form of intellectual nationalism upheld by Clark and Soyinka? First, more significant than having their plays merely larded with traditional idioms of African folklore was the fact that Clark and Soyinka also sought a new social order, a community whose concepts, ideas are antithetical to the ones obtaining in the cosmopolitan world and its extension into the pseudo-intellectual social order of middle class nationalist culture. Secondly, the coming into the intellectual scene of Ibadan by Negritude was an important event, especially because the claims it made tested and further stimulated the theories of Clark and Soyinka on African literary drama. Thirdly, Negritude poetry -- it produced no drama -- was preoccupied with problems of cultural alienation, racial identity and decolonization, to the extent that its entire program became a mere antithesis to European cultural values.

In reality the movement for racial identity, the rejection of the colonial sense of beauty, and the formulation of an African aesthetics began in the United States of America with the writers of the Harlem Renaissance in the twenties and the thirties, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Claude Mackay, and other contemporaries. In 1966 Langston Hughes (1902-1967) recalls that "Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal and Aimé Césaire of Martinique, the great poets of negritude, while still students at the Sorbonne, had read the Harlem poets and felt a bond between themselves and us";<sup>130</sup> but the word Negritude was coined in France. Generally speaking, the younger writers like Soyinka and Clark approved of a racial awareness.

Later in his career when he had familiarized himself with the tenets of Negritude, Clark made his own position succinctly clear. Negritude was he said a global movement which sought to awaken in all Africans a sense of the self, or as Senghor says it, "C'est que l'homme noir apporte."<sup>131</sup> But Clark, in total agreement with the poet Abioseh Nicol of Sierra Leone, argued that there was no such beast as Africa. Africa is "a concept/Fashioned in our minds, each to each,/To hide our separate fears."<sup>132</sup> However, to sound less grandiloquent, the real Africa is a

fantastic variety of ethnic groupings of peoples, 'tribes or clans' as these are called, with all their different languages, their social systems, their customs and conventions of religion, their practice of art, and all that sum total of activities which members of each group have and share in common from birth till death, identifying them from others however closely related. There are hundreds of such human groups, each perhaps as distinct from the other as the Slavs are from the Latin or the Germanic peoples.<sup>133</sup>

Basically it means that the recognition of the African cultural matrix affects the way Clark selects and organizes his material to the extent that Clark is inclined to have foregrounded images and linguistic resources characteristic of the life of rural communities. It is also understood by Clark that folklore presupposes the existence of a real homogenous community like his own which possesses a homogenous social vision. The environment which Clark identifies to be culturally relevant for his work, like that identified by Synge and Lady Gregory, is a rural one inhabited by "peasants."

Generally speaking, Wole Soyinka also recognizes the historical importance of Negritude but he feels that as a literary ideology, the movement was born by events such as decolonization, but when independence was achieved Negritude was no longer relevant. He writes:

The vision of Negritude should never be underestimated or belittled...The concept of a socio-racial direction governed a whole literary ideology and gave it its choice of mode of expression and thematic emphasis.<sup>134</sup>

The result was that,

Both for Africans on the mother-continent and for the black societies of the diaspora, Negritude provided both a life-line along which the dissociated individual could be pulled back to the source of his matrilineal essence, and offered a prospect for the coming-into-being of new black social entities.<sup>135</sup>

Beyond this concession Soyinka expressed opposite views to what he calls "negative contradictory definitions"<sup>136</sup> made by the writers of the Negritude persuasion. I shall outline below only those "negative contradictory definitions" made by the Negritude writers which concern the present study. At the present point of the discussion it is essential to understand that Negritude writers were regarded as writers whose attitude to African sources was inclined to be romantic. On this particular issue Soyinka was rather hard on Negritude's idealization of the African past. He warned his contemporary writers against the dominant attitude of Negritude, the idealization of the African past: "the African Renaissance," he says, "is not the easy refuge in literary nationalism, which, anyway, is self-indulgence and no substitute for art."<sup>137</sup>

As I shall show in Chapter Two these distinctions are important here. It is essential to observe that the reaction of Soyinka to the school of criticism that idealizes or tries to limit the landscape of the African dramatist to an entirely ethnic aesthetics or rural environment has accordingly, been negative. Soyinka, therefore, detects the trend in modern African literary criticism which delimits the "African poetic landscape" to:

a landscape of elephants, beggars, calabashes, serpents, pumpkins, baskets, town criers, iron bells, slit drums, iron masks, hares, snakes,

squirrels,...a landscape portrayed with native eyes to which aeroplanes naturally appear as iron birds; a landscape in which the animals behave as they might behave in African folklore, of animals presented through native African eyes.<sup>138</sup>

Soyinka argues that while the African dramatists recognize the validity of the fantasists that "pumpkins, baskets, iron bells, etc. are part of the poetic landscape of the African, we are saying history also is. That the dialectics of event and communication...does develop also into other expressions of integrated familiarity before too long."<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, Soyinka says that because the fantasists or "neo-Tarzanists," fail to consider the wider context within which the contemporary writer operates, the "neo-Tarzanist" school of criticism gives us an illusionary "aesthetic matrix," called the African traditional cultural matrix. In general, "neo-Tarzanism" tends to ignore, Soyinka argues, that the work of art is a "wilful entity" possessing a "self-validating existence." What is required of the "neo-Tarzanist" poetics "of limited sensibilities"<sup>140</sup> is the recognition of the intentional element involved in the actual process of selection and organization of a work of art. Elsewhere in another text Soyinka asks:

To recommend, on the one hand, that the embattled African general or the liberation fighter seek the most sophisticated weaponry from Europe, America or China, while, on the other, that the poet totally expunge from his consciousness all knowledge of a foreign tradition in his own craft, is an absurdity.<sup>141</sup>

Therefore, in order that the writers can keep their art in step with contemporary African history, Soyinka suggests and actually believes in a dynamic conception of culture. Like Synge, Soyinka argues that the African writer need not seek a particular level of society, all that is required of him is the recognition of "the more profound aspects of an African cultural matrix."<sup>142</sup> Soyinka urges the artist to seek the ever present reality, and like J.M. Synge, seeks the "fundamental realities of life which are never fantastic,

are neither modern nor unmodern."<sup>143</sup>

Soyinka's criticism of "neo-Tarzanism," "ethnic purism" and the "aesthetics of limited sensibilities" underlines his conception of what it takes an artist to be able to return to his roots. Soyinka's own assertions cited above with regard to the artist's response to the pull of the umbilical cord raise a number of questions, which Soyinka also tackles. In the essay on "Aesthetic Illusions" cited above Soyinka says that,

What concerns us above all is not the failure or success of individual explorations of deeper experience but misguided generalisations that seek to restrict the right of such explorations and the (by nature) complex transmissions of the poet's findings.<sup>144</sup>

In theory Clark and Soyinka seek to discover in language a way of putting into practice their "explorations of deeper experience"; Clark's essay, 'The Legacy of Caliban' started as a personal search for the kind of language spoken by the African and other 'Savage' characters in English.<sup>145</sup> First Clark believes very strongly that language can be an effective tool of exploring the knowledge and wisdom that informs the world of his own people. He writes:

Language...provides the best index to a people's culture, that totality of activity they learn and share together within the area of their settlement throughout their lifetime.<sup>146</sup>

The problem with European writers who happened to introduce "native" characters into their work is that they were unaware of this basic fact that language forms an organic part of a people's lore; hence these European writers extracted Africans out of their social orders and instead imposed them on the European social class structure.

Clark says:

...the African or native character in English literature has posed the English writer a peculiar problem. How does he fit into the structure of a society where class and education determine a man's manner of speech and by implication the level of his mind as well as the limits which his ambition may vault.<sup>147</sup>

Therefore, to discover the right level of language spoken by the African is to reverse the cultural points of reference which had hitherto been imposed upon the African characters; and the "native" can be rehabilitated by simply taking him back into the wisdom of his society; a society whose points of reference are taken from within the society itself.

Also, Clark's whole theory and practice is a revulsion against the contemporary naturalistic style in the drama; his main preoccupation is with the problems of language and the possibilities of reworking linguistic aspects of traditional African drama into the literary drama.

The fundamental question for Clark as a user of the English language, is how to communicate with his people who happen to speak neither English nor its variants like the West African Pidgin English. Clark began as a poet and wanted to bring poetry (through theatre) to the people. He believes very strongly that a transformation of the nature envisaged by him can be possible where the poetic dramatist weaves the "ancient constants" of African drama like music, dance, song, and mime to the idioms of the literary drama. The infusion of traditional African theatrical idioms into the contemporary drama therefore narrows the gap separating the purely literary drama from the folk theatre; and Clark finds a superabundance of traditional forms in his own society. Clark's solution to the problem of language therefore is poetic, and it will be shown that even though Clark's drama conforms in general to the drama of Synge and Lady Gregory, quite unlike them, Clark's choice of a level of language which would reflect the deeper thoughts of his Ijaw people does not entail deviation into the use of naturalistic devices like dialect, nor even into the West African pidgin English. As a satirist and humourist, Clark obtains his effects by a conscious exploitation of rhetorical categories like proverbs, fables, allusion, parody, wit, word play and by exploiting the beliefs and attitudes of rural communities; like Synge, Yeats, and Lady Gregory, the reality of contemporary urban

life does not feature in his work. Since he works primarily in archaic modes -- diction, proverbs, narratives -- dialect speech like pidgin English which is actually an urban dialect is rarely employed by him. However, like Yeats, Clark obtains his own effect by simply foregrounding of natural images and other inner resources of language.

I have pointed out that Soyinka's conception of culture is dynamic, and as would be expected the social order recognized by him is more comprehensive than might have been expected from a writer whose goal is the retrieving of the image of the race. For instance, Soyinka's choice and use of language is again determined by the assumption that Yoruba society is not static; hence he concludes that to an artist who recognizes the dynamic nature of society language is a "mere tool of expression." The responsibilities are then passed unto the writer who acts as the "visionary of his people," and recognizes "past and present not for the purposes of enshrinement but for the logical-creative glimpse and statement of the ideal future. He anticipates, and he warns."<sup>148</sup> The strong belief that the development by the ironical artist of a "historical sense" offers the writer unlimited ways of relating to society forms a basic tenet of Soyinka's theory and actually influences his practice. For instance, Soyinka believes like Yeats that the modern artistic consciousness is capable of recalling the "candle of the past" in a way to illuminate the present. Like Yeats, Soyinka uses myth in an interpretive way to obtain flashback effects in his drama. In his essay, "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," Soyinka calls for an "urgent release from the fascination of the past" by stating that:

the past exists, the real African consciousness establishes this -- the past exists now, this moment, it is coexistent in present awareness. It clarifies the present and explains the future, but it is not a fleshpot for escapist indulgence, and it is vitally dependent on the sensibility that recalls it.<sup>149</sup>

Two things are evident from Soyinka's conclusions: the "sensitivity that recalls" the past is the artistic one and by implication it stands outside the main force of political nationalism. Therefore, the involvement of a historical imagination widens the gap separating the aspirations of the cultural nationalist from the political nationalist. Secondly, the artist becomes one of the mythic archetypes because he refuses to be tied down to one level of society; in a way that his individual consciousness forms part of the timeless mythic collective consciousness of the race. It should therefore, not be surprising that the culture conflict theme, a current mode of expression among the less sophisticated Nigerian contemporaries of Clark and Soyinka like Henshaw, is recognizably absent in the plays of Clark and Soyinka.

The development of the historical imagination directly leads to the adoption of a circular vision of history; the latter has profound effects on the technique of the dramatists. I have already mentioned the use of flashback, but more significant for the theatricality of Soyinka's plays is the practice of evoking mythical archetypes, the adoption of a dystopian vision of history. And the awareness that a future utopian society is not possible forms the basis of Soyinka's tragic drama and also of his comedies, and satires.

In the preceding discussion I have shown that the practice among critics of dividing African drama between traditional content and modern form persistently raises a number of issues concerning the nature of African drama. I have also suggested that in their theories and practices writers try to wed the traditional forms with modern idioms; and in the process of returning to their sources the African playwrights adopt methods adumbrated by Yeats and his contemporaries of the Irish Dramatic Movement. In doing so I have, however, emphasized the responsibility the dramatist asserts to himself and to his play, that is to say, the element of selection and organization, which is an important criterion for differentiating sociology from the drama. From the moment it is understood that selection is an important rule of creative organization, it will

become almost unavoidable for the critic and writer alike to establish the criteria used by the dramatist to be able to render certain characters, words, expressions, figures and images more pronounced than others; that is before the critic can elucidate what Professor Eldred Jones finds to be a main characteristic of Wole Soyinka's style, "the complexity of organization and of language that distinguishes literature from mere writing."<sup>150</sup>

Again we are confronted with a crucial situation which not only demands from us a reconsideration of our notion of African creative writing but which also questions existing assumptions concerning the relationship between African subject matter and a European language. If a creative work, to quote Soyinka, is a "wilful entity" possessing a "self-validating existence," we ought therefore to take into consideration also the intentionality involved in the entire process of producing the structure; an arrangement which is not only a form but also content. Unless, therefore, one were to presume that the work can be examined as an aggregate of subject matters, the content of the work cannot be separated from the language without doing the work a disservice.

Professor Ezekiel Mphahlele has stated accurately that the "use of European languages is the only reason there is for us to conceive of African literature as a coherent body of writing that permits collective responses, cross-cultural evaluations and intelligible dialogue about such responses."<sup>151</sup> Let us, however, examine the implications of the preceding concern with language and organization for the thoughts and methods of Clark and Soyinka. I believe that questions raised with regard to the ultimate aesthetic value of African literary drama, those issues that affect criticism directly, are in having to relate the drama to the linguistic tradition to which it belongs; in our case, the English language. This argument is based on the premise that poetic foregrounding, "the aesthetically intentional distortion of linguistic components of the work," serves

the dual purpose of cultural assertion and communication. Since "foregrounding of a component implies precisely its being placed in the 'foreground'"<sup>152</sup> the retreat into folklore and language by the Irish and African playwrights was not an end in itself; eventually the drama produced by these writers must be judged less by its content alone but also by its ultimate aesthetic value. Therefore, Clark and Soyinka would agree with Yeats that "One can only reach out to the universe with a gloved hand -- that glove is one's nation, the only thing one knows even a little of."<sup>153</sup> This reaching out is achieved through the revival of two traditions which are already implicit in the folklores of their individual cultural backgrounds: the tragic myth, and the comic and satiric spirit.

## Chapter 2

### Escaping the Nightmare of History: The Cultural Context

In the preceding section of the present study I have shown that in response to a crisis of identity Irish and African playwrights retreated physically and intellectually into their individual traditional cultural backgrounds. However, retreat is used in this context of embracing the whole idea of a return to sources. Similarly, folklore is used to signify a body of material constituting a basis and the meaning of the "popular" culture of a community. Throughout the study I have relied on Ralph Steel Boggs's definition of the material of folklore:

As a body of material, folklore is the lore, erudition, knowledge, or teaching, of a folk, large social unit, kindred group, tribe, race, or nation, primitive or civilized, throughout its history. It is the whole body of traditional culture, or conventional modes of human thought and action.<sup>1</sup>

There are three main types of folklore which I have isolated, for the purpose of this discussion, from the main body of the materials of folklore: the literary material -- legends, myths, folktales, and traditional poetry; linguistic material -- dialect speech, inner resources of language like imagery, proverbs, gestures, and riddles; theatrical idioms -- music, customs, art, crafts, magic, cures, prophecies, witchcraft and other beliefs. The main body of the theory and practice of the Irish and African dramatists is focused on their having to work in archaic modes implicit in the literary, linguistic, and theatrical materials of folklore (Appendix A).

Generally speaking, critics agree that Irish and African drama has been inspired by nationalism, but not many of them have been able to ascertain the basis on which a drama founded on Irish and African folklore should necessarily be national.<sup>2</sup> I shall show in discussing the relation of the Irish and African drama in relation to cultural history that the development and the defense of their

literary ideals were based on one premise: a living folklore is a reflection of the "self-apprehended" world of their own people; hence the drama is national, because it has been produced, in Soyinka's words, "in the context of primal systems of apprehensions of the race."<sup>3</sup> In this chapter I hope to show that the basis and meaning of nationalism in the Irish and African drama must be sought in the dramatists' attitude to folk culture. A persistent search to identify with and exploit "archaic" modes of thought and attitudes pertaining to a social order whose cultural and intellectual points of reference differ radically from those popularly accepted in cosmopolitan society forms a major characteristic of the playwrights under discussion. Therefore, viewed as a literary ideology, nationalism may not explain adequately or even clarify the nature of the return to sources undertaken by the Irish and African playwrights.

As Wole Soyinka says:

...the new ideologue has never stopped to consider whether or not the universal verities of his new doctrine are already contained in, or can be elicited from the world-view and social structures of his own people.<sup>4</sup>

What Soyinka terms "social structures" are those aspects of a people's ~~lore~~ which identify the particular group from another. In the passage already cited above Clark also defines the lore of a people as "all that sum total of activities which members of each group have and share in common from birth till death, identifying them from others however closely related."<sup>5</sup> In Ireland the belief that a writer's work must have a background gave Yeats and his contemporaries the "gifts" of "contact with a living folklore and thus with myth; contact with a living folk speech."<sup>6</sup> These ideas are also implicit in Clark's thought. He says: "to observe in art what does not exist in real life would be, unless one is creating fantasy, to break the other canon of verisimilitude which demands that there shall be no falsification of the facts, social or otherwise."<sup>7</sup> A basic tenet of the

theory and practice of Clark and Soyinka, then, is that their drama takes its power from the social "concepts" of individualized African communities, in Clark's case, rural communities.

Turning to the example of Ireland, we find a similar conviction demonstrated by a tendency, in the writers, to place their work in the context of the life and history of the race. For instance, Yeats talks about the writers "who see all things reflected in their souls, which are from the parent fountain of their race, instead of filling their work with the circumstances of a life which is dominated by England."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, when thoroughly assimilated, a racial consciousness clarifies the writer's vision, as Stephen Dedalus says, "This race and this country produced me," so "I shall express myself as I am."<sup>9</sup> We are made to agree with these writers that the artist can attain universal recognition by simply immersing himself in a process which Yeats calls "that experimental digging in the deep pit of themselves."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, J.M. Synge thinks that there can be no originality until writers have learned to place their work in the context of "the characteristic of a particular (time) and locality and the life that is in it."<sup>11</sup> Finally, in Nigeria, Clark maintains that "before the poet begins playing any role in Nigerian society he has to recognize himself. He has to find himself really within his society; because in the search for the most apposite expression you often find you are going back to your roots."<sup>12</sup> Both in Ireland and in Nigeria, the method of turning to sources and the manner of re-enacting it, cohere. To the Irish and African dramatists nationalism is, indirectly, a matter of the writer's attitude to his sources. The central concern is whether the writer interprets existing materials of folklore with points of reference culled from an alien intellectual tradition, or whether he immerses himself in the collective consciousness of his race in a way that that consciousness informs his idealism and actually clarifies his vision of the future society. My observation is that in theory and practice

Clark and Soyinka adopt an attitude to their African roots similar to the one adopted by Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory in relation to their Irish sources.

Yet it has been suggested by Frank O'Connor that "nationalism alone could never have created"<sup>13</sup> the Irish national theatre. In fact, Maire O'Neill, one of the Abbey Theatre actresses, also pointed out that

...if the Abbey Theatre had remained subordinate to nationalism, political as well as cultural, it might never have achieved the success it did. It had to stand outside the nationalistic movement in order to make its mark in the theatre world.<sup>14</sup>

An extreme example of the critics who think that Yeats and his companions were a-political is Malcolm Brown in his The Politics of Irish Literature. Malcolm Brown maintains that in spite of the claims which Yeats makes concerning Irish nationalism, "Ireland's colonial condition, the root fact of Irish history, was represented in the verses of Ireland's national poet by an almost total blank."<sup>15</sup> Finally, Frank O'Connor in the text cited above notes that it needed a philosophy common to Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory "that everything must be created anew to send a man back from Paris to London to work out his destiny in a provincial town."<sup>16</sup> These viewpoints will need to be considered.

Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory believed that they were nationalists and working for the interest of Ireland. For instance, Yeats thought that nationalism is a condition in which each writer is born, one which informs and shapes his thoughts. In 1889, commenting on the writing of a contemporary, T.W. Rolleston, Yeats says:

I wish he would devote his imagination to some national purpose. Cosmopolitan literature is, at best, but a poor bubble, though a big one. Creative work has always a fatherland.<sup>17</sup>

Yeats believed that all "literature and all art is national."<sup>18</sup> Such strong beliefs about the importance of the life in a particular place

for the creative writer also found expression in one of the early essays in which he saw the nation as a basic experience of every important writer. He says:

To the greater poets everything they see has its relation to the national life, and through that to the universal and divine life: nothing is an isolated artistic moment; there is a unity everywhere; everything fulfills a purpose that is not its own....But to this universalism, this seeing of unity everywhere, you can only attain through what is near you, your nation, or, if you be no traveller, your village and the cobwebs on your walls.<sup>19</sup>

A fundamental character of the protest against cosmopolitan drama, or what Synge terms the "intellectual modern drama," is the Irish writer's willingness to turn away from the social reality of Dublin and instead seek what Yeats calls "this universalism, this seeing of unity everywhere" in an archaic environment -- peasant or heroic. Their Irish background placed them in direct contact with a living folk culture. For example, the duopolization of Irish cultural history between the celebrated "beggar-man" and the "noble." Yeats insisted that while it is true that contemporary history forms part of the material of modern drama, folklore also is. Consequently, a national literature, he says, is "the work of writers who are moulded by influences that are moulding their country, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end."<sup>20</sup> As we shall see, two main streams of cultural history meet in the Ireland of the 1890's: political and nationalist Ireland, and romantic Ireland. The fact that in his theories Yeats emphasises the deeper life of the artist places the task of unifying these mainstreams of Irish cultural history upon the shoulders of artists. In practice, it meant evolving a method that would bring the past and present together, and so unify these two areas of racial experience. A central concern of the writers of the Irish Dramatic Movement was to revive ancient modes of expression and ancient beliefs. The program entailed reviving archaic subjects, exploiting beliefs and attitudes

of archaic societies and working in archaic modes-- living speech.

Nationalism in the theatre presupposes two assumptions, the recognition of the nation by writers, and the quest for intellectual freedom from the dominant literary modes and conventions. Hence, Yeats's personal conviction that all "literature is national"<sup>21</sup> made him argue further that all literature "is always personal, always one man's vision of the world, one man's experience."<sup>22</sup> Continuity was sought in two ways: reviving traditional modes of expression and defending the traditional role of the artist in ancient society. Yeats protests bitterly against the lack of that intellectual freedom without which "there can be no agreement"<sup>23</sup> in Dublin. And in 1892 he asks, "Can we not unite literature to the great passion of patriotism and ennoble both thereby?"<sup>24</sup> The preceding utterances demonstrate that in spite of Irish politics, religion, and the land, Yeats knew that a national movement that can include the most different minds"<sup>25</sup> should be able to express the different varieties of Irish national purpose. The plays of younger contemporary dramatists-- Padriac Columm, William Boyle, George Fitzmaurice, Lennox Robinson, T.C. Murray, and the plays of Sean O'Casey<sup>26</sup> in the 1920's reveal that the ideals of Yeats and his colleagues achieved coincidence with the aspirations of a large number of younger writers.

In Ireland and in Africa, the post-Yeatsian generations of dramatists recognized at once the similarities between their own aspirations and those of Yeats and his friends of the Irish Dramatic Movement: first, in the search for what Clark calls the most apposite expression the younger generation of writers discover their own people, secondly, these writers begin to defend the new life of the people, seeing in it a basis for a theory of cultural unity. It is therefore not surprising that literary nationalism has since the days of Yeats been associated with the search for a unity of culture. The explanation is simple: folk culture is the homogenous

heritage of the group; turning to it by writers is a way of placing their work in the context of the worldview of their own people. Historically, therefore, literary nationalism has had little to do with what Professor O'Driscoll aptly calls "the fashionable and narrowly nationalistic"<sup>27</sup> movements; instead it has, as its basic tenet, the unity of cultural experience. In fact, doctrinaire politics tends to serve as object of attack by these writers. In Ireland, certain events, examined below, gave Yeats and his friends of the literary movement the opportunity of seeking to renew belief in things Irish. I have already mentioned that Irish cultural history was, in the 1890's at least, dominated by two main streams of thoughts: the political and the romantic. These trends spring from sources that will need to be considered.

Scholars sympathetic with the vision of Ireland created by W.B. Yeats have tended to popularize what Yeats calls cultural and intellectual nationalism<sup>28</sup> as opposed to popular nationalism. Robert O'Driscoll thinks, in Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland that two "events, one literary and one historical, lie behind the development of a cultural nationalism in nineteenth-century Ireland." The first one was "the publication in the early 1760's of James Macpherson's translations of what he claimed were authentic poems of Ossian"; the other was the "founding in 1791 of the United Irish Society" which proposed to abolish "all religious distinctions" and to unite all "Irishmen against the unjust influence of Great Britain."<sup>29</sup> These two events, according to Professor O'Driscoll, culminated in the work of Samuel Ferguson in the 1830's and also in the activities of Thomas Davis during the 1840's. He says:

Samuel Ferguson, who advocated that a national literature would not only be the means of realising the cultural destiny which he considered rightfully Ireland's, but would also provide a link between people of diverse convictions: it would minimise and ultimately remove antipathies between Orange and Green, Protestant and Catholic, aristocrat and peasant....What Yeats calls "intellectual nationalism," then, has its beginnings in Ferguson.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1890's when the literary theatre was founded the death of Parnell created a vacuum in the minds of writers, intellectuals, and politicians alike. The Church no longer exercised total moral command over popular Catholic Ireland and the political leadership was either in disarray or paralysed by events following the death of Parnell. Creative writers were forced to take upon themselves the duties which hitherto had been the sole responsibility of the priests and politicians. In 1892 Yeats says:

Amidst the clash of party against party we have tried to put forward a nationality that is above party, and amid the oncoming roar of a general election we have tried to assert those everlasting principles of love of truth and love of country that speak to men in solitude and in the silence of the night.<sup>31</sup>

Henceforth, but still proclaiming his superiority as an artist, Yeats developed an image of political nationalist Ireland which has been accepted by most Yeats scholars. The politics of Ireland were represented as "mere anarchy" or even "vain frenzy";<sup>32</sup> in Dublin,

The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

In the perspectives of Yeats's studies nationalist Dublin is represented as a place where "there can be no agreement."<sup>33</sup> Yeats says:

Without intellectual freedom there can be no agreement and in Nationalist Dublin there was not -- indeed there still is not -- any society where a man is heard by the ears...in its stead opinions crushes and rends, all is hatred and bitterness: wheel biting upon wheel, a roar of steel or iron tackle, a mill of argument grinding all things down to mediocrity.<sup>34</sup>

Most critics and Yeats scholars have been so familiarized with rhetorical outbursts such as "A terrible beauty is born"; "maybe a breath of politic words/Has withered our Rose Tree"; or "an old bellows full of angry wind," "a drunken vainglorious lout"; "Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut," and "Was there another Troy for her to burn";<sup>35</sup> that they tend to overlook the sense of

superiority which the poet assumes and the further consideration that these rhetorical utterances are issuing from the pen of a poet who knew the city and the people he was satirizing and mocking. It can be argued that by deliberately exploiting the rhetorical idioms of his Society, W.B. Yeats is a satirist of considerable power and persuasion. "Even W.B. Yeats," says Vivian Mercier, "has his own special vein of defiant or despairing humour."<sup>36</sup> From the stand point of the poet Dublin is casually dismissed as a "Nationalist Abstraction."<sup>37</sup> Not only was the social order of Dublin in need of freedom from "intellectual hatred," the literary culture of the city was also infused with what Yeats terms the "stale odour of spilt poetry," spilling over from England. Writers and artists, Yeats insisted needed to turn from the prevailing literary conventions and to discover new styles and new subjects from their Irish background. For instance, he criticised the "poetry of cigarettes and black coffee, of absinthe, and the skirt dance."<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in the English theatre he saw only stage comedy and satire: "that superficial appeal to the nerves and to vulgar appetites which has made sincere drama impossible in the ordinary modern theatre."<sup>39</sup> On the other hand "sincere drama," the literary drama which delights in variety is "intellectual art, less of tricks and caricature."<sup>40</sup>

Since Dublin opinion and literary taste were dominated by the middle class, a class which represented to Yeats "an attitude of mind more than an accident of birth,"<sup>41</sup> he saw in the tastes of this class an extension of cosmopolitan (colonial) culture. The latter constituted a big threat to intellectual nationalism in two ways: first, it was a detraction that kept young aspiring writers away from their sources -- folklore and a living speech; secondly, it created an atmosphere of divisiveness; hence it constituted a formidable threat to cultural unity. For example, in A Vision he describes, in a tone of protest, the conditions of the "horrible generation that in childhood sucked Ibsen from Archer's hygenic

bottle."<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, he affirms the nature of their own protest against what Synge terms the intellectual modern drama. Yeats remembers that their turning away from the dominant literary conventions "made it possible [for them] to create a new kind of acting, for it gave us time to prepare and experiment."<sup>43</sup> A second result of their revolt is that their actresses and actors "grew but slowly to skill and power because...they were never tempted to copy some popular favourite."<sup>44</sup> In this way, belatedness became a virtue and a source of strength. Therefore, Yeats and his contemporaries believed that intellectual nationalism could hardly be expected to evolve from a social order whose intellectual and literary traditions took their points of reference from the morphology of the cosmopolitan social structure. They chose instead to work in "unfashionable" modes, exploiting peasant beliefs and attitudes, "the myths and legends of Ireland.

But Ireland was not, according to the Irish dramatists, an overblown infant; in his writing Yeats presents culture conflict to be something which the poet also feels intensely:

Out of Ireland have we come  
Great hatred, little room,  
Maimed us at the start.  
I carry from my mother's womb  
A fanatic heart.<sup>45</sup>

The choice open to Yeats was, however, not between Irish culpability and "England may keep faith/For all that is done and said";<sup>46</sup> he still believed that another form of idealism could replace the nationalist abstraction of Dublin-- the renewal of belief in the ancient ideals of Ireland. He then proposed that the folk culture of the Irish peasants, the mythological literature of ancient Ireland, through a long process of adaptation, have preserved the national character; this Irish background of a living tradition forms the only basis on which a national literary drama can evolve.

First the writers were to discover their role in society; more so because what had hitherto been regarded as the intellectual

centre of Ireland, Dublin, was threatened by "mere anarchy,"<sup>47</sup> artists were required now more than at any other time to identify their roles in the society. Yeats says:

Ireland is passing through a crisis in the life of the mind greater than any she has known since the rise of the Young Ireland Party... . Many are beginning to ~~recognise~~ the right of the individual mind to see the world in its own way, to cherish the thoughts which separate men from one another, and that are the creators of distinguished life, instead of those thoughts that had made one man like another if they could, and have but succeeded in setting hysteria and insincerity in place of confidence and self-possession.<sup>48</sup>

The result is that the quest for the "right of the individual to see the world in its own way" asserts to itself the moral and professional superiority of the artist. In later years he urged Irish poets to learn their trade, "Sing whatever is well-made."<sup>49</sup> In the light of conclusions of this nature, Irish writers justify their turning away from the preoccupation with ideological themes by asserting that their revolt is a protest against what Yeats calls "hysteria and insincerity" in the drama.

At the end of the nineteenth century in Ireland, therefore, writers like Yeats recognized that the conditions were favourable for them to start and defend intellectual nationalism. As Yeats says:

The arts are, I believe, about to take upon their shoulders the burdens that have fallen from the shoulders of priests, and to lead us back upon our journey by filling our thoughts with the essences of things, and not with things.<sup>50</sup>

We can see perhaps why Yeats explained that they wanted "intellectual nationalism" because it was the form of "nationalism like that of Norway, with the language question as its lever."<sup>51</sup> We have also to remember that, in order to perform these newly acquired cultural responsibilities artists also needed to return to a new social order. First, writers were urged to recognize the existence of an Irish cultural past; secondly, they were asked to distinguish between

aspects of Irish culture and those that tended to reinforce the colonial image of Ireland; thirdly, they asserted the freedom of the artist; and lastly, they encouraged individual writers to place their work in the context of the morphology of Irish folk culture. Quite literally, it meant that Irish writers were to elicit from the literary, linguistic, and theatrical idioms of Irish folklore the "essences of things" Irish.

Throughout his career these ideas were basic to Yeats's thoughts, especially the personal conviction that the literary movement was part of a new literary enthusiasm, nationalistic in character. He began to urge aspiring writers to add a new beauty to the legends by bringing to bear upon them their experience of the literature of other countries: the literary dramas of ancient Greece, Elizabethan England, and the French drama of the age of Racine. These dramas had been based on a living mythology, he said, but that mythology "had been passing for long through literary minds without any new inflow from living tradition and lost all the incalculable instructive and convincing quality of the popular traditions."<sup>52</sup> Even when it happens that the examples chosen reveal the contrary situation as in the case of Shakespeare, Calderon, and Milton, where the writer uses the lives and legends of other countries, he insisted that those writers "have written out of emotions and thoughts that came to them because of their profound sympathy with the life about them."<sup>53</sup> In the perspectives of these earlier literary traditions, Yeats says:

All that is greatest in that literature is based upon legend -- upon those tales which are made by no one man, but by the nation itself through a slow process of modification and adaptation, to express its loves and its hates, its likes and its dislikes.<sup>54</sup>

Yeats insisted that "instead of filling their work with circumstances of a life which is dominated by England,"<sup>55</sup> Irish writers should return to "the old legends and the folk songs and the folk

traditions."<sup>56</sup>

Our opportunity in Ireland is not that our playwrights have more talent-- it is possible that they have less than the workers in an old tradition --but that the necessity of putting a life that has not hitherto been dramatised into their plays excludes all these types which have had their origin in a different social order.<sup>57</sup>

Gradually, Irish writers developed interest in their ancient civilization and older modes of thought: folklore and a living speech, legends, myths; the use of codes of conduct pertaining to an older aspect of culture and making it a dominant element in the structure of the plays. In the process of moulding and perfecting national feeling, life, and ideals, the writer stabilizes mythological heroes. Yeats's conclusions are based on the knowledge that "the common people, wherever civilization has not driven its plough too deep, keep a watch over the roots of all religion and all romance."<sup>58</sup> He then reminded aspiring contemporary writers like Synge that a living tradition on which a national literary drama can draw its power exists in folklore. We can see perhaps why Yeats insisted that

Folk-lore is at once the Bible, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer, and well-nigh all the great poets have lived by its light.<sup>59</sup>

In the end, the return to "that eternal and ancient Ireland which has lived from old times in tender and heroic tales" can become, in the hands of the artist, an important weapon to be employed in the battle for the "de-Anglicising" of Ireland. Indeed, by insisting on retrieving the ancient and primitive aspects of culture, intellectual nationalism seeks to awaken in the race the reality of its popular traditions, and by having this reality illuminate and shape the contemporary conscience of the race, it seeks to unify cultural experience.

The peasants in the west of Ireland provided ample opportunities to artists for the exemplification of their theories. Our

"movement," Yeats says, "is a return to the people," and the nation was identical to the peasant culture itself. Yeats then said that a writer "who wishes to write with his whole mind must knead the beliefs and hopes, which he has made his own, with the circumstances of his own life."<sup>60</sup> The meaning of nationalism, therefore, is found in the idea of the people, their literature, and their language. So that anything that threatens the people and their apprehension of the world also threatens the whole of national culture. Yeats writes:

Our poetry is still a poetry of the people in the main, for it still deals with the tales and thoughts of the people....There is a distinct school of Irish literature, which we must foster and protect, and its foundation is sunk in the legend lore of the people and in the national history.<sup>61</sup>

In the process of moulding and perfecting national feeling, life, and ideals, writers stabilize mythological and legendary heroes and heroines. As the poet asks:

What stood in the Post Office  
With Pearse and Connolly?  
What comes out of the mountain  
Where men first shed their blood?  
Who thought Cuchulain till it seemed  
He stood where they had stood?<sup>62</sup>

For the artist, at least, intellectual nationalism can achieve coincidence with popular nationalism in an ironic way. The resulting drama is as much a product of cultural history as the essence of intellectual culture in the way it harnesses myth, legend, and the folk tale. Therefore, the revival of traditional modes of expression -- literary, linguistic, and theatrical -- was a central concern of the Irish Dramatic Movement. The point cannot be overstated that in order to be able to work in them the principal figures of the Irish Literary Revival were in a way revolting against existing dramatic conventions and literary modes. We should not therefore be surprised to find a similar pattern evolving in Nigeria.

In the Nigeria of the 1950's the political, social, and literary situation is slightly different from the conditions of the Ireland of the 1890's, although no less anxious. Before 1960, the year of Nigerian independence, Clark and Soyinka had each made a slight impression on the literary world in Nigeria and abroad. But after 1960 they began, definitively, to formulate and put into practice their thoughts on African drama.

During the early phase of his literary career Clark, for example, was engaged with the task of self-definition; his thoughts on African literature have been collected into a single volume, The Example of Shakespeare. At the same time he was engaged in field work in the Ijaw area of Nigeria during which time he prepared the material for his play, Ozidi. He recorded and transcribed the story from the ancient Ijaw saga of Ozidi, a narrative or epic drama told in seven days.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, his research on the aspects of Nigerian drama show that the "roots of Nigerian drama" go "deep in the past of the race."<sup>64</sup> Clark observes that just "as the roots of European drama go back to the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Dionysus, so are the origins of Nigerian drama likely to be found in the early religious and magical ceremonies and festivals of the peoples of this country."<sup>65</sup> For example, he then concludes that the "egungun and oro of the Yoruba, the egwugwu and masques of the Ibo, and the owu and oru water masquerades of the Ijaw are dramas typical of the Nigerian national repertory."<sup>66</sup>

Basically, Clark looks at the traditional forms of African folk drama as a rich source of material for the modern literary dramatist. He acknowledged the fact that plays like Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest and his own Ozidi "show a definite tendency towards" wedding the folk medium of drum, song, and dance to the literary ones "of overall speech and plot."<sup>67</sup> Like the Irish dramatists he works in archaic modes, exploits beliefs and codes of conduct belonging to rural communities.

The early 1960's are also important for the establishment of Soyinka as dramatist, actor, critic, novelist, lecturer, and controversialist, and the outspoken critic of Negritude. At the same period he directed the production of plays by Brecht, Chekhov, J.P. Clark, and Synge. His ideas about the future of African drama and literature were also formulated chiefly between the years 1960-1967.

The essay, "The Fourth Stage" published in 1969, represents Soyinka's "earliest effort to encapsulate [his own] understanding of [the African] metaphysical world and its reflection in Yoruba contemporary social psyche."<sup>68</sup> In "The Fourth Stage" he seeks the origin of Yoruba tragedy in the mysteries of the Yoruba god, Ogun. "Ogun," he says, "is best understood in Hellenic values as a totality of the Dionysian, Apollonian and Promethean virtues."<sup>69</sup> Soyinka regards the myths and rituals of the Yoruba as a reflection of the way his own people apprehend the universe; in theory, he insists always on representing this self-apprehended world of the Yoruba in his work. In practice it means utilising the materials of Yoruba folklore. Starting from this basic position he has evolved, in theory and practice, to the point of defending the freedom of the writer from preoccupations with fashionable themes like cultural definition and what he calls "aggressive national consciousness"; and lastly, he has become a social critic who has managed to develop apposite literary tools of social satire, comedy, and tragi-comedy.

It is generally agreed that the Nigerian drama was inspired by a "virile" nationalism.<sup>70</sup> A number of factors, which I shall examine presently, account for conclusions of this nature. Both Clark and Soyinka started their careers as writers at a time when many forces, cultural and political, were at work in Africa. On the African continent itself, elitist ideals like Pan-Africanism, Negritude, scientific materialism, each sought to offer "Young Africa, a prototype of the time, the way to be a nation. In the perspectives of the cultural and political history of Africa in the 1950's, elitist ideologies

were essentially optimistic in nature. Kwame Nkrumah, for instance, warns his compatriots in a statement characteristic of the time that "What other countries have taken three hundred years to achieve a once dependent territory must try to accomplish in a generation if it is to survive. Unless it is, as it were 'jet-propelled,' it will lag behind and thus risk everything for which it has fought."<sup>71</sup> Even an ideologically oriented literary movement like Negritude tended, also, to measure human progress in economic terms.<sup>72</sup> About the 1950's, culturally and politically, therefore, African intellectuals were optimistic about constitutional developments of their individual territories. Essentially, the situation demanded a pooling together of cultural and political energies, in order to attack a common enemy -- underdevelopment. Political leaders in the so-called emerging nations recognized the fact of existing colonial boundaries, but they were also threatened by large homogenous ethnic groups, designated tribes by most political leaders and nationalists. Ethnic consciousness or "tribalism" was, according to most nationalist leaders, a big threat to nation-building. For example, in Soyinka's play, Kongi's Harvest, Kongi, the self-proclaimed populist leader, absorbs the yam festival into his new progressive philosophy of "scientificism" but brutally disposes of Danlola the spiritual leader of the people, castigating Danlola with tags like "reactionary relic of the kingship institution." It can be argued, without prejudice to the intentions of political nationalists, that the elitist attitude of mind represented by the dialectical materialism of nationalist leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, and even the more ambitious plan of successive cultural transformations of Negro humanism into a higher form of humanism advocated by Negritude, were antagonistic to the survival of folk culture.

For example, early in 1960 Soyinka was commissioned to write a play for Nigerian independence. He wrote A Dance of the Forests, although the play was rejected by the independence committee. During the "gathering of the tribes" which Soyinka recreates in the play, Demoke,

the carver is commissioned by a council to carve a totem in the modern fashion to commemorate the historic gathering of the tribes. But the event turns out to be the cause for Demoke's alienation and retreat. The reason Demoke gives for his flight is that "When I finished it, the grove was cleared of all the other trees, the bush was razed and a motor road built right up to it"<sup>73</sup> -- motor roads are symbols of progress.

When the council decided to build a motor road right up to the grove of a Yoruba god they destroyed the religious aspect of the grove. Demoke flees from the sight and joins the forest spirits. Later on in the play, the council cause a lorry called the Chimney of Ereko to be driven right up to the tree itself, an act of profanity which angers the forest beings and the ancestors -- they retreat deeper into the forest.

Old Man: I sent for it. For fumigation. It is the Chimney of Ereko.

Abgoreko: The Chimney of Ereko! A-a-ah, Baba, will you never believe that you cannot get rid of ancestors with little toys of children...<sup>74</sup>

When the lorry does arrive the strategy of ridding the grove of the ancestors and other spirits is effectively done.

A slow rumble of scattered voices, and the forest creatures pass through, from the direction of the lorry, coming straight down and turning right and left. They all hold leaves to their noses, and grumble all the way. Some sniff in disgust, others spit, all stop their noses, disapproving strongly of the petrol fumes.<sup>75</sup>

Here, we are witnessing the split between cultural nationalism and political nationalism. The middle class attitude of mind exemplified by the dialectical materialism of political leaders like Kwame Nkrumah which believes strongly in the myth of progress threatens folk culture. Soyinka's response to the materialists and their belief in nationalist abstractions is simply this:

Social emancipation, cultural liberation, cultural revolution are easier but defluctive approaches, for

they all retain external reference points against which a progression in thinking can be measured.<sup>76</sup>

Since art derives its power from the morphology of folklore it is a more powerful and independent tool of de-colonization and self-discovery than tags like "social emancipation"; the choice of forms by cultural nationalists like dramatic literature then is no accident. The return to folklore, to the "primal systems of apprehension of the race"<sup>77</sup> is an active way of retreating from what Soyinka calls "metaphysical abstractions."<sup>78</sup>

Not only has middle class optimism been a threat to the cultural nationalist, but additional demands have been put upon the writers by popular nationalism, demands which induce the writers to surrender their integrity to what Soyinka describes as the "monolithic stresses" of the time. Writers are attracted to admire the bombast that follows political victory and consequently they are forced to celebrate and actually enshrine the image of a nation modelled on colonial boundaries. J.P. Clark, for instance, presents the position in the following words:

...the forces at work now in Africa have been for widely different groups to come together under one colonial flag and cosmopolitan language.<sup>79</sup>

To Soyinka, however, the enshrinement of the image of the nation reminds him of the humiliation of his own people by imperial Europe; hence a recognition and identification with the people attests to the temporal nature of the nation and affirms the cultural reality of the people.

In the prison notes, The Man Died (1974), he grapples with the problem of allegiance and identity, but eventually casts his lot with the people.

He writes:

For the truly independent thinker it is always easy--and often relevant--to recall the artificiality, the cavalier arrogance, the exploitative motivations which went into the disposal of African peoples into nationalisms. One overcomes the sense of humiliation which accompanies the recollection of such a genesis by establishing his essential identity as that which goes into creating the entity of a people.<sup>80</sup>

And,

Partly because the human factor is the most demonstrable determinant, I caution myself and try substituting peoples for nations...In moments of grave doubts it is essential to cling to the reality of peoples; these cannot vanish, they have no questionable a priori--they exist.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore,

...any exercise of self-decimation solely in defence of the inviolability of temporal demarcations called nations is a mindless travesty of idealism. Peoples are not temporal because they can be defined by infinite ideas. Boundaries cannot.<sup>82</sup>

Even though Soyinka's argument tends towards the affirmation of the old argument that Nigeria (and most African states) was the arbitrary creation of colonialism, these thoughts also tackle a fundamental literary and intellectual question, the drift in Africa towards the creation of nations based on the morphology of European political thought; a trend which constitutes a threat first, to the survival of folk culture and secondly, to the intellectual freedom of individual writers.

And since, to most political nationalists, the so-called tribe which formed the basic unit of a homogenous folklore was considered a threat to nation-building, in the new-born states like Nigeria where the groups of peoples are made of extremely large units, the struggle between cultural nationalism and political nationalism is strong. Clark, for instance, detests the practice of indiscriminate "lumping together of African peoples"; instead he argues that the real Africa is a "fantastic variety of ethnic groupings of peoples... with all their different languages, their social systems."<sup>83</sup> Like Soyinka, Clark considers the writer's recognition of the folk culture of his people as a basis and meaning of nationalism. Also implicit in the position taken by Clark and Soyinka is the fact that the drift in contemporary Africa towards what Soyinka calls the "monolithic stresses of the time,"<sup>84</sup> threatens folk culture and imposes a foreign

morphology on the African world. Therefore, criticism of the social vision of political nationalism is a way of identifying with an authentic African social order. This desire to return to the roots is reflected in the work of these writers as the perpetuation of regionalism and ethnic consciousness, the adoption of archaic diction and other archaic modes of expression.

In general, the development of literary drama in Nigeria in the 1950's has been represented as an intellectual response to decolonization, and resulting directly from this, as part of a literary renaissance. The renaissance aspect, which is central to it, is evident in the insistence of these dramatists to revive older ways of doing things, reviving old beliefs, old faiths -- the whole of their cultural heritage, what has always existed. It is also agreed that the kind of work writers were doing complemented that of political nationalists. Michael Echeruo leaves us with an impression of this kind when he says that in Nigeria at Ibadan in the fifties, "there was general acceptance," of what poets did and the "public response wasn't very critical at this stage. There was the widespread approval of what poets were doing, what they were saying, and lots of people at the university took part in literary discussions."<sup>85</sup> In fact, Dapo Adelugba also suggests that an atmosphere of intellectual freedom like the one described by Professor Echeruo above, an intellectual environment which believed in "the freedom of the individual artist to choose his own way, his forms and his influence from his own knowledge of the world,"<sup>86</sup> prevailed at Ibadan. However, Soyinka's career as playwright, actor, founder and director of two acting companies, *The 1960 Masks* and *The Orisun Theatre*, has clashed with the censor. For example, in 1965 the Nigerian police questioned him about an illicit broadcast from the Ibadan radio station of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. He was subsequently charged with invading the Western Region Broadcasting Corporation and forcing them to play a pre-recorded tape denouncing the Government's (rigged) election

victory. Soyinka was detained; he was not released until he had gone on a hunger strike. The story soon became an international affair, to the extent The New York Times, November 11, 1965 carried the story that seven leading American Scholars -- Lillian Hellman, Alfred Kazin, Robert Lowell, Norman Mailer, William Styron, Lionel Trilling, and Norman Podhoretz -- had signed a petition in which they appealed to the late Nigerian Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to assure that Mr. Soyinka, whose works had helped to bring Nigerian culture to world attention, was safe.

Soyinka also spent the period 1967-1969 as a political prisoner, having been incarcerated by the military Government of Nigeria for an alleged charge of complicity with the rebellious leader of secessionist Biafra, Colonel Ojukwu. To Wole Soyinka, however, we must remember, these experiences were not unexpected; he had anticipated the movement towards totalitarianism, exactly what he calls "aggressive national consciousness" in the play which he wrote for Nigerian independence, A Dance of the Forests (1960). In it, an individualistic soldier who refuses to fight a war for one of Africa's illustrious emperors, is castrated and sold into slavery. The vision of history dramatised in this play is aptly represented by a court historian in the following words:

War is the only consistency that past ages  
afford us. It is the legacy which new nations  
seek to perpetuate. Patriots are grateful  
for wars. Soldiers have never questioned  
bloodshed. The cause is always the accident,  
...and war is the Destiny.<sup>87</sup>

With respect to the intellectual culture in Nigeria in the 1960's, when Soyinka and Clark were putting their theories into practice, some critics have noted that there was hardly any intellectual freedom in the Nigeria of the late 1950's and the early 1960's. Marianne Fearn in a recent dissertation on modern African drama submitted to Northwestern University (1974) says that censorship was partially responsible for the failure of the acting companies that Soyinka formed:

The 1960 Masks was not a professional company and it is reported that the fact that many of the actors were government civil servants tended to create tensions -- particularly if the material in production was topical or political in nature.<sup>88</sup>

Similarly,

Hubert Ogunde's name is noticeably missing from [the 1964] season. During the past year he had been having censorship problems with his company in the Western Region. He was banned from appearing in the Western Region in early 1964; in 1965 he and his entire company were banned from appearing anywhere in Nigeria.<sup>89</sup>

Increasing threats to intellectual freedom encouraged writers to turn to folklore, the material of which provided no controversial subjects. Secondly it gave the writers the opportunities of self-definition, identify with, and also of formulating their theories of the drama "in the context of primal systems of apprehension"<sup>90</sup> of their own people. Finally, it brought the writers directly in contact with a living tradition and they adopted its modes of expression for their own plays.

Soyinka took the first step in analysing the situation in his essay, "The Terrible Understanding" (1968). He argued that given the present drift towards "the monolithic stress" the writer should not direct his energies to "enshrining victory, to reaffirming his identification with the aspirations of nationalism and the stabilization of society." African writers, he says, must revere their intellectual integrity in order that they can procure and keep some measure of intellectual freedom. He realized that creative writers who possessed an independent and strong personality could hardly be expected to work successfully in the social order created by the "ruling élite."<sup>91</sup>

He writes:

...irrational events have so far deranged the course of basic human intercourse that it is impossible, physically impossible at the moment, for the writers of the country even to meet in their own country.<sup>92</sup>

Actually Soyinka recognized very early in his career that there were two forms of nationalism: intellectual and political nationalism, the latter he called aggressive nationalism, fostered and exploited by "demagogic opportunists" of the new aggressive national consciousness." He felt that writers who submitted their creative consciousness to the demands of aggressive nationalism tended to fill their work with themes of "cultural definitions." Here "was the beginning of the abdication of the African writer and the deception which he caused by fabricating a magnitude of unfelt abstractions."<sup>93</sup> To the writers who had not successfully liberated themselves from the social order of middle class culture their only theme was culture conflict and they had one type of character, the man who had lost his identity, and the type was reproduced in their writing in many shades. This type of writer, Soyinka says:

...even tried to give society something that the society has never lost--its identity.<sup>94</sup>

But it was never considered that

the artist labours from an inbuilt, intuitive responsibility not only to himself but to his roots. The test of the narrowness or ~~breadth~~ breadth of his vision, is whether he tries to stretch accidental situations to embrace his race and society or the fundamental truths of his community inform his vision and enable him to acquire even a prophetic insight into the evolution of that society.<sup>95</sup>

In order to attain this historical position the individual writer places his individual consciousness in the context of the morphology of the collective consciousness of his race, and let the latter shape his vision of the future. By rejecting the social order created by the middle class intellectual tradition, Soyinka advocates a return to folklore, the "primal systems of apprehension of the race."<sup>96</sup>

Nigerian writers, therefore, are aware of the widening gap which separates aggressive nationalism from intellectual nationalism; their response to the crisis of cultural identity has been for them to return to the folklores of their own peoples. In theory and practice,

the retreat into the primal culture has meant, to Clark and Soyinka, drawing heavily on and working with the literary, linguistic, and theatrical modes of folk culture like myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, praise poetry, music, prognostic beliefs, rituals, primitive passions and symbols, making these a dominant aspect of their plays, to the extent that both have been able to produce a verse and prose drama the majority of critics simply term sophisticated.

In his essay, "The Communication Line Between Poet and Public" (1966), Clark maintains that a "traumatic break in the line of communication occurred between his contemporary Nigerian writers and their public." He noted that with the generation of Ibadan writers, "probably as a result of changes in education and outlook, poets and people no longer seem to share that one language and view point to life, either on the personal or national level."<sup>97</sup>

In the drama one required not so much the knowledge of European literature and the Bible, but a knowledge of African symbolism, myths, legends, folktales, prognostic wisdom of an African people. For example, mythological heroes like Ogun, Obatala, and Sango; heroes of folktales like Esu, and figures emanating from folk belief like Abiku, are all subjected to reinterpretation in the perspectives of contemporary cultural history. In Clark's Song of a Goat a real goat is sacrificed on the stage; one reviewer of the Ibadan production complained that "the slaughtering of a real goat during the sacrifice is a poor substitute for real finesse in directing. The actors get so involved in handling all that gore that they neglect to get the symbolism of the goat's head in the pot across to the audience."<sup>98</sup> Even so, another reviewer saw only the powerful symbolism of fertility; "the symbolism of the first rains...with the suggestion of the hopeful fertility of spring significantly opposed to the dry tension of harmattan, and the natural images are altogether successful."<sup>99</sup> By having the action of his play laid in a rural environment Clark was able to use an older form of symbolism as well as exploit the natural

imagery of the rural community. In this way, Clark's retreat is an asset to him, for he is exploiting not only the landscape but equally important the beliefs, anxieties, and attitudes of the inhabitants of these rural communities.

In this respect Soyinka says that "the ~~moment~~ African writers and producers become very conscious of the potentialities of these idioms," they are bound to "inject novelty" and "freshness into their interpretation" of their themes and the practice "might lead to a theatrical revolution."<sup>100</sup> In A Dance of the Forests Soyinka says, he "tried to use a lot of rites, a number of religious rites -- and there's one of exorcism which he tried to use to interpret a theme which is quite completely remote from the source of its particular idiom."<sup>101</sup> Soyinka was possibly referring to the use of petrol fumes by the council to exorcise the forest spirits from Oro's grove, discussed above.

Clark thinks that the practice did not end with the early plays like Song of a Goat and A Dance of the Forests; it actually persists in plays written in the mid 1960's: "Songi's Harvest by Mr. Wole Soyinka...and my own Ozidi," he says, "provide concrete evidence" for this trend.<sup>102</sup>

This revivalist approach to the drama in Nigeria, which entails working in archaic modes, is new in the sense that it is not an exploitation of the language of the newspaper and of a conventional symbolism aimed at attracting the already existing popular audience of the folk theatre; instead the playwrights address themselves to a literary audience, a part of the society whose knowledge of literary dramatic traditions is as far-reaching as that of the playwrights themselves. Clark says:

...the new dimension of achievement is perhaps not always realized sufficiently for the picture to be instantly visible to a large section of an already limited audience. / My own 'The Imprisonment of Obatala' provides a notorious example about which

pupils and teachers alike are constantly writing in to the poet for exposition! And I dare say Mr. Soyinka's new long poem 'Idanre' will be regarded by many as carrying a similar if not stronger dose of constipation.<sup>103</sup>

Though literary sophistication may not be a virtue, all the same, it is a cult. Thus, Clark concedes that

Difficult though 'The Imprisonment of Obatala' may be, it can be said without presumption that the poem demands no more of the reader than does Mr. W.H. Auden's poem 'Music [sic] des Beaux Arts'.<sup>104</sup>

Indirectly the literary audience is being asked to assume an attitude toward folk culture similar to the one adopted by the playwrights themselves. In order to appreciate this kind of writing, the audience must return to their own sources; it is not therefore as if the return to folklore were an exercise to be performed by the writer alone; it has to become popular through familiarity. Clark says:

Just as a knowledge of Greek mythology and the painting by Brueghel is essential for anything like a full appreciation of the Auden poem, so is a knowledge of Yoruba mythology and of the painting by Susanne Wenger a considerable aid to an understanding of 'The Imprisonment of Obatala'.<sup>105</sup>

With the introduction of a literary style of writing informed by literary and linguistic resources of African folklore, "gone here are the public statements, the identification of personal problems with the struggles and aspirations of diverse peoples just beginning then to recognize themselves as of a corporate body with one country, one destiny, one God."<sup>106</sup> Gone also is bombast which,

...served on the one hand to prove Young Africa had become the equal, if not the better, of the Englishman at his own language, and on the other it served to confuse and befuddle the adulating mob. The woolly-thinking nationalist had only to fire off a string of -isms unknown to the masses and they went delirious with thunderous cheers for a hero who was a walking book.<sup>107</sup>

In the crisis of identity in Nigeria, serious writers like Clark and

Soyinka chose the way of intellectual nationalism: first, the return to folklore served as a logical dimension of intellectual decolonization, secondly, it affirmed the emergence of the artist as a powerful moral influence who uses his work to shape the moral vision of society; in the latter sense writers argue that their task is to expose internal treachery and betrayal in order to rescue ideals from being abused by narrow-minded political demagogues. Apart from reviving and employing an archaic diction, primitive symbolism, and nature imagery, Clark and Soyinka also revive the tragic myth and the comic and satiric style of writing.

In the perspective of the cultural history of the 1950's, Clark and Soyinka show a tendency of representing conflict as an intensely felt experience. This reinterpretation of history, in a way, represents a re-evaluation of the role of the artist in it. I have pointed out in the first part of the study that Negritude writers were regarded by the writers of Ibadan as Africans who, in returning to their sources, were inclined to be romantic. Romanticism, happens, however, to be a very broad term, but a basic premise of the theory and practice of Clark and Soyinka is the belief in a felt concept of history -- history was not only a public event it was biography and autobiography. In this way, not only is tragedy caused by one's awareness of his position on a global context, but the progress and distortion of human history is also an intensely felt experience by individuals working out the lives' tenure in a particular environment. Therefore, not only is the resulting drama a reaction against the colonial world, it is also a celebration of life. In the light of the moral role of the writer in the stage, we can see perhaps in a few citations from essays written in the 1960's by Soyinka, how he tackled the response of writers to contemporary cultural history.

In his essay, "The Failure of the Writer in Africa" (1967), he attacks "the lack of vital relevance between the literary concerns of writers and the pattern of reality that has overwhelmed even the

writers themselves in the majority of the modern African states."<sup>108</sup>

He says:

In new societies which begin the seductive experiment in authoritarianism, it has become a familiar experience to watch society crush the writer under a load of guilt for his dare in expressing a sensibility and an outlook apart from, and independent of the mass direction.<sup>109</sup>

Having thus analysed the situation he turns to the writer: "In the movement towards chaos in modern Africa," he argues, "the writer did not anticipate." Instead he "was content to turn his eye backward in time and prospect in archaic fields for forgotten gems which would dazzle and distract the present."<sup>110</sup> He urges that the "African writer needs an urgent release from the fascination of the past... the past exists, the real African consciousness establishes this."<sup>111</sup> The wrong conception of time and historical vision is made plausible by the wrong attitude with which the writers approached their past. The "historic vision," Soyinka argues, is not periodic but recreative and it abandons nothing previous and cannot therefore be totally restricted to a single historical event: "A historic vision," he says, "is of necessity universal and any pretense to it must first accept the demand for a total re-examination of the whole phenomenon of humanity."<sup>112</sup>

Quite literally, in A Dance of the Forests (1960) Soyinka examines the phenomenon of human history by leading us hundreds of years into the past for us to discover the greatness of our "illustrious ancestors," a greatness encrusted by the rust of a million years of a common humanity. This, Soyinka says, is the basic

realization that human beings are just destructive all over the world.... I have thought about this again and again but during the production [of A Dance of the Forests], I find that the main thing is my own personal conviction or observation that human beings are simply cannibals all over the world so that their main preoccupation seems to be eating up one another.<sup>113</sup>

Indeed, although A Dance of the Forests had been written for Nigerian independence, the author anticipated not victory, triumph, and unity but the writer's awakening to the reality of irrational events and the betrayal of hopes. Armed with this knowledge he warns writers to turn away from the mass direction of public events; instead he urges them to turn "inward...into the obvious symptoms of the niggling, warning, predictable present from which alone [lies] the salvation of ideals."<sup>114</sup> To Wole Soyinka, as with W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge, the true artists are those writers who confront a historical condition of "mere anarchy" by going "down to the root of public events and who seek the truth with earnestness and sincerity."<sup>115</sup> By insisting that the artist is one of the "handful of people" who after a revolution choose to "stand aside and question every move of the new regime," the artist asserts to himself a sense of moral superiority over "aggressive nationalism."<sup>116</sup>

As I have already shown above in connection with the conflicts caused by contemporary cultural history in the 1950's, Soyinka conceded that the phenomenon of cultural nationalism is a reaction to colonialism, but he also insisted, as did the Irish writers at the beginning of the century, that intellectual, spiritual, and literary decolonization must begin with the indigenous artists and critics themselves. What all this means, to Soyinka, is that conflict and contradiction must first be felt and resolved by the artist; until writers and critics have re-discovered their own roles in the context of the whole culture of a particular people or race they cannot engage, in a fruitful manner, in the process of eliciting in myth, legend, folktales, proverbs, fables, rituals, and in the prognostic, curative and aesthetic wisdom, the "self-apprehended universe" of their own people. The situation is similar to a religious conversion where the writer's background puts him in direct contact with the faiths, beliefs, and the mores of a particular society.

Soyinka says:

When all the claims to an objective synthesis of the observed relations of object matter and phenomena and their presentation have been pared away, the abstraction of this process which we call an aesthetic, may actually inform us of little more than the wistful self-location of its formulators in an escapist or idealized social order.<sup>117</sup>

For example,

A disgust with the materialist, technological and dehumanising aspects of an existing social reality such as Europe or America may, for instance, create in a critic the need for a contrasting order of humane creative references, leading in extremity to the adoption of purely illusionary matrices.... This was the case with Negritude.<sup>118</sup>

The greatest hazards facing the cultural nationalist are not the actual process of debunking the colonial outlook, but also and equally important, the perpetuating of another abstraction created in the context of the morphology of an alien social order. Soyinka proposes two approaches to the problem: the first one I have already hinted at above is the development of a historic vision which demands that the writer recognize his role in the evolution of society, and the second demands that the writer recognizes that the basic nature of human society and culture is that it is never static. Evidence for a belief in the dynamic conception of society is provided by the adaptability of African folklore. Soyinka writes:

The African world-view is not, however, as though by implication, static.... An attitude of philosophic accommodativeness is constantly demonstrated in the attributes accorded most African deities, attributes which deny the existence of impurities or "foreign matter" in the god's digestive system.<sup>119</sup>

This process of growth and adaptation extends into the practices of most African societies, for instance:

Experiences which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's cognition 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 enters the lore of the tribe.<sup>120</sup>

The syncretic process described by Soyinka entails the "absorption of every new experience" by the folk mind. In Soyinka's own work he demonstrates this ability to gather "multifarious experiences" and "exploiting them in one extravagant...whole."<sup>121</sup> In more than one way this philosophy of "accommodativeness" characteristic of folk culture has influenced Soyinka's style and distinguishes his achievement from that of contemporary writers like J.P. Clark. It also accounts, partially, for the richness of Soyinka's drama. Placed in the context of what Soyinka calls "primal systems of apprehension of the race,"<sup>122</sup> his drama represents a good example of what Yeats refers to as an art that has not been separated from the people.<sup>123</sup>

If, however, the reader agrees with the Irish and African dramatists that the drama is national because it has been inspired by folklore, how do we explain the fact that a majority of the folktales deal mainly with comic themes? In fact, studies of African folk drama, masquerades, and festivals, reveal that comedy and farce are the predominant forms. Vivian Mercier in The Irish Comic Tradition says that any archaizing movement is bound to beget a comic and satiric revival. The reason is simple: "humour springs from folklore, magic, and myth; wit and wordplay permeate folk speech; satire is inseparable from the traditional prestige of the poet; parody grows naturally out of the Gaelic poet's obsession with technique." In fact, Mercier concludes that the comic tradition "is not something peripheral" to the ideals of the Irish dramatists: "On the contrary, one may even claim its right to be considered the central tradition" of the Irish Literary Revival; "it is the comic and satiric aspects of the Revival that has worn best"<sup>124</sup> in the plays of Synge, Lady Gregory, Yeats, and later, O'Casey. In the chapters on Clark and Soyinka I will show that their evolution of a comic and satiric technique is largely dependent upon their attitude to folklore. Here, however, we are concerned with the revival of the tragic myth: whether a tragic spirit is already

implicit in Irish and African folklore. I have already noted in section one of the present study that the Irish playwrights encountered a similar problem; whether subjects drawn from Irish folklore could provide independently of Greek, Christian, and European mythology and legends, material for a tragic drama. The plays of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory proved that a tragic drama can be produced, in Soyinka's words, "in the context of the primal systems of apprehensions of the race."<sup>125</sup>

In Africa the situation was hard to prove. Robert Pagéard in Littérature Nègre-Africaine, concludes that in traditional African society tragedy does not seem to exist:

If one defines the tragic sense as the possession of a sorrowful consciousness of human destiny on the part of the individual, one may doubt the existence of tragic art in the traditional society.<sup>126</sup>

According to this argument what is usually classified as folk drama, folktales that antedate European penetration, is characterized by the reproduction of a variety of comical and farcical types. It will be made evident below that both the Irish and African dramatists consider farce to be a latecomer, whose domain is the social situation. However, let us examine the argument in the proper sequence.

But a writer like Senghor, for instance, suggested that African "magical practices are in fact of relatively recent origin and they seem to me to be a superstitious but only too human corruption. Proof of this can be seen in the development that they have undergone in the degenerate African societies of America."<sup>127</sup> I have already shown above that Soyinka does not think that development in folk culture, what he aptly termed "philosophic accommodativeness," has anything to do with decadence. Instead he argues as does W.B. Yeats that folk culture lives "through a slow process of modification and adaptation, to express its loves and its hates, its likes and its dislikes."<sup>128</sup> Yeats's characteristic expression for folklore was "the accumulated beauty of the ages."<sup>129</sup>

Therefore, the question then why folktales of certain countries do not contain tragic themes is less a matter of cultural degeneracy than one of apprehension and interpretation of reality. But in order to make a distinction between the idea of a return to sources adumbrated by Negritude and the concept of a return to the roots undertaken by Clark and Soyinka I should like to quote Senghor for the last time. In his essay, "The African Apprehension of Reality," Senghor says:

The African is as it were shut up inside his black skin. He lives in primordial night. He does not begin by distinguishing himself from the object, the tree or stone, the man or animal or social event. He does not keep it at a distance. He does not analyse it. Once he has come under its influence, he takes it like a blind man, still living, into his hands. He does not fix it or kill it. He turns it over and over in his supple hands, he fingers it, he feels it.<sup>130</sup>

Senghor concludes,

The African is one of the worms created on the Third Day...a pure sensory field. Subjectively, at the end of his antennae, like an insect, he discovers the Other.<sup>131</sup>

By retreating not into folk culture but into the "primordial night" Senghor evades the question raised at the beginning of this section, why there is no evidence, as Robert Pégard asks, of the "existence of a tragic art in the traditional society."<sup>132</sup>

As we shall see in the examination of the plays of Clark and Soyinka, writings of Negritude do not posit a sound basis for the definition of African tragedy; instead only in the drama of the Ibadan writers, Clark and Soyinka, do we find a definite and fruitful effort being made to elicit a theory of tragedy from African folklore. Clark and Soyinka, therefore, represent, in our African folktales, the second-born who prevails. They took off from the labyrinth where their ideologically oriented predecessors had lost their way. For instance, Clark recognizes the importance for the African writer

of the necessity of a return to one's sources; the latter he calls a "grand passion," but which each writer must adhere to "with due respect to his own particular portion of the continent." Clark places a "premium on differences of identity" because as he insists the writer returns to his own particular region, which he knows but not to an idealized "primordial" world. For instance, in his critical essays Clark emphasizes "fidelity to facts," arguing that in the process of utilizing material of folk culture the writer should not fiddle with phenomena, for example, social manners, customs, costumes, etc.<sup>133</sup> Like Synge, Clark's tragedies are influenced by his ability to exploit attitudes in a rural society.

Soyinka believes that an important manner of ascertaining cultural continuity is to revive the tragic myth. In "The Fourth Stage" he says, "the persistent search for the meaning of tragedy, for a redefinition in terms of cultural or private experience is, at least, a recognition by man of certain areas of depth experience which are not satisfactorily explained by general aesthetic theories." This knowledge that universal concepts cannot explain cultural phenomena is the "insistent voice that bids us return to our own sources." Since Soyinka acknowledges "the depth illumination of Nietzsche's intuition into basic universal impulses"<sup>134</sup> on his own definition of Yoruba tragedy, it may be rewarding for the interest of this discussion to examine Nietzsche's ideas side by side those of Soyinka.

Nietzsche's importance originates primarily from the fact that he sought to re-establish, ironically through his intuition of life, some basis upon which contemporary human culture could be reconstituted. He argued that the quality of soul that lurks beneath the forms of Greek art was Dionysian in nature. Tragedy, he said, originated from the mysteries of Dionysus; far from being an imitation of reality, tragic art is a return to mystery. This return to the heart of being was made possible by the recognition by man of the importance of myth and of the finding through "it a central means of continuity

with the past." According to this argument the quality of a people's art is known not by its sociological content but by the quality of the soul that went into the making of the work; and since a degree of suffering is involved, it came to be current after Nietzsche's avowed declaration of the "courageous acceptance of the negative" that a people that possessed no sorrowful consciousness produced no tragic art; accordingly such a people hardly knew itself.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, a people will discover its essence not in the spirit of romance and opera, or in what Soyinka calls "the universal surface culture of courts,"<sup>136</sup> but in the tragic spirit. Nietzsche emphasized the point that "every culture that has lost myth, has lost, by the same token, its natural, healthy creativity. Only a horizon ringed about with myths can unify a culture."<sup>137</sup> The rebirth of a tragic spirit was closely bound with the urge to revive cultural myths and the anxiety to find one's roots. We have shown that myths make up part of the literary material of folklore; the revival of the tragic myth, therefore, is central to any group of writers that seeks to revive traditional modes of thoughts, expressions, and apprehensions. I should like to discuss Soyinka's attitude to myth in connection with the revival of the tragic spirit. Like J.P. Clark Soyinka places a premium on the human factor insisting that all phenomena occurring in a particular human society should be attributed to that culture. Therefore, the primary objective of an African writer engaged in the intellectual issue of decolonization is first and foremost to recognize these "more profound aspects of an African cultural matrix,"<sup>138</sup> as Yeats would have phrased it, "to go down to the root of public events."<sup>139</sup> The difference between African and non-African writing is not the preference for archaic or legendary subjects but in recognition, careful selection, and organization. Soyinka warns:

We must distinguish between works which are the careful elicitation of an aesthetic matrix and the intoxication of an even intelligent and dedicated theoretician who, blinded by the sheer

potency of a pure, raw, ethnic vision, proceed to hurl themselves [sic] over the brink of rationality under the sheer momentum of a positioned rhetoric.<sup>140</sup>

Cautiously, Soyinka distinguishes between the tragic and comic element in Yoruba traditional society. The naiveté of traditional African art, Soyinka argues, is deceptive because in most cases surface harmony may hide profound agony beneath. He then suggests that the artists of the grotesque masks, a very popular item in folk festivals, "take refuge in deliberately grotesque and comic attitudes," with the objective to "flee the full power of cosmic vision."<sup>141</sup>

Similarly, the masks and comic stories of the African folktales are only fabrications meant to evade the stress of tragic terror.

He says:

The grotesquerie of the terror cults misleads the unwary into equating fabricated fears with the exploration of the Yoruba mind into the mystery of his individual will and the intimations of divine suffering to which artistic man is prone.<sup>142</sup>

In a similar way the scientific, like magical, curative, and prognostic practices, and linguistic material of folklore are no evidence of superstitious beliefs and the manifestations of a decadent stage in a once unified culture; instead they demonstrate the way the Yoruba apprehend the universe. Soyinka writes:

Ifá's cycle of masonic poetry--curative, prognostic, aesthetic and omniscient--expresses a philosophy of optimism in its oracular adaptiveness and unassailable resolution of all phenomena; the gods are accommodating and embrace within their eternal presences manifestations which are seemingly foreign or contradictory. It is no wonder therefore that the overt optimistic nature of the total culture is the quality attributed to the Yoruba himself, one which has begun [sic] to affect his accommodation towards the modern world, a spiritual complacency with which he encounters threats to his human and unique validation.<sup>143</sup>

Therefore, "Yoruba 'classical' art is mostly an expression of the Obatala resolution and humane<sup>7</sup> beneficence, utterly devoid, on the

surface, of conflict and irruption."<sup>144</sup>

Whereas the resolution of all phenomena takes place within the ritual ceremonies of Obatala, the Yoruba god of patient suffering, tragedy is concerned with the mysteries of Ogun, the darer and the first tragic actor. Soyinka's Ogun "is the artistic spirit, and not in the sentimental sense in which ~~the~~ ~~idea~~ of negritude would have us conceive the negro as pure artistic intuition."<sup>145</sup> Instead Yoruba tragedy is concerned with man's intuition of a gulf separating the self from an eternal essence; it entails disintegration, anguish and "divine suffering." He writes:

Tragedy, in Yoruba traditional drama, is the anguish of this severance, the fragmentation of essence from self. Its music is the stricken cry of man's blind soul as he flounders in the void and crashes through a deep abyss of aspirituality and cosmic rejection. Tragic music is an echo from that void; the celebrant speaks, sings and dances in authentic archetypal images from within the abyss. All understand and respond, for it is the language of the World.<sup>146</sup>

Even so acting saves the tragic hero from total "destructive despair":

Acting is therefore a contradiction of the tragic, spirit, yet is also its natural complement. To act, the Promethean instinct of rebellion, channels anguish into a creative purpose which releases man from a totally destructive despair, releasing from within him the most energetic, deeply combative inventions which, without usurping the territory of the infernal gulf, bridges them with visionary hopes. Only the battle of the will is thus primarily creative; from its spiritual stress springs the soul's despairing cry which proves its own solace....<sup>147</sup>

Since the Yoruba comic mask hides this image of profound agony, Soyinka suggests that the Yoruba "harmonious world [unity of image], a harmonious will which accommodates every alien material or abstract phenomenon within its infinitely stressed spirituality," was born only "after the demonic test of the self-will"<sup>148</sup> had taken place. He writes:

Only one who has himself undergone the experience of disintegration, whose spirit has been tested and whose psychic resources laid under stress by the forces most inimical to individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of fusion between the two contradictions. The resulting sensibility is also the sensibility of the artist, and he is a profound artist only to the degree to which he comprehends and expresses this principle of destruction and re-creation.<sup>149</sup>

For the Yoruba to live in their harmonious world is a battle with the self to overcome "the raw urgent question [which] beats in the blood of the temples, demanding, what is the will of Ogun?" And since the "hammering of the Yoruba will was done at Ogun's forge, any threat of disjunction is, as with the gods, a memory code for the resurrection of the tragic myth." For the Yoruba, therefore, "the first art was the tragic art,"<sup>150</sup> and it is implied that comic and satiric art is a late comer. The responsibility of the contemporary tragic dramatist is to recreate, "in the context of primal systems of apprehension of the race,"<sup>151</sup> this experience of the first battle of the human will "through the medium of physical contemporary action, reflecting emotions of the first active battle of the will through the abyss of dissolution."<sup>152</sup> He can do so by selecting modes of expression and themes from folklore and by employing linguistic and literary material of folklore -- myth, legend, music, language, poetry, proverbs, etc., and by relating them to the "most concrete experience of that community."<sup>153</sup>

W.B. Yeats says that Synge "was no mere realist. In his comedies there is the eternal battle -- he is a tragi-comedian.... The tragedian finds that something in his own soul;-- the comedian finds it in the world. All comedy is satire. Satire is essentially battle."<sup>154</sup> Yeats might have added, rebellion, and revolt; but it is important that he made the distinction between the fact that tragic battle is cosmic while comic battle is fought in the context of a human society. Comedy is the art produced by artists who possess strong personalities; tragedy is an art that compels man to renew belief in the omnidirectional vastness

of the cosmos. Tragedy is, as Yeats says, "self-knowledge after human defeat."<sup>155</sup>

I have shown that the drama of Clark and Soyinka began as a reaction against the psychology of colonialism, and that this reaction is manifested in their theories as an intellectual attitude which seeks to place the drama in the context of an African social order. In doing so they hope to demonstrate, as did Yeats and his contemporaries in Ireland at the beginning of the century, that a drama inspired by the folklore of their own people -- for instance, folktales, legends, myths, traditional poetry -- can "approach, in contemporary relevance and significance, that which [has] established itself on Biblical and classical foundations."<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, they have successfully revived the tragic myth and the comic tradition in African drama. Since the present study is concerned primarily with relating the theories and practices of Clark and Soyinka to the overall achievement of the leading playwrights of the Irish Dramatic Movement, it has not been considered necessary to undertake an exhaustive study of individual Irish plays; however, whenever necessary I have shown, in a juxtapositional manner, the pertinent aspects of affinities. The following analysis then concerns primarily a selection from the plays of Wole Soyinka and J.P. Clark in which the folk element has been examined with respect to its literary qualities and functions.

## Chapter 3

### Escaping the Nightmare of History: The Literary Context

In the preceding chapter, I showed that the Irish and African backgrounds gave two advantages to their writers: they were made to come in direct touch with the folklores and mythologies of their own people; they also benefitted from the availability of what Yeats calls a living speech. In the works of the Irish playwrights, the return to sources meant exploiting the beliefs, habits, and attitudes of rural communities or archaic societies. With respect to this particular point W.B. Yeats says that it "was the shock of new material that gave our plays and players their admirable style."<sup>1</sup>

However, a closer examination of the plays of Synge and Lady Gregory, Clark and Soyinka, reveals that there is more to it than the mere fact that "style is from the shock of the new material."<sup>2</sup> In an introductory note to his collection of poems, A Reed in the Tide, Clark observes that "a man not only fuses elements of both sides but he also constitutes a new independent whole."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, there are two problems involved: the problems of method and manner. A dramatist's willingness to work in archaic modes or even to exploit the beliefs of an archaic society constitutes method; but the additional fact that he recognizes himself as a "new independent whole" is what forms his manner. Whereas method is a playwright's awakening to "the shock of new material," manner is the extent of personal life and feeling involved in the process. Since contemporary history is "mere anarchy,"<sup>4</sup> the writers under discussion employ method and manner to give order to contemporary cultural history. J.P. Clark says, "I sometimes wonder what in my make-up is 'traditional' and 'native', and what 'derived' and 'modern'."<sup>5</sup>

A central concern with the Irish and African dramatists is the desire to ascertain cultural continuity; in other words, to unify cultural experience. Therefore, the revival motif, the desire to "unite...

the old passions of the earth"<sup>6</sup> with contemporary belief, is a major aspiration of the Irish and African dramatists.

J.P. Clark's Song of a Goat is laid in an Ijaw settlement in the delta region of the Niger River. It is the story of Zifa and his household. Zifa is an Ijaw fisherman and part time pilot. His wife, Ebieré, is also an ordinary Ijaw woman; she has a son by Zifa. Tonye, Zifa's brother, stays in the same compound with his elder brother and he, too, is an aspiring fisherman and promising local wrestler. Their aunt, Orukore, who has brought up the boys, is also a sort of seer. When she was a girl she was chosen by the people of the sea -- water spirits -- to be their bride on account of her beauty. Because she was loved by water spirits, these "people of the sea" have put a spell on her. In the play she has visions and hallucinations "of houses burning" and of the leopard -- an apocalyptic beast in this play -- devouring her goat. She says:

I must find him, the leopard  
That will devour my goat, I must  
Find him. Surely his footsteps will show  
Upon the mud? Surely, those claws bloody  
From hunt of antelopes in the forest  
Will show in the sand?

It is implied in the repetition of "surely" that she has gained a dimension of awareness which has made her wiser than the neighbours who merely think that the "woman may have double vision after all."<sup>7</sup>

Another important character in the play is the masseur. He is an old man, crippled, and acts as a local family doctor, a confessor and an oracle. The neighbours also form the social background of the play; like the neighbours in Synge's and Lady Gregory's plays they serve as a chorus in the play. To them we owe much of the past history of the families of the main characters; especially the story of Zifa's house.

The central concern of the play dramatizes an event in the marriage life of Zifa and Ebieré. Zifa and Ebieré have been married for five years and Zifa has been able to father a son. But both husband and

wife realize that because the man has lost his sexual powers, their chances of getting more children are non-existent. They know that the society teaches that a "guest after being fed looks up/At the sun,"<sup>8</sup> so both husband and wife decide to wait and see, hoping that by suppressing their anxiety, and by waiting, Zifa's impotence may eventually disappear. But the man forgets that Society also teaches that an "empty house...is a thing/Of danger. If men will not live in it/Bats or grass will."<sup>9</sup> The question posed by the social vision of society to Zifa and his wife then is for how long can the suffering spirit endure before providence rewards it for its patience? So while Ebiere waits for time to bring in good fortune, Zifa keeps appearances, "the strong weep only at night," he asserts.

One of Zifa's devices to keep appearances is to send Ebiere to the local masseur to receive a useless birth cure. During the interview with Ebiere, the masseur discovers that in reality the patient should be Zifa. The masseur, out of a sense of communal concern, resorts to the wisdom of the society which simply states that "even leopards go lame" and for every "ailment in man there is /A leaf in the forest."<sup>10</sup> Thus, knowing full well that in the wisdom of his people, "No/Man ever built a house or cleared/A piece of ground all by himself,"<sup>11</sup> he suggests to Ebiere the best solution would be for her husband to make her over to Zifa's younger brother, Tonye; in which case if Zifa's younger brother manages to get children with Ebiere, "That'll be a retying/Of knots, not a breaking or loosening/Of them."<sup>12</sup>

Even though Ebiere and her husband reject the masseur's proposal, the woman becomes resentful and restless. Eventually she seduces the younger man. Zifa discovers the treachery and betrayal by his own brother and wife. Their aunt proposes a cleansing ritual. A goat is procured but during the actual ceremony when Zifa severs the goat's head he loses his self-possession and becomes vindictive, threatening to kill the younger man. Tonye runs away and hangs himself, and in a powerful dramatic irony the abused husband realizes the folly of his

attempt to assert himself. Tonye was the only other male member of Zifa's family who might have continued the perpetuation of the family, but in destroying him, Zifa becomes the destroyer not of the evil doer, but of his own house. This sense of guilt forms the basis of Zifa's tragedy. On the other hand, Ebiere and Tonye are folk characters: She being the regular restless unfaithful wife married to an impotent man, while Tonye is the folk hero who is usually employed to subvert hierarchy. In this play, however, the two represent the combination of the forces of nature subverting moral law. The seduction scene is represented as a loss of self-control and also surrender to emotions:

Tonye: Why, Ebiere, you are mad, so gone far  
Leaves-gathering, and you are hot all  
Over, oh so shuddering, shuddering  
So, you want toppull me down which is  
A thing forbidden, now take that then, and that -- Oh  
my father!

Ebiere: So I am crazed, completely gone leaves-plucking,  
And you? Aren't you shuddering too, Oh,  
So shuddering in your heat of manhood you  
Have thrown me? Now, hold me, do hold on and  
Fight, for it is a thing not forbidden!  
ICock crows beyond! 13

In a review of the Mbari production of Song of a Goat, Robert G. Armstrong notes that the play "will continue to disturb -- or move -- many people." First he suggests that it

...opens a new era in Nigerian writing, for it deals in purely local and personal terms with a human problem, and thereby manages to achieve universality.<sup>14</sup>

The other thing he observes about the play is its novelty. He says:

Africans may well dislike a work of art which forces them to face a problem that cannot be blamed on outsiders. Europeans may well find that a play which deals with the sexual impotence of a father not only has unwelcome echoes at home, but also destroys their cherished stereotype -- or dream -- of the erotically extravagant African male.<sup>15</sup>

On a number of occasions, Clark has also defended the novelty of Song of a Goat. Zifa, Clark says is an Ijaw man who "loses the will to live when he loses potency and all hope of further procreation. His surely is a tragic passion as the Greeks knew it, and as only primitive people today, like Garcia Lorca's and mine, may know it."<sup>16</sup> Song of a Goat not only dramatises the theme of male impotence but it exploits a primitive passion. Hence the story involves Zifa's pedigree. His father dies a bad death, from an attack of leprosy, and was interred in an evil grove. But Zifa hastily brought the body back home from the evil grove, and the curse of impotence is believed to have originated from this violation of a social taboo. His failure to relate with the past is also carried forward by his brother's death which also frustrates his hopes. This sense of defeat is revealed in Zifa's lament after the death of his brother, Tonye:

My house, it has collapsed  
 In season that is calm to others. My fathers  
 Built it before my time that my children  
 And theirs to come may find a roof above  
 Their heads. And now what have I done  
 With it? In my hands it falls into a state  
 Of disrepair and now is fallen,  
 Fallen. Nothing stands; I will go  
 And find a new place to rest.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Una Maclean who was at Ibadan during the early 1960's and probably witnessed an Ibadan production of Song of a Goat concluded that Zifa's "house which was built upon the sands of compromise collapses with a resounding thud before the assembled forces of natural law."<sup>18</sup> This observation is true to a large extent; Clark mentions a curse on both Zifa and his aunt but these areas are not explored in depth. He was more concerned with those forces that force Ebiere and Tonye to cause the total collapse of the house. However, central to the tragedy is the matter of Zifa's guilt, one caused by the self-knowledge that he has been defeated by history. The sense of guilt here is comparable to that felt by Cuchulain at the end of Yeats's On Baile's Strand, when in an effort to prove his heroism and keep an oath, he kills his own

heir. But more specifically in Clark's play, the knowledge that Zifa has been the cause of the failure and disintegration of their house, compels him to wade into the sea and drown himself.

"Proportion in African tragedy," Soyinka says, "is governed by an element of the unknown in the forces of opposition or by a miscalculation by the tragic victim of such powers."<sup>19</sup> African moral vision is based on and explained by those events and actions that go into establishing harmony and continuity. Soyinka writes:

Morality for the Yoruba is that which creates harmony in the cosmos, and reparation for disjunction within the individual psyche cannot be seen as compensation for the individual accident to that personality. Thus good and evil are not measured in terms of offences against the individual or even the physical community, for there is knowledge from within the corpus of Ifa oracular wisdoms that a rupture is often simply one aspect of the destructive-creative unity, that offences even against nature may be part of the exaction by deeper nature from humanity of acts which alone can open up the deeper springs of man and bring about a constant rejuvenation of the human spirit.<sup>20</sup>

Zifa's tragedy is caused by the realization that he has been the cause of the frustration of the destiny of the unborn by creating a fissure in a moral foundation laid by his fathers. Viewed in the context of the moral vision of the Masseur and of Zifa's aunt, the fallen house of Zifa starts an unprecedented act of disintegration in the moral vision of a hitherto harmonious state. Zifa's failure as a man is more painful and agonizing because it enacts the collapse of the house which "My fathers/Built...before my time that my children/And theirs to come may find a roof above/Their heads." By destroying the present, Zifa's action creates disunity between his past and himself and the action also frustrates the future. By employing the image of the house Clark recreates for us an earlier state of communal harmony, when the weaknesses in nature were balanced and compensated for by rituals, morality, in contrast to a present of treachery, betrayal, and a future of uncertainty.

The relevance of the theme of kinship, treachery and betrayal in the context of Clark's post-independent Nigeria is prophetic. Like the aunt of Zifa, Orukorere, Clark predicts with terror the chances that self-interest could become a major cause for the travesty of nationalist hopes. Like Orukorere he anticipates that in a situation where men of the same family struggle over the same thing, there can be no victor:

The leopard, I have missed the leopard  
That will despoil the prime goat of our yard.  
But I do not hear the victor's cry.<sup>21</sup>

Since Clark believes that drama is "the elegant imitation of some action significant to a people...the physical representation or the evocation of one poetic image or complex of such images,"<sup>22</sup> he knew exactly the importance of the problem of fertility for his people. In Song of a Goat individual actions affect the fates of other members of the community -- the living, the dead, and the unborn. Similarly the fates of women are made to be larger than they can actually contain; although Ebiere appears in the Zifa family as an outsider, even so the destiny of the race of the Zifa family is inescapably bound with her own. According to this formulation, men may make mistakes, to the extent of even being sold into slavery, but the women must perpetuate the race. It should therefore not be psychologically untenable that Ebiere should take it as part of her responsibility to seduce the young man and get another child. But in taking her fate into her hands, like Deirdre of the sorrows, she becomes the "firebrand suddenly flaring up and consuming in her flames herself and all those dear around her."<sup>23</sup>

In the latter sense Ebiere becomes the cause of the destruction of Zifa's house, and plays the role of the archetypal fateful woman, in a way combining the Irish Deirdre with the Greek Helen of Troy. The two brothers in Clark's play, like the rival men in the Deirdre legend, have been struggling over a woman, whose fate is intertwined with their own. The similarities between Zifa's house and those other houses of the heroes of the Red Branch in the Irish Legend, of Maurya's house in Synge's Riders to the Sea is apparent. However, the social relation

and vision informing Song of a Goat is specifically Ijaw. The tragedy is caused by a man's fear of impotence and a woman's eagerness to produce more children. Thus Ebiere seeks to enlist her name among the worthy and procreative matriarchs of her society, but hers is not a passion for love but a passion that awakens to the cyclical rhythms of life. This is the way the Masseur represents Ebiere:

She has waited too long already,  
Too long in harmattan. The rains  
Are here once more and the forest getting  
Moist. Soon the earth will put on her green  
Skirt, the wind fanning her cheeks flushed  
From the new dawn. Will you let the woman  
Wait still when all the world is astir  
With seed and heady from flow of sap?<sup>24</sup>

By evoking the symbolism of nature, Clark uses the myth of fertility to dramatise man's struggle to survive within the cosmic totality of birth, life, death, and birth. The belief that a drama can be created by the playwright simply dedicating himself to the understanding and interpreting of the habits and lore of a specific region affected Clark's style enormously.

Clark's originality, like Synge's, lies in having to work in archaic modes, especially the use of diction and a form of speech that is dominated by nature imagery. The Masseur represents Ebiere's plight to Zifa in characteristic nature symbolism:

Masseur: Here, son, the woman has told nothing.  
Don't you see the entire grass is gone  
Overlush, and with the harmattan may  
Catch fire though you spread over it  
Your cloak of dew?<sup>25</sup>

Zifa's pretensions are represented by four words, "Your cloak of dew," the line anticipates the power of natural forces, "harmattan" and "fire," consuming the pragmatic wisdom of human society. Clark's nature symbolism forces his protagonist to apprehend reality in cosmic terms rather than at the social level of moral law. Like Synge in Riders to the Sea the tragic experience is the contemplation of things vaster than the individual. Tragedy in this sense deals with

cosmic conflict, with events pertaining to human history and destiny. Tragic myth is a parable of life; the individual is forced by events to contemplate the world in its "omnidirectional vastness." Indeed, we find a similar attitude to the world in Riders to the Sea, where man's individuality is placed in the context of all the natural forces. The old woman has just heard that Bartley, the last of her sons, is drowned:

Maurya: raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her .7. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me.... I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening... Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white Boards, and a deep grave surely....What more can we want than that?.... No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.<sup>26</sup>

I have mentioned Zifa's lament in Song of a Goat, the lyricism of which compares with Maurya's. Clark and Synge exploit the habits and attitudes of rural communities and in this way they revive primitive tragic passions.

Another similarity with Synge is that at the end of Song of a Goat our sympathies go to the weaker members of the group. In a society like that of Song of a Goat where "custom dictates those who die childless/Be cast out of the company of the fruitful whose/Special grace is interment in the township," a society in which "it is the woman who is in the wrong/Always,"<sup>27</sup> Ebiere's seduction of Tonye is made plausible. Clark reverses the values; instead of presenting the woman as the agent who frustrates the destiny of the group, he gives us the image of an impotent male hiding his frustrations in a "cloak of dew." Like Synge, Clark's sympathies go with the oppressed. For example, the Masseur tells Zifa: "Young man...your wife has/Been faithful to the point of folly." And you "keep up appearances" and finally rebukes him, she "has waited too long already."<sup>28</sup>

But neither Synge nor Clark are realists: they are exploiting social concepts, attitudes of societies that are evidently remote in the perspectives of urban psychology; even though they may work in archaic social orders they believe that they are reviving primal modes of apprehension of the race, and they make these archaic elements the dominant motive in their plays (pp. 134-135 below).

I have shown that part of the tragedy of Zifa is caused by a sense of guilt caused by the belief that his action may frustrate the hopes of the future generation. But his guilt is best understood in terms of the character of Cuchulain in Yeats's On Baile's Strand who mistakenly kills his son and heir. A similar idea that an individual's actions will affect the lives of unborn generations is also dramatized by W.B. Yeats in his The Dreaming of the Bones. Here a personal crime becomes part of cultural history, as the questioning voice in the following lines from The Dreaming of the Bones implies:

The Memory of a crime ....  
But does the penance for a passionate sin  
Last for so many centuries?<sup>29</sup>

A similar question may be asked, with justification, about the action of Clark's second play, The Masquerade. In fact, The Masquerade demonstrates that Effa's lament at the end of Song of a Goat was based on a sound moral vision. At the end of Song of a Goat it is reported that the woman had had a miscarriage, but The Masquerade reveals that the supposed miscarriage of the baby she was going to bear for the Zifa house had not occurred. In The Masquerade, the stranger-suitor is none other than the "Playboy," Tufa -- child of Tonye and Ebiere. Clark had originally planned to have Song of a Goat as the beginning of a trilogy of plays in which he hoped to dramatize "the problem of 'the sins of the father'"<sup>30</sup> descending unto his children.

In his second play, The Masquerade, the woman of Song of a Goat dies in the process of giving birth to a son and the child is brought up by an aunt in another Ijaw settlement in the creeks. When he grows up he goes into one other settlement where he wishes to take

a wife, but when the wedding is about to take place the issue of his dubious background is leaked out. His father-in-law to be says there can be no marriage between his daughter and a man whose family had been cursed with self-destruction. The girl insists by ignoring her father's threats and is accidentally shot by him.

In an introductory note to his collection of poems, A Reed in the Tide, Clark tells us that he adapted this tale about the bogus lover who woos the beautiful maiden of a local community from Amos Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard :

The "complete gentleman" of Amos Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard, a character straight out of West African mythology (who I admit has informed my own play The Masquerade) set out to win the fair hand of the bride, who refused all other suitors, by borrowing every single accessory to his body and stunning outfit. How was the poor innocent girl to know? Only on the triumphal march home, when creditors fell upon the Bridegroom, each demanding the article he had lent, did she discover her man was a scarecrow capped with a vacant skull.<sup>31</sup>

Tufa, the hero of Clark's play, ordinarily would be a folk hero in the way in which Lakunle is in Soyinka's The Lion and The Jewel, and Christy Mahon in Synge's The Playboy of the Western World. But as Clark points out with respect to the use of the materials of folklore, "what is leit-motiv for one kind of people in one place at one time may not be for another group."<sup>32</sup> Although Clark may believe "people like Yeats...who say that at bottom all people are the same, all folklore, mythologies, spring from the same sources," he reminds himself constantly that "writers are born and bred against a certain background, a certain back-drop and therefore they think of this and you find this in their work"<sup>33</sup> all the time.

In Clark's treatment of the character, interest is shifted from the moral aspect of the tale and focused on the "element of the unknown" or the hidden secret. The significance of its effects is judged not from the point of view of the adult world but from the stand point of a larger social reality whose laws confound the basic assumptions of

the human community. Instead of having the community stay outside of the action as was the case in the original story, Clark introduces them directly into the main body of the action, especially the Diribi family. Whereas the folktale was concerned with the fortune of the heroine, Clark's treatment concentrates on the question of the destiny of the entire lineage of Diribi -- past, living, and future. In order to affect this thematic change, the hidden secret is used to trigger events rather than as an end. When the secret of Tufa's background is revealed, the movement also reverses. I have already shown this tendency in Clark to direct our sympathy unto the deviant. The grotesque and macabre humour caused by the disproportionate and almost fantastic transformation of Tutuola's original "complete gentleman" into a skull was a joke that was made at the girl's expense. But by eliminating the grotesque and macabre Clark focuses our attention on the outcast, transforming the established society and its taboos into a target, the oppressive force.

The first part of the play sets the scene for a celebration of life, an occasion during which the entire community is involved. This movement is reversed when it is discovered that the bridegroom is a man without pedigree. The young lovers are faced with the awkward situation of having to prove that the bridegroom has a clear background. Titi, the bride says:

All right, all right, enough about others  
Of whom I know we are an extension. But  
Tonight tell me about yourself as man.<sup>34</sup>

The question which the action sets out to answer is, can Tufa know himself "as man" without knowing his sources, that is, the legend of his house? From the point of view of the community the answer is simply that people do not just "live on good looks and smart display."<sup>35</sup> Tufa is compelled to know his part in the legend of his race. He says:

I never knew my mother. In fact,  
My coming was her undoing, at least  
So my aunt who brought me up, poor woman,  
She died last year, told me the few  
Occasions she would talk.<sup>36</sup>

The moral obligation that one owes to one's past reinforces the moral position taken by the Masseur in Song of a Goat.

Even I,  
That am cripple in more ways than one, live  
And hope to some purpose for my people.<sup>37</sup>

According to this criterion, personality is defined as that which goes into making a community. Titi's father, Diribi, and his wife insist throughout the play that their daughter's success as a woman depends on the role she will play in perpetuating and expanding the social group. Umuko, the bride's mother says to the bridegroom:

My daughter  
Was brought up on a sound family  
Structure, the most solid in all the Delta.  
Pray, what mother have you  
To fan her welcome, sing her beauties?  
.....  
And what father-in-law had you in store  
To shower my daughter with gifts that are  
More than her due, the piece of land to farm,  
Not to talk of the umbrella for wife  
And grandchildren to take shelter in, &  
When owls beat the air?<sup>38</sup>

Diribi actually argues that since the matter of pollution concerns the Diribi race, he cannot allow any "taint" or "bad sap"<sup>39</sup> to flow in and pollute the stream of their lineage. In the eagerness to cleanse the house, in the manner of the Old Man in Yeats's Purgatory, he destroys his daughter, described to have been his "very last who should have been the first."<sup>40</sup> The play ends by invoking an image of frustrated destiny, as was the case in Clark's first play, Song of a Goat.

Tragedy in The Masquerade is caused by the fact that while the young lovers are prepared to belong to the moral world of their parents, that is, to fulfill themselves in the context of its social vision, they also wish to grow; but the action reveals that nature or the human society has created no compensating remedies. What is needed, then is not a rejection of community but the creation of new devices to compensate for those things which the lore of the society has not yet adopted, absorbed within its system, and which the individual does not

yet have access to in the absolute moral world of the play. In Song of a Goat and in The Masquerade freedom is not an escape, and Clark suggests that in the evolution of society, conflict between the laws of nature and man-made laws constitutes a major problem. It happens that only the young, those who have not been completely initiated into society become the victims or are destroyed in the actual process of becoming. There is therefore no way out for the individual to escape the nightmare of history.

The psychology of The Masquerade is informed by the contemporary cultural history, especially the situation in Nigeria during the late 1950's and the early 1960's. When the country gained independence in 1960 there were four regions which sponsored a federal government. Post-Nigerian independence politics showed that a man's ethnic background rather than his innate qualities gave him power over others. Northerners with the largest population became the virtual rulers of Nigeria; the fact that there was no way to redress the situation except a violent revolution became a reality when the Nigerian Army took over the government of the federation, after constitutional government had virtually failed to be operative and effective. In Nigeria, as was the case in the Ireland of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, the drama evolved in the context of the "shock of new material" caused by contemporary cultural history."

Like The Masquerade, Clark's third play, The Raft was written at Princeton, in the United States during the 1962/63 academic session. Even though the action of the play takes place in the Delta region the whole spirit of it is different from that obtaining in the two preceding plays. During his stay in America he describes in imagery reminiscent of The Raft the feeling Clark got on arriving at the Arena Stage in Washington:

I felt like one who had been following the course of a river and, just when he is thinking it is one long journey with no turning, suddenly he is enveloped in a whirlpool drawing over him all the force and flow of the stream.<sup>41</sup>

The circular imagery and vision of the play owe something to Clark's ironic and cynical attitude to the America he saw while he wrote the play.

The Raft dramatizes the plight and loss of four lumbermen employed by a timber company on the Niger; they take an "accursed raft" down the Niger River and the action of the play begins just at a point where the four men, Olotu, Kengide, Ogro, Ibobo, are about to arrive "on a creek in Niger Delta," and they suddenly realize that they have drifted into a whirlpool. The raft splits in the middle, the men drift apart, one of them is chopped to death by the propellers of a passing steamer, and three are lost in the fog.

The impact of the play depends on the language as there is simply no action. Through their talk we are made to understand that they actually belong to the life on the mainland, and to the Ijaw area of the country. At the end of the play their disappearance into the sea seems to have affected nobody; not even their employer who is reported to be "wining away at Warri"<sup>42</sup> on the mainland.

Through the evocation of images of futility Clark reveals that the four men are victims in a sense which we have not so far encountered in Clark's plays: "it is/We ordinary grass and shrubs who get crushed/As the mahoganies fall."<sup>43</sup> Like the ants in Soyinka's A Dance of the Forests, they are victims to history. Before disappearing into the coastal fog they utter the agonizing cry, "We're adrift, adrift and lost,"<sup>44</sup> but the cry reverberates into emptiness. In actuality the people on the mainland did not even know that the lumbermen ever existed, so that despite their disappearance into the sea, life went on as indifferently as it had done before.

The symbolic use of the river, whirlpool, and the sea to evoke a sense of timelessness, while it serves to liberate the four men from local interests, suspends time. The physical movement of tides, waves, and of the whirlpool, leaves them not only in a real whirlpool of no exit but also in a moral and existential one. But, in a sense, The Raft

is not a realistic play. In a passage cited above I noted the distinction which Professor Mahood makes between plays like Soyinka's The Swamp Dwellers and the "poetic" plays of the Irish Literary Revival, to which The Raft rightly belongs. She suggested that "Yeats and Synge...have helped us to a new insight into the poetic drama....Plays of this lineage are not about particular characters performing particular actions in a particular time and place; they are about some emotional experience of great weight, and their characters, setting, plot and language are the modes of expression of that experience." Even though these plays might have African settings they are written for audiences "reared on Yeats and Synge."<sup>45</sup>

Like Synge in Riders to the Sea, Clark portrays the precariousness of the lives of his characters as they seek a means of survival under the most hazardous conditions. And like Synge's riders, the knowledge of the sea, the movement of tides, of the winds, does not help Clark's lumbermen at all. But unlike the case of Synge nobody remains to "keen" Clark's lost lumbermen. In Synge's play, the girls and Maurya are left to represent the human community, but in The Raft the natural and the human worlds remain indifferent to the fates of the victims. Both playwrights reveal a similar loss of faith in conventional morality.

Ozidi (1966) represents Clark's interest in experimenting with other forms of material, especially the use of a combination of literary materials drawn from Ijaw saga literature. The play is based on an Ijaw epic, the Ozidi saga, told in seven days. According to Clark's own account the sagas, "half drama, half narrative" belong to the "narrative or epic dramas which go on for days (seven is the magic number!) and which, because they demand so much energy and time, are more or less dying out today."<sup>46</sup> Ozidi belongs to the type of plays which Clark calls "ancestral or myth plays" in which "the story derives directly from an ancestor or founder myth well known to the audience." It is to be noted that Clark's Three Plays: Song of a Goat, The Masquerade, and The Raft were all laid in a rural environment and the dramatist deliberately chose to work in a mode which I have called archaic, one

which is anything but realistic and naturalistic. I shall show in chapter four that his aversion to naturalism is responsible for his retreat to the use of an archaic diction; a practice radically different from "pioneer" or nationalist writing whose language was culled from newspapers, or the "ready stock of vocabulary, phrases and sentiment that a compiler who cared enough could easily have made out of it a dictionary of poetry."<sup>47</sup> We shall see that Clark's return to the living tradition of his Ijaw background has been an asset to him and it forms a source of originality and strength. Clark says that Ozidi is

the story of a posthumous son brought up by a witch's grandmother to avenge an equally famous father killed at war by his own compatriots to spite their idiot king, his brother. But the hero overreaches himself in the course of his quest for vengeance, and in a grand turn of dramatic irony narrowly misses his doom at the hands of smallpox.<sup>48</sup>

A cursory comparison of passages from the original text with the version in the play reveals that the dramatist has followed the original very closely, actually the play is an adaptation of the original epic; it has therefore affected Clark's characteristic concern with a controlled and unified plot and structure in the early three one-act plays.

He has also employed almost every known material of folklore in Ozidi; and when a play like it can be successfully produced it will represent a real combination of the arts -- music, magic, masks, mime, wrestling, besides the varieties of poetic forms which the author has employed to make up the material of Ozidi. It is hoped that this play will become a true and rewarding source of material for further plays; especially because of the enormous amount of material which Clark recovered and preserved in the play.

The shorter plays, Song of a Goat, The Masquerade, and The Raft were dominated by a single lyric aspiration; their themes were therefore suited to the one-act form which requires one movement and a reversal. But in Ozidi, there are five major acts, with at least thirty-

nine scenes; the spirit of the play is evidently epic.

Another departure in Ozidi is that whereas the shorter plays had been dominated by family or domestic conflicts, Ozidi introduces an allegorical comment on important affairs of the state, on treachery at the national level. The story is introduced by a narrator who gives the play a greater feeling of the theatrical.

An aspect of Clark's art significantly absent in Ozidi is the fact that the conflict does not touch on the immediate concerns of the community. Although young Ozidi has inherited the sins of his father, the cause for him to engage in a heroic war of revenge is not felt even by his mother, an important person in the play. She feels that Ozidi's heroic exploits are unnecessary and may reduplicate the life of the first Ozidi. Yet Clark's use of myth and legend is less self-conscious and his vision of history is also less deterministic, although no less pessimistic than Soyinka's (discussed below). Clark's main interests are with moral man and the significance of his actions on the community.

In the preceding discussion of the use of folktales, legends and myths in the plays of Clark it has been made evident that Clark emphasizes the customs, social ideals, and religion and beliefs of his own people. In this way Clark has kept to his word that the success of the dramatist depends on his "special skill and immediate conditions of his individual person and place." This position accounts partially for the conviction already quoted above that the African writer wishing to produce a work of African experience should do so "with due respect of course to his particular portion of the continent."<sup>49</sup>

Beginning as an emphasis on the sense of place, Clark's drama discovers the driving forces in the lives of his Ijaw country people; and like Synge and Lady Gregory he explores the local habits, attitudes, and anxieties of his people and has thus been able to recreate in a characteristic spirit the life of the Ijaw area of Nigeria.

Unlike J.P. Clark, Wole Soyinka does not obtain his effects by emphasizing the sense of place; he is primarily concerned with what he

calls exploring ways of "placing" his work "in the context of primal systems of apprehension of the race."<sup>50</sup> The Lion and the Jewel represents a dramatization in a village community of a theme we have already encountered in Clark's The Masquerade -- young lovers in conflict with a stubborn and older world. Lakunle, the school teacher tries to convince Sidi, a village belle that if they were married she will not be made to do what "most modest women do." For instance, she will never be subjected to that ignoble custom of bringing "forth children by the gross."<sup>51</sup>

In the number of versions of folk stories of this nature dramatized by other Nigerian playwrights -- Dr. Henshaw, the folk dramatists, and J.P. Clark -- emphasis is placed on one comic or tragic idea. But in Soyinka's play Sidi would very much have liked the idea of marrying the young school teacher but she also presents to him her own options. She would prefer a marriage in which "child-bearing in a wife"<sup>52</sup> is not scorned. Lakunle must pay the bride price to her parents before any other compromises will be made. To Sidi, marriage is neither a matter of pure love nor an act of asserting individual freedom. It is a way of enacting certain rituals which when carefully performed can initiate the young into the adult world.

Lakunle: Faith. Because I have faith.  
 Oh Sidi, vow to me your own undying love  
 And I will scorn the jibes of these bush minds  
 Who know no better. Swear, Sidi,  
 Swear you will be my wife and I will  
 Stand against earth, heaven, and the nine  
 Hells....

Sidi: Now there you go again.  
 One little thing  
 And you must chirrup like a cockatoo.  
 You talk and talk and deafen me  
 With words which always sound the same  
 And make no meaning.  
 I've told you, and I say it again  
 I shall marry you today, next week  
 Or any day you name  
 But my bride-price must first be paid.

Aha, now you turn away.  
 But I tell you, Lakunle, I must have  
 The full bride-price. Will you make me  
 A laughing-stock? Well, do as you please.  
 But Sidi will not make herself  
 A cheap bowl for the village spit.

Lakunle: On my head let fall their scorn.

Sidi: They will say I was no virgin  
 That I was forced to sell my shame  
 And marry you without a price. 53

Soyinka also introduces another comic idea, the history of the life of Sadiku and the Bale. Sadiku slyly tells Sidi that the old lion, the Bale, has lost his sexual powers and that it is she who has killed him. When she first encounters Sidi, Sadiku represents the meeting in these words:

You have chosen a better time to scare me to death  
 The hour of victory is no time for any woman to die. 54

Sadiku is playing on the word "death"; by Yoruba tradition Sadiku herself had married Okiki the father of the present Bale, thereby inheriting the life that was still in the old man. When Okiki's son succeeded his father he had also married Sadiku, thereby affirming continuity. Sadiku needs someone to take her place in order to establish a connection between the present Bale and the next generation. It so happens that her haphazard choice fell on Sidi, who must sacrifice herself, her youth to the perpetuity of the Bale's family. This is how the Bale presents the case to Sidi:

The old must flow into the new, Sidi,  
 Not blind itself or stand foolishly  
 Apart. A girl like you must inherit  
 Miracles which age alone reveals. 55

In this first extravagant comedy Soyinka's world is already fully mapped-out; the evolution of a social vision from the lore of the people themselves. Imported points of reference, like the ones suggested by the school teacher, Lakunle, are discarded and choices are made in the context of the world view of the Yoruba people. Similarly, Soyinka makes the beliefs of the people the dominant motive; they

ignore the futurist tendencies in Lakunle's thoughts and instinctively dismiss his attitude to women; especially the young woman, Sidi, whose idea of herself as woman is juxtaposed with the notion of womanhood sung by Lakunle. Since the central concern in the play is continuity, Lakunle is discarded to enable Sidi to celebrate her marriage with the old Bale.

The Swamp Dwellers is set somewhere in a settlement in the swamps of the Niger Delta; here "frogs, rain and other noises" constantly menace the swamp dwellers. Superficially the play represents the lives of a "peasant" family, one of those inhabiting the delta, during the most precarious period of their lives, the rainy season when the patches of land and islands have been overrun by floods.

The scene is a hut on stilts, built on one of the scattered semi-firm islands in the swamps. Two doors on the left lead into other rooms, and the one on the right leads outside. The walls are marsh stakes plaited with hemp robes. The room is fairly large, and is used both as the family workshop and as the 'parlour' for guests. About the middle of the right half of the stage is a barber's swivel chair, a very ancient one. On a small table against the right wall is a meagre row of hairdressing equipment--a pair of clippers, scissors, local combs, lather basin and brush, razor--not much else. A dirty white voluminous agbada serves for the usual customer's sheet. 56

The house, typical of a "village in the swamps" belongs to an old "peasant" couple, Makuri and Alu, his wife.

Makuri, an old man of about sixty, stands by the window, looking out. Near the downstage are the baskets he makes from the rushes which are strewn in front of him. Upstage left, his equally aged wife, Alu, sits on a mat, busy at her work, unravelling the patterns in dyed 'adire' cloths. Alu appears to suffer more than the normal viciousness of the swamp flies. She has a flick by her side which she uses frequently, yelling whenever a bite has caught her unawares. 57

Igwezu, their son, has been living in the city; there he lost his unfaithful bride to his brother. Having failed to adjust to the life of the city, he has decided to return to his maternal village in the

swamps to resume work on his farm; but on arrival in the swamps he learns that his crops have been destroyed by floods.

Makuri: What happened in the city?

Igwezu: Nothing but what happens to a newcomer to the race. The city reared itself in the air, and with the strength of its legs of brass kicked the adventurer in the small of his back.

Makuri: Did your own brother ride you down, Igwezu? Son, talk to me. -What took place between you two?  
(Igwezu is silent again, and then)

Igwezu: .... What took place is not worth the memory.... Does it not suffice that in the end I said to myself... I have a place, a home, and though it lies in the middle of the slough, I will go back to it. And I have a little plot of land which has rebelled against the waste that surrounds it, and yields a little fruit for the asking. I sowed this land before I went away. Now is the time for harvesting, and the cocoa-pods must be bursting with fulness... I came back with hope, with consolation in my heart. I came back with the assurance of one who has lived with his land and tilled it faithfully... 58

To the swamp dwellers the disaster is only part of the work of the gods; individuals like Igwezu must await their own moment of prosperity; "To some it comes quickly; to others a little more slowly. But your own turn will come soon, Igwezu; it will come before long." 59 The philosophy of the peasants represents what Soyinka calls the Obatalan spirit-- suffering, enduring, and awaiting eventual victory. 60

Another folk character in the play is the priest of the serpent of the swamps; his duties are to take the gifts which the peasants give to him and offer them to placate the serpent of the swamps. Before leaving for the city Igwezu had given his share of the offerings to the Kadiye; had the ritual sacrifices been effective, Igwezu argues, there might have been no disaster. The sleek and plump priest who uses the sacrifices for himself insists he gave them to the serpent. The villagers agree with him but Igwezu thinks the priest is a pervert.

Soyinka's description of the priest justifies Igwezu's plight:

...the Kadiye himself, a big, voluminous creature of about fifty, smooth-faced except for little tufts of beard around his chin. His head is shaved clean. He wears a kind of loin-cloth, white, which comes down to below his knees and a flap of which hangs over his left arm. He is bare above the waist. At least half of the Kadiye's fingers are ringed. He is followed by a servant, who brushes the flies off him with a horse-tail flick. 61

Another important folk character in this play is the Beggar, blind and comes from the north of the country.

The blind man is tall and straight. It is obvious from his dress that he is a stranger to these parts. He wears a long, tubular gown, white, which comes below his calf, and a little skull cap. Down one ear hangs a fairly large ear-ring, and he wears a thick ring on one of his fingers. He has a small beard, which, with the skull cap, accentuates the length of his face and emphasizes its ebony-carving nature. His feet are muddy above the ankles. The rest of him is lightly wet. His bearing is of quiet dignity. 62

These characters are recognizable types in any part of the local communities in Nigeria and elsewhere in West Africa.

However, The Swamp Dwellers is not a realistic attempt to recreate the life of the peasants living in the Delta region of Nigeria (not even in the poetic manner of Clark). It is not possible that Soyinka knew the swamp dwellers about whom he was writing; hence the cosmology of the play is Yoruba and the author probably ignored this point when he chose to locate the action of his play in the delta region. Whereas the reality of village life may be true, the realism is dubious. For example, there are blind beggars in Southern Nigeria who have migrated from the north, but they are an uncommon phenomenon in isolated settlements where begging may be very unrewarding -- but it is possible to find a considerable number of them in cities like Lagos, Ibadan, and Onitsha, where begging can be a profitable vocation.

In The Swamp Dwellers each character brings an attitude of looking at the world to explain the disaster. When the Blind man arrives Makuri

and his wife are forced to re-examine their attitudes regarding human deformity. They also suspect that there might be something-mysterious about their visitor. Makuri says to his visitor: "Blessed be the afflicted of the gods." And, "My faith teaches me that every god shakes a beggar by the hand, and his gifts are passed into his heart so that every man he blesses...."<sup>63</sup> Since the folk believe that the gods and ancestors are capable of assuming a number of disguised forms when they visit the human community, Alu is made to wash the stranger's feet. Hence, Makuri and his wife believe in the power of providence.

The Swamp Dwellers is not "a play about the Niger delta." It must be viewed in the tradition of poetic dramas written by Yeats and Synge. The "characters, setting, plot, and language are the modes of expression of that experience. Their validity is not to be tested by 'realism' -- their resemblance to people, places, events and speech in everyday life -- but by their power to evoke that central experience which is the play's theme."<sup>64</sup> Indeed, early in 1960, immediately after he returned from abroad, Soyinka participated in a dramatic reading of The Swamp Dwellers for the media on the Nigerian Radio and Television, he warned his listeners that it would be "futile to seek a central character or action" in the play. Instead, he said, his play was a "play of mood."<sup>65</sup> Therefore, folk belief is used in this play, as Synge and Lady Gregory did in their own plays, to intensify and localize the mood. The role of the blind Beggar can best be understood in the context of Yoruba folk belief.

In A Dance of the Forests, a god disguises himself as Obaneji and visits the human community. In another play, Death and the King's Horseman (1975) the characters believe that "the god of luck limped by, drenched/To the very lice that held/His rags together."<sup>66</sup> It is therefore believed that gods, the ancestors, and the god of providence can disguise themselves before they visit the human community.

Makuri: Well, didn't you hear what the Kadiye said? The rains have stopped...the floods are over. You must carry luck with your staff.

Beggar: Yes, I could feel the air growing lighter, and the clouds clearing over my head. I think the worst of your season is over.

Makuri: I hope so. Only once or twice in my whole lifetime have we had it so bad.<sup>67</sup>

But "blinded" by his bitterness against the hypocrisy and deceptions of the priest of the Serpent of the swamps, the rebellious young man, Igwezu, fails to recognize the ritual and religious significance of the blind Beggar's visit -- the Beggar's arrival in the swamps coincides with the recession of the floods. He then tells his host and hostess how locusts and the droughts have been a regular threat to the survival of people in his own hometown in Bukanji in the north, thereby also revealing that his journey to the south had been in search of a new life. He says, "But let there be water, because I am sick of the dryness." But when Igwezu, the rebel son of Makuri, insists that everything has been destroyed beyond restoration, the Beggar reassures him, "Master, it will thrive again....I am a wanderer, a beggar by birth and fortunes....I have stood where your soil is good and cleaves to the toes like the clay of bricks in the mixing; but it needs the fingers of drought whose skin is parchment....I shall give myself to you and work the land for your good. I feel I can make it yield, in my hands like an obedient child."<sup>68</sup> Igwezu and the Beggar have memories of past disasters, failures, and deceptions; unlike the blind Beggar but very much like the poet, Aleel, in Yeats's The Countess Cathleen, Igwezu is disarmed by a vision of future disasters. But the Beggar brings along with him a renewal of belief in life and continuity. But before leaving the scene of action, Igwezu says: "I must not be here when the people call for blood."<sup>69</sup> According to Igwezu, all events are sign posts for future happenings; hence he anticipates no improvement in his own situation.

Judged in the perspective of Soyinka's belief that "Morality for the Yoruba is that which creates harmony in the cosmos,"<sup>70</sup> the Beggar's vision of reality is animistic, that is, the mystic apprehension of

life which has not reduced "reality," in Soyinka's words, "to the narrowest matrix of values." Instead it is the "animist sensibility... a deeper subsumption of the self into vision and experience... in which the animist knowledge of objects of ritual is one with the ritualism, in which the physical has not been split from the psychic, nor can the concept exist of the separation of action from poetry. Music is not separate from the dance, nor sound from essence."<sup>71</sup> The Beggar's consciousness of time is cyclical in nature and coincides with the cyclic rhythms of nature. It is this belief in placing one's self in the context of cosmic growth and decay that makes this play's argument resemble the arguments of Synge's peasant tragicomedies: Riders to the Sea, The Shadow of the Glen, The Well of the Saints, and The Tinker's Wedding. In these plays the characters ignore all practical remedies and instead renew belief in the wisdom of earth.

The inspiration for The Swamp Dwellers is literary, and the play can best be examined in relation to a play like Yeats's The Countess Cathleen (1892). Yeats's The Countess Cathleen is the popular Irish folk tale of two Eastern Merchants who come to a hotel in Ireland during a period of drought and famine and do nothing but count gold. The news gets round to the famine-stricken country folk that there are some mysterious men buying souls. Many people come and sell. Countess Cathleen, who happens to be the sovereign of the region, wishing to save her tenants, sells all except her mansion and gives the money to the poor. The merchants, who happen also to be agents of the devil, steal the money. While this is happening, supplies of grain which were expected from the East in eight days do not arrive. Cathleen decides to sell her soul and locks herself in her mansion; three days later she is found dead in her room.<sup>72</sup>

The action of the play is centred on the life of the Shemus Rua family made up of Shemus, Mary his wife, and Teigue their son. Yeats was able to create a rural scene with "individualized Irish peasants."<sup>73</sup> Yeats was, like Soyinka in The Swamp Dwellers, concerned primarily with the crisis and its tragic consequences for Countess Cathleen. Like Igwezu,

the Countess has been away from the scene of the disaster, but on her return she discovers that her people are dying of starvation. The crisis offers an opportunity for her to perceive the nature of reality and to recognize the gap separating dream from reality.

...I had thought I would find nothing changed.  
But that's a dream, for the old worm o' the world  
Can eat its way into what place it pleases. <sup>74</sup>

Cathleen's isolation is caused by the fact that she rejects simple solutions like riches, love, and art; and by the fact that she recognizes the "bitter truth" and accepts the wisdom that accompanies it. Like Igwezu in Soyinka's play who desecrates every practical and expedient measure, Cathleen's singular shift of angle of vision enables her to suppress her romantic dreams and to embrace the higher ideal: "From this day for every I'll have no joy or sorrow of my own." <sup>75</sup>

In The Swamp Dwellers and The Countess Cathleen, whether disaster has been revealed to these "rebels" from the "unfashionable gyres," or whether it is only a local disaster like a famine or a flood, the individual "sensitive body" is inescapably immersed in it. The same drifting towards transformation occurs on individuals like Cathleen and Igwezu as they live their lives from a condition of innocence through frustration, despair, and tragic recognition; to them, salvation is always an act of individual will. They seem to escape the nightmare of history by a simple act of the will, or reconstituted wholeness of the self.

In plays like The Lion and the Jewel and The Swamp Dwellers the representation of conflict is reflected through the "peasant mirror," but in his A Dance of the Forests Soyinka seeks deliberately to place the Yoruba folk imagination in the context of human history; and he employs myth and legend to obtain his results. I have indicated in chapter one that to writers like Yeats and Soyinka the mythical method, as opposed to the narrative method, gives the writer the opportunity, first, of transcending what Yeats calls "external necessity," <sup>76</sup>

and secondly, in T. S. Eliot's words, "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."<sup>77</sup> As Wole Soyinka also says, myth is used not "as a kind of narrative," but is utilized "in an interpretive way."<sup>78</sup> In this way, Soyinka argues that the "past exists...in present awareness," it "clarifies the present and explains the future."<sup>79</sup>

The basic idea which underlies the belief in the effectiveness of the use of myth as method is that writers like Yeats and Soyinka deliberately turn away from the conception of history as progress; instead they embrace "the cyclic consciousness of time."<sup>80</sup> According to this assumption contemporary events and personages are matched with corresponding events and archetypes in the mythologies and legends of past societies. The attitude is aptly represented by Yeats in the following lines:

Irrational streams of blood are straining earth:  
Empedocles has thrown all things about;  
Hector is dead there's a light in Troy;  
We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, the development of the historical sense or what Yeats calls the "historic imagination,"<sup>82</sup> enacts the tragedy of history. In this way history is revelation and the drama is a new way of apprehending reality; its most prized characters are agonists like Cuchulain and the Ogun-man. Yeats writes:

If I need the most complete external exposition of any man's life I cannot give him a greater memory than is in that life, I cannot begin before his birth. The things he talks of will be what he has heard of during say the seventy years of his life. But if I give an exposition of my own mind, I am the spectator of the ages. The Tale of Troy is quite near to me, probably much nearer than anything I read in this morning's paper; or, on the other hand, if my turn is for Biblical mythology, Judea is nearer than the Balkans, but I do not talk of them. They do not enter into my business life.<sup>83</sup>

He then concludes that

I want a vast symbolism, a phantasmagoria going back to the beginning of the world, and always the Tale of Troy, of Judea, will be nearer to me than my own garden, because I am not limited by time. I am as old as mankind. Out of all that rises the inner art of poetry, the language of music and the arts which is not the natural language.<sup>84</sup>

But the practice of "going back to the beginning of the world" is not, as Soyinka warns, "a fleshpot for escapist indulgence"; instead it entails the development of "a vast symbolism, a phantasmagoria" drawn from the myths, legends, of societies, past and present. We have seen at the beginning of the thesis that Yeats emphasizes the fact that a writer "can only reach out to the universe with a gloved hand -- that glove is one's nation, the only thing one knows even a little of";<sup>85</sup> all this means is that the writer must seek the archetypes from within his own folklore and mythology first before he can begin to establish the connections and correspondences with other folklores and mythologies. He works in modes taken from his own background. In spite of their eagerness to be eclectic in design the dramas of Yeats and Soyinka are informed by and made lively by the folk imagination of the individual writer's nation. "From that great candle of the past," Yeats points out, "we must all light our little tapers."<sup>86</sup> But this past must first be implicit in the folklore of the individual writer. The concern with myth is a way of ascertaining continuity with the past. What one must remember is that in their thoughts both Soyinka and Yeats defend the "traditional" role of the artist; because only he is able to unify past and present cultural experience.

In 1960 Nigeria was to have its independence on the first of October. Soyinka was commissioned to write a play for the event; he wrote A Dance of the Forests in which he revealed, not the rebirth of ancient African glory, but its tyranny and decadence. In undertaking to write the play Soyinka must have been confronted with a number of options; to write a play which would recreate in an epic spirit, what

Senghor calls, "C'est que l'homme noire apporte" (The contributions of Africa to World Culture),<sup>87</sup> or in Soyinka's word, "illustrious ancestors" and the "accumulated heritage."<sup>88</sup> Soyinka, therefore, could have written a play in which he reflected the contemporary African's idea of the African heritage; he would then reveal in an optimistic manner the transformation of the present in anticipation of a utopian future society. Soyinka chose, instead, to delineate the methods which the builders of the ancient kingdoms and empires used in obtaining their power; and following a sort of deterministic assumption, he anticipated that a reduplication of similar methods might occur with his own contemporaries.

A Dance of the Forests (1960) is the story of an anonymous African Community which decides to celebrate "the gathering of the tribes." These "tribes" had been scattered in "the days of pillaging," in the days when men journeyed/In the market-ships of blood."<sup>89</sup> The human community decides to ask the gods to send some of its illustrious ancestors to be present at the occasion as guests of honour. In response, the gods and forest dwellers send two spirits of the "restless dead."<sup>90</sup>

The choice of the Dead man and Dead woman "was no accident. In previous life they were linked in violence and blood with four of the living generation."<sup>91</sup> The four humans are Demoke, the Carver; Adenebi, the Court Orator; Rola, a prostitute also known as the legendary Madame Tortoise; Obaneji, a filing clerk. The two "restless dead" are man and wife. In their former lives they had all been at the Court of one of Africa's ancient emperors, Mata Kharibu. Then the Dead man was a soldier in Mata Kharibu's army and the Dead woman was the warrior's wife. Demoke, the Carver, then, was the court poet; Adenebi, the court historian; Rola (Madame Tortoise) was Mata Kharibu's Queen. 800 years ago, when the human and the dead lived in the Court of Mata Kharibu, there has been no change in the natures of the protagonists.

When the two "restless dead" arrive as their guests, the human community is embarrassed and decides to drive them away by fumigating them with petrol fumes. The supreme deity, Forest Father, who has been masquerading as a human then decides to welcome the dead himself. Forest Father asks Aroni, his attendant, to invite the four humans to attend the welcoming of the dead. The Criere says:

We hold these rites, at human insistence.  
 By proclamation, let the mists of generations  
 Be now dispersed, Forest Father, unveil, unveil  
 The phantasmagoria of protagonists from the dead.<sup>92</sup>

The metaphor which Soyinka uses in this play is the context, one that takes place between the creative and destructive forces; two protagonists are prominently delineated -- Ogun and Eshuoro respectively. The Forests beings and the four humans then retreat further into the forests where the welcoming takes place.

When the retreat into the forest by the four humans is completed, Forest Father, intent on revealing their past to them, with the assistance of his attendant, Aroni, invokes the court of Mata Kharibu. The scene turns out to be the trial of the Warrior (dead man), who has been accused of possessing thought. The warrior had refused to fight a useless war, to retrieve the Queen's trousseau from her former husband, and convinced that "Unborn generations will be cannibals" he defies the orders of the Emperor and the Queen's attempts to seduce him. The Queen, Madame Tortoise, orders the Warrior to be castrated and then sold to a slave merchant. The Warrior's pregnant wife who has been witnessing the proceedings, collapses and dies, with her child still unborn. After 800 years she is to find out that a "hundred generations has made no difference."<sup>93</sup>

A Dance of the Forests portrays the dead couple as victims of unscrupulous power and tyrannical social ideals, and tyranny as a recurrent infliction on humanity. The nihilistic vision of history represented in A Dance of the Forests forms an important pattern in plays like Kongi's Harvest (1967), Madmen and Specialists (1971). In

these plays the various masks of tyranny always persist because the "System" is its mainstay though it wear a hundred masks and a thousand outward forms."<sup>94</sup> There are two groups of victims -- persons like the warrior and the Old man in Madmen and Specialists who happen to possess thought, and there also are the masses; these latter are "the ones remembered/ When nations build/...with tombstones...the headless bodies when/ The spade of progress delves."<sup>95</sup>

Forest Father decides that the Dead woman should be relieved of her burden; she gives Birth to a Half-child, the child who, in Yoruba folklore, is born to die. Thus A Dance of the Forests anticipated a future that is the antithesis of a utopian dream -- a dystopia. This nihilistic vision of history is re-enacted in Soyinka's play, Madmen and Specialists where humanity is caught on the eternal wheel of "As-Was-Is-Now-As Ever Shall Be..." and the "cycle is complete." In this latter play the vision of the future is also a ~~un~~nerving one; the prophecy of the dead man in A Dance of the Forests that "Unborn generations will be cannibals," has become a reality; the specialist, Bero, has finally realized that "Human flesh is delicious. Of course, not all the parts of the body. I prefer the balls myself."<sup>96</sup> Here, "Human inaccessibility to moral enlightenment, surely evidence of some 'primal crime,' and history merely combine to 'legalize' cannibalism"; and "the precise taste for the genitalia guarantees deformity in the future."<sup>97</sup>

Therefore, Soyinka's aversion to the myth of progress seems to originate from a belief about man and the fate of his soul, a vision of history quite similar in kind to W.B. Yeats's. Yeats reveals in his notes that "I took satisfaction in certain public disasters, felt ecstasy at the contemplation of ruin." He concludes that "Our civilization was about to be born from all that our age had rejected." And like Soyinka, Yeats believes that "man has lived many times";<sup>98</sup> hence like the nature of the Half-Child in A Dance of the Forests, man's soul may be reborn but it never changes its nature. To both Yeats and

Soyinka life is seen and represented as "repetition." Like the Irish playwrights, Soyinka recognizes the importance of myth and finds through it a central means of establishing continuity with his past. It shall be seen that the revival of the tragic spirit is connected with the idea of reviving cultural myths; these myths enhance and deepen theories of cultural continuity and literary renaissance.

Soyinka's use of legend, myth, and the folktale is closely linked with his conception of history and the place of the other archetype, the artist, in it. I have noted that Yeats, Synge, and Wole Soyinka believe that in a situation of cultural crisis the artist must go deep beyond events, dig deeper "inwards" into the mythic self, as Soyinka says, where alone lies the salvation of ideals.<sup>99</sup> One cannot therefore appreciate Soyinka's use of myth, legend, and the folktales in his drama without examining the position of the artist in his world. As Yeats's Seanchan says, "when all falls/In ruin, poetry calls out in joy."<sup>100</sup>

In A Dance of the Forests certain characters among the humans and the forest beings seem to act in a natural and instinctive way or in accordance to roles assigned to them by their function in society; set apart, not because they do not act within the main body of the play but because besides being actors they serve as manipulators. Among the forest beings and gods we have Eshuoro, Aroni, Ogun, and Forest Head; Demoke and Rola among the humans. Their perception of themselves and others marks them as distinctly superior to the others.

Demoke the "silent one" carved the symbolic totem for the "gathering of the tribes," a job which Obaneji describes as "the work of ten generations"; he further adds the compliment to Demoke, "your hands are very old. You have the fingers of the dead."<sup>101</sup> Obaneji we know is a god camouflaging as a human, and therefore is capable of apprehending the past, present, and the future; that is, he is what Yeats calls "the spectator of the ages."<sup>102</sup>

The artist, however, is no god and therefore has only one way of entering the collective consciousness of the race: by evolving a system of "a vast symbolism, a phantasmagoria, going back to the beginning of the world." This is the method which Demoke uses. Demoke and Madame Tortoise (Rola) know their legendary roles, at least the part that "rises from legends."<sup>103</sup>

Demoke (to Rola): I carved something to you. Of course, I didn't know you then, I mean, I had never met you. But from what I heard, you were so...

Adenebi: Bestial. Yes, just the sort of thing you would carve, isn't it? Like your totem. Utterly bestial.

Demoke: Actually, that is what I mean. Madame Tortoise is the totem--most of it anyway. In fact, you might almost say she dominated my thoughts--she, and something else. About equally.<sup>104</sup>

The three humans thus debate a concept of history which is antithetical to the one commemorated by the human community. They retreat from the epic spirit represented by "Mali, Chaka, Songhai, Glory, Empires" and instead seek a meaning in "felt history." Adenebi asks: "you cannot feel it, can you?" And then he concludes, "it is to those who cannot bear too much of it to whom the understanding is given." The result of this knowledge is that a character like Rola sees the festivities as a reflection of a "maze of purple and gold," thereby insisting like Adenebi to find a meaning in a felt conception of history. Similarly Rola says, "I owe all that happened to my nature. I regret nothing," in a way testifying to the fact that she knows her legendary role. It is therefore not surprising that Demoke should have used her to bridge the gap separating past and present. He says: "I needed some continuity and you provided it."<sup>105</sup> I have shown in chapter one that Yeats's rhetorical declamations with respect to recent contemporary civilization that "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity"<sup>106</sup> represents a self-conscious manner

of asserting the role of the artist in society. Yeats's poet, Seanchan in The King's Threshold, goes on a hunger strike in order to prove a point that the artist has always existed in society. Soyinka also insists that the "artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time."<sup>107</sup> Like Yeats's Seanchan, Soyinka himself went on a hunger strike in 1965 in protest against the treatment he got from Nigerian authorities. It is important therefore to understand that the defense of the role of the poet is an important aspect of the return to sources. It gives the younger generation of writers in Nigeria the freedom to choose to return to the use of archaic forms and beliefs. And since the artist is also the spectator of the ages, only he can revive the tragic myth. Tragedy, we are told, deals with cosmic conflict and tragic myth is therefore a parable of life. Its area is human origins, primal severance and terror in the face of "immense chaotic growth"; its heroes are in Lady Gregory's words, "Gods and Fighting Men"; hence only the artist can evoke that phantasmagoria of protagonists for us. The revival of the tragic myth is central to the idea of a return to sources.

In the same way the gods and the forest spirits are holding the ceremony as a "gentle rebuke" of humanity but Eshuoro who epitomizes the bestial in man would have liked to see history re-enacted as a blood bath rather than have it serve merely as a gentle rebuke. Eshuoro's point is made with some justification that only a violent shock may move humanity and cause a measure of moral regeneration. He says:

Four hundred million of their dead will crush the humans in a load of guilt. Four hundred million callously smoked to death.<sup>108</sup>

But Forest Head and his attendant, Aroni, are less concerned with vengeance than with seeing that history should not repeat itself. Forest Father says, "It was really their latent violence which frightened me";<sup>109</sup>

again. This is the voice of the artist. Essentially, the contest is between Eshuoro, who represents the bestial, and Ogun, the creative instinct. Their drama reflects a cosmic pattern.

But as Demoke says, "Reflections is nothing, except in the eye of a sensitive soul," and it looks as if Forest Father can do no more for humanity than rebuke them. He says: "It is enough that they discover their own regeneration,"<sup>110</sup> but since man is thrown into a gulf of "a-spirituality"<sup>111</sup> how can regeneration be possible? What may redeem mankind is the reflection, the work of art or the knowledge which it brings to those like Demoke and Adenebi who have sensitive souls. Thus, Forest Father the artist is capable of standing aside and actually seeing what effects his work creates:

Yet I must persist, knowing that nothing is ever altered. My secret is my eternal burden-- to pierce the encrustations of soul deadening habit, and bare the mirror of original nakedness-- knowing full well, it is futility. Yet I must do this alone, and no more, since to intervene is to be guilty of contradiction, and yet to remain altogether unfelt is to make my long-rumoured ineffectuality complete; hoping that when I have tortured awareness from their souls, that perhaps, only perhaps, in new beginnings... 112

In The Road, Samson the "king of touts" describes the method of using disaster as a reflection of reality as "cinema show." Samson questions Professor's methods: "Na another man calamity you fit take look cinema," with emphasis on the verb "look." As is the case with Professor in The Road, the cinema show is an experiment. He says: "One must cheat fear by foreknowledge." A similar quest compels Professor to run that "Inferno" which he calls "AKSIDENT STORE - ALL PART AVAILEBUL"; here thugs, touts, addicts, and drivers gather. But unlike Forest Father, Professor "abducts" only one person, god-infused Murano: the man knocked down dead when he was possessed by a god, Ogun. The others were drawn to Professor's AKSIDENT STORE "on a wave of sympathy." But Professor's choice was not arbitrary, as he says, "you must not think

I accept such manifestations as truth. It may be blind...but every discovery is a sign post...eventually the revelation will stand naked, unashamed...my cause vindicated."<sup>113</sup>

Given the examples of A Dance of the Forests and The Road we are made to know that the artist is not fascinated by violence, death, ruin, and disaster for their own sake; he is not a realist; these events serve as a "sign posts" (like the one Professor carries in the play) and the eventuality is the revelation. Professor asks, do "you take me for a common gawper after misery?"<sup>114</sup> The adoption of primitive symbolism partly accounts for Professor's decision to have his AKSIDENT STORE installed adjacent to the Church he had attended when he was still the youthful scholar, that is before his "fall."

Here, in his new "Church" he assembles what he calls rejects of the road: "I pick my words only among rejects," and being himself a fallen angel he gives us only the reflection of a fallen world. He says:

My task is to keep company with the fallen, and this word rose in pride above spiked bushes. We must all stick together. Only the fallen have need of restitution.<sup>115</sup>

The relationship between the artist and his characters is one of collaboration. The Old man and the mendicants in Madmen and Specialists live in a similar manner of sticking together and actually collaborating. Goyi one of the mendicants says:

...he told us the earth goes round and round, which if you remember was just too much for someone like me to swallow. So, the following morning when the sun came round again, I said to myself well, I suppose the Old Man must be right.<sup>116</sup>

But then the conclusion of this experiment is no longer the Oldman's thesis but Goyi's:

I don't know what makes the world go round but I do know what goes round the world. It's wind. And I broke it loudly and felt better.<sup>117</sup>

Thus the study of Soyinka's art must necessarily examine the role of the artist in it. The vast symbolism and phantasmagoria of characters created are part of the collaborative process which goes on between the characters and the artist.

In this evaluation of Soyinka's development of the historic vision I have tried to show in plays like The Lion and the Jewel (1957), The Swamp Dwellers (1958), A Dance of the Forests (1960) that his conception of history has been well sketched out to the extent that it is re-enacted in the later plays like The Road (1965), Kongi's Harvest (1967), The Strong Breed (1964), Madmen and Specialists (1970), Death and the King's Horseman (1975), and in The Jero Plays. The technique which he employs to exemplify his beliefs will be discussed in Chapter Six, but it is necessary to understand that he maintains that the individual must possess a strong sense of historical awareness in order to liberate himself from the nightmare of history, or "soul-deadening habit." Indirectly Soyinka pegs the individual's floundering soul onto a philosophy of futility,<sup>118</sup> hence he enslaves his characters onto a deterministic and nihilistic vision of history. Important to his vision of history is the belief in the earth as the eternal rhizome,<sup>119</sup> the conviction that the iconoclastic individual, fulfills himself within the spiritual boundaries of his maternal world-view, the "African cultural matrix."

The type of play we have examined fits very conveniently within the tradition of modern plays written by Yeats and Synge. For instance, these plays are characterized by an extreme search for a perverse sense of novelty, or what Synge calls the wild and extravagant in reality, to the extent that the themes are very controversial within nationalist circles. In Clark's Song of a Goat a real goat is sacrificed on the stage. In his second play, The Masquerade, a father shoots and kills his daughter. In order to understand how shocking and perverse Clark's sense of originality had advanced, one must bear in mind that these plays were written in the late 1950's and the early 1960's when politicians and literary men, both from Africa and abroad,

did everything within their power to celebrate the untainted image of the African.

It will be an overstatement to say that this perverse sense of life is characteristic of Clark alone; we are already familiar with W.B. Yeats's The Countess Cathleen in which the heroine, a Catholic, sells her soul for gold in order to buy bread for the poor of Ireland. In Synge's The Playboy of the Western World, Christy Mahon splits his father's skull with a loy; in Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest and in Clark's Ozidi the main characters are served with a human skull on the stage. I have already cited the example of Bero, the specialist in Madmen and Specialists, who confesses openly to a priest that "Human flesh is delicious. Of course, not all the parts of the body. I prefer the balls myself." The Irish and African writers believe as Yeats did that "Belief comes from shock."<sup>120</sup> But this shock is created by deliberate acts of the artists to revive the grotesque and the macabre; these latter are already implicit in their individual cultural backgrounds -- folklore. One critic has suggested rightly that these novelties are owing to "the poet's obsession with technique."<sup>121</sup>

## Chapter 4

### Language and the Dramatic in Clark and Soyinka

I have examined three basic ideas of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory which are that all literature is national, and that the basis and meaning of literary nationalism is found in the inspiration which folk culture gives to literature, and finally that every writer who claims to be a nationalist usually begins by digging deeper into the folklore of his own country and draws his inspiration from the "accumulated beauty of the race."<sup>1</sup>

An important dimension of the ideas which proves the success or failure of the development of literary drama in the Ireland of Yeats and in the Nigeria of Clark and Soyinka is the question of language. Here, similarities arise not only from the circumstances inherited by the writers themselves but also from the approaches adopted by these writers. To begin with Ireland, in an essay entitled "The De-Anglicising of Ireland," Yeats asks:

Can we not build up a national tradition, a national literature, which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language?<sup>2</sup>

He then suggests,

When we remember the majesty of Cuchullin [sic] and the beauty of sorrowing Deirdre we should not forget that it is that majesty and that beauty which are immortal, and not the perishing tongue that first told of them.<sup>3</sup>

Soyinka also thinks that to the Yoruba tragic art "Language still is the embryo of thought and music where myth is daily companion, constantly mythopoeic." He concludes that "it is 'unmusical' to separate Yoruba musical form from myth and poetry. The nature of Yoruba music is intensely the nature of its language and poetry, highly charged, symbolic, myth-embryonic."<sup>4</sup> Here language is not what Yeats calls "the perishing tongue that first told of" things, but a return into the heart of being. Therefore, Yeats wanted a form of English that would be heightened by the beliefs, visions,

and symbolism drawn from the inner resources of Irish folk culture. He suggested that aspiring writers like Synge and Lady Gregory should work in these primitive modes so as to put into English that "which shall have an indefinable Irish quality of rhythm (sic) and style."<sup>5</sup> Yeats also wanted artists "who have made a subtle personal way of expressing themselves, instead of being content with English as it is understood in the newspapers."<sup>6</sup> This idea is accepted and reinforced by Lady Gregory who says that she was the first to use the peasant dialect with "belief in it."<sup>7</sup> In Nigeria J.P. Clark says,

...for the African writer in a European language  
...his best way to a new and genuine mode of expression seems to lie in a reliance upon the inner resources of language. These are images, figures of meaning and speech, which with expert handling can achieve for his art a kind of blood transfusion, reviving the English language by the living adaptable properties of some African language.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to know that the Irish and African writers are aware that these elemental modes of expression are already implicit in their backgrounds. Therefore, in the process of looking for the most apposite way of expression the artist discovers not only material but also equally important, a style.

Similarly, J.M. Synge in the Preface to The Playboy of the Western World represented the matter as basically a problem of style:

On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy, and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality?<sup>9</sup>

In order to understand what Synge means by reality, and "the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality," it may be convenient to examine his reaction to contemporaries like Yeats and George Moore. Even though Synge loathed the heroic and purely fantastic and Cuchulanoïd type of play written by Yeats, he dismissed what he called "the drivel of George Moore" arguing that "it is better to rave after the

sun and the moon as Yeats does than be as sane as a pedant." <sup>10</sup> Synge was opposed to the idea of separating realism from the imagination. In order to obtain the required fusion he had to use a form of language spoken by contemporary Irish peasants whose vocabulary was taken from Tudor England and its construction from Gaelic.

Synge explores two areas; first, the reality of Irish peasant life and, second, the embellishing of this reality with "the rich joy found only in what is superb" in the imagination of his own folk culture. By unifying reality with the folk imagination Synge creates an entirely new aspect of the modern in the drama, significantly absent in the cosmopolitan drama or what he calls "the intellectual modern drama."

In Nigeria the language issue is unquestionably handled in a way similar to that suggested by the Irish playwrights in defining their own position. Clark, for instance, starts his career by criticising the naturalistic style of representation in the modern drama, and his revulsion is shown in the attempt he makes in identifying a homogenous social order for his own plays. He writes:

Education and class-consciousness which pre-suppose and actually create levels of speech and language in European societies have, thank God, not done that havoc to the non-literate tongues like Ijaw. Style, imagery, etc., these are what tell one user of a language from another -- not grammar or class.... <sup>11</sup>

What Clark opposes then is the practice in modern naturalistic drama of separating "fidelity to facts" from the living imagination of the people; the latter is made up of imagery, proverbs, riddles, gestures, praise poetry, incantations, etc. Even though Clark says that the people in his plays are "ordinary Ijaw persons working out their life's tenure at particular points on the stage," <sup>12</sup> they happen also to be people living in a classless society. Clark argues that the revival and use of these archaic modes of expression as powerful implements with which "to till the interior being of a people with no literate means to stock memory" <sup>13</sup> is central to his own practice.

However, in Clark's case it so happens that the language which he employs in his drama is not the language of the people. Clark says that as a writer who employs a foreign language to represent the inner thoughts and emotions of his own people, he has been obliged to adopt the role of a letter-writer. Hence his "task" as a writer then has been to find "the verbal equivalent for his characters created in their original and native context," so as to "render the message" of his characters who are speaking in Ijaw "in an equivalent English," and he must do so in a way that "the actual flow, images and devices of speech used"<sup>14</sup> by them are recorded. In this particular instance,

The quest is not on the horizontal zone of dialect and stress which are classifications of geography, society, and education. It is on the vertical plane of what the school masters call style and register, that is, a matter of rhetoric, the artistic use and conscious exploitation of language for the purposes of persuasion and pleasure.<sup>15</sup>

Since the thoughts, aspirations, and anxieties expressed in Clark's plays are all concerned with the lives of the Ijaw people of Nigeria, he is primarily concerned with selection and organization of the most apposite expression. As he says, it is a matter of "style and register," of "conscious exploitation of language for purposes of persuasion and pleasure."<sup>16</sup>

Central to Clark's choice to revive and work in elemental and primitive modes is, as we have said, this revulsion from the "popular method exploited by the 'naturalists'." In practice, Clark turns away from what he calls "the new order of things, with differences of education and employment opportunities creating a variety of social classes among the polyglot populations ineluctably on the move today from the rural areas to the urban." To this new social order he ascribes two important moving forces -- politics and diplomacy; but to his rural communities he gives ritual and reproduction. Also central to Clark's choice and use of language is the problem of selection and craftsmanship: "language," he says, "has to be 'moulded'

by the artist with skill and consciousness." Like Synge, he emphasizes "the process of choice and formation which every artist undergoes consciously or subconsciously."<sup>17</sup>

The dramatic effectiveness of the language of Clark's plays, in general, depends on the consummate use of imagery culled directly from the delta region of the Niger River. The practice is demonstrated by the fascination Clark takes with the shifting life of the world, the movement of tides, moon, whirlpools, the sirens of steam boats going up and down the river; and by reflecting the true psychic state of the locality, the practice creates a strong feeling for the sense of place. Some samples from selected plays will show the basic trend in Clark's use of language.

In Song of a Goat the dramatic use of language to create a situation is handled very effectively. In the first movement of the play Ebiere is lying face up on a mat in a half-lit room, and the masseur is also "seated on a stool by her side and with hands arrested on her belly, has just made a discovery";

Masseur: Your womb

Is open and warm as a room.  
It ought to accommodate many,

Ebiere: Well, it seems like staying empty.

Masseur: An empty house, my daughter, is a thing  
Of danger. If men will not live in it  
Bats or grass will; and that is enough  
Signal for worse things to come in.

Ebiere: It is not my fault. I keep my house  
Open by night and day  
But my lord will not come in.

Masseur: Why? Who bars him?

Ebiere: I do not hinder him.

Masseur: My feet drag, but not so my wits;  
They are nimble as the lamb.

Ebiere: My house has its door open I said.

Masseur: I can see that. Too open I rather  
 Fear. Draught may set in any time  
 Now. Let the man enter and bring in his warmth.

Ebiere: Of course, I want his warmth.<sup>18</sup>

The effectiveness of the language in this scene derives from the fact that both "patient and doctor" revert to the use of what Clark calls "indirection" in order to avoid using direct sexual imagery.

Clark says:

I would like to draw attention to the use of another language device, that of indirection which features prominently in my own play Song of a Goat. That doctor and patient in that play do not approach the business on hand with the directness of an arrow does not mean the playwright is unappreciative of the importance of speed and despatch.<sup>19</sup>

Instead,

...it is a recognition by him of a living convention observed among the people of the community treated in the play, namely, that you do not rush in where angels fear to tread for the simple reason that the flying arrow either kills promptly or sends the bird in flight. Accordingly, delicate issues are handled delicately by these people. This approach is evident in their manner of negotiating marriage between one family and another, and of announcing the news of death to the persons most affected. Each subject is tackled by indirection.<sup>20</sup>

Here they tackle their problem by simply opposing womb, warm room, accomodate many, open house, and warmth with empty house, danger, bats or grass, and worse things to come. The dramatic situation establishes the following argument-- Ebiere's house (womb) is "warm as a room," signifying the fact that it can "accomodate many," but the optimism implied so far is nullified by her own words: "it seems like staying empty." The anxiety is then reinforced by the Masseur's conclusive but equally potentially frightful statement: "An empty house, my daughter, is a thing/Of danger. If men will not live in it/Bats or grass will, and that is enough/Signal, for worse things to come in."

Also the evocation of imagery drawn from nature reveals the way the Ijaw apprehend reality: nature does not stop to await human strategies, for where man fails nature usurps the place, and man tends to understand his situation better when he is made aware of the fact that one can not cause the cyclic flow of nature's rhythms to stagnate without causing a rupture elsewhere. The Masseur portrays the forces of natural law lurking beneath Ebiere's modesty and patience, and their forceful inevitability is anticipated in the form of possible disaster; should Zifa refuse to act in accordance with the Masseur's remedy:

Masseur: There is a way out I spoke to your wife  
 About only a little while ago.  
 But you yourself saw even now how the hen  
 All but blew down the house with the flutter  
 Of her wings. With the cock himself, the walls  
 May well give in and I am too old  
 To start raising green thatch for my grey hair.<sup>21</sup>

In the scene between Ebiere and the Masseur, therefore, the apprehensions of the masseur become more evident if it is recalled that they anticipate the theme of impotence and its effects on the husband and wife. The reality of Zifa's withdrawal from his wife is also anticipated by the suggestion that when a house is deserted for an indefinite period, "Batssor grass" may come in. Since in Act One of Clark's Ozidi suicide is represented as the act of tying the "immortal knot of bats," the evocation of the imagery of bats in the first scene of Song of a Goat anticipates Tonye's suicide at the end of the play.

I have already examined the historical significance of Zifa's house in section three of this study; but more important for the dramatic effectiveness of the dialogue in the "doctor and patient" scene is the social significance of the word house, for both man and wife. When Ebiere says that her "house has its doors open" she states a simple social practice; the house in this sense is Ebiere's own dwelling as distinct from Zifa's own house. Her argument runs as follows: since her husband noticed that he had become impotent he no longer frequented her house, in which case, the social relation endows the words, house,

womb, room, etc., with a sense of immediacy and significance that may not apply to the same word used for a community in which husband and wife usually live in the same house and share same rooms. The extent to which this explanation forms part of a critical statement is that it enables the reader or audience to center the lore of the people in the play and to see the emotional significance of the issues being dramatized and, last, because Clark's main problem is that of trying to communicate to two independent worlds it is necessary that the words must first be understood in the context of the way the Ijaw apprehend reality. For instance, later in the play, neighbours who have not so far been introduced on the stage make disparaging remarks about Zifa's desertion of his wife's house, a situation which may not arise in a society where husband and wife live in the same house. Another consideration of the importance of the language for an understanding of the psychology of the play is the fact that Zifa accuses his younger brother Tonye of usurping his bed. Zifa says: "there he was sprawled on/My bed when I thought he was still out/Inspecting hooks."<sup>22</sup> There is, however, sufficient evidence to sustain the argument that since Zifa is a fisherman and part time pilot he will necessarily spend most of his time fishing or piloting. But this does not tackle the main issues concerning the psychology of the play. The Tonye of Song of a Goat is introduced as a boy and he continues to be so to the end of the play. He is therefore incapable of initiating a tragedy based on the passion of love for his elder brother's wife. During the actual seduction scene Tonye describes Ebiere's "desperate" effort to seduce him in the following words: "you are mad, so gone far/Leaves ~~gathering,~~"<sup>23</sup> and the fact that Ebiere repeats Tonye's words demonstrates that the play is concerned with the problem of survival.

The language of the play reveals that the "boy," Tonye, is initiated into his manhood by Ebiere. The argument is supported by Zifa's statement that now "she stands/Guard over him in my bed against me."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the neighbours murmur that they "say he doesn't go in/To her any more."<sup>25</sup> The language of the first movement establishes the premise that unless there is a tangible reason to support physical incapacity a man's with-

drawal from his wife's house amounts to desertion. This assumption characterizes the Masseur's thoughts:

Masseur: Has he a house elsewhere?

Ebiere: No.

Masseur: Well, he is not crippled in anyway?

So you turn your face to the wall. That is  
The sign of death, my daughter.<sup>26</sup>

If Zifa does not keep a second wife then he must be "crippled," and Ebiere recoils at the mere mention of the word; her reaction is communicated to us by the Masseur: "So you turn your face to the wall." Since the Masseur who is interrogating Ebiere is himself physically crippled the combined use of language, gesture, and symbol is dramatically effective. Therefore, the "doctor" interprets the woman's reaction to signify "death," which is introduced as a contrast to the symbols of fertility evoked at the beginning of the play. The word "death" also reinforces the Masseur's original apprehensions that "Bats or grass" are likely to usurp a deserted house; the word also anticipates Zifa's lament at the end of the play with respect to the fall of their house "into a stage/Of disrepair."<sup>27</sup>

Even though Clark's language creates effective dramatic situations, it tends, however, to depend largely on the knowledge of the reader of the lore of the community. Characters are not perceived as actors on a stage instead Clark leaves them completely immersed in the society outside of the stage. The point I am making is that indirection is neither allusion nor parody; hence the world outside of the stage is introduced through connotation rather than through any of the dramatic methods employed by a playwright like Soyinka (below).

However, there are instances when the dialogue evolves from the strength exerted by strategic words. For instance in the "doctor and patient" scene, Ebiere has been holding down her anxiety until the "doctor" mentions the word "death" at which moment the power within her has become so overtly manifest that she can no longer contain it.

Ebiere: Oh, how I wish I'd die, to end all  
This shame, all this showing of neighbours my  
Fatness when my flesh is famished!

Masseur: This is terrible, my daughter, nobody  
Must hear of it. To think that a stout staff  
Is there for you to hold to for support.

Ebiere: It isn't there, it isn't there at all.  
For all its stoutness and size.  
There isn't just a pith to the stout staff.<sup>28</sup>

Ebiere's repetition of "all/This shame, all this showing of neighbours my/Fatness when my flesh is famished," with emphasis being placed on the alliteration in "fatness...flesh...famish" demonstrates that not only is she exasperated but her situation is actually a desperate one. Her desperation is enacted in the final repetition of "It isn't there, it isn't there at all," and then "there isn't just a pith to the stout staff." Part of Ebiere's shame is that in spite of her fatness she has not been able to prove to the neighbours that her feminine suppleness can be productive. In this way Clark is able to introduce the censorious outside world on the stage through the dramatic perception of action. Hence, when one of the neighbours thinks that Ebiere "certainly looks stiff for all her fatness,"<sup>29</sup> the observation helps, dramatically, to win the reader's support for Ebiere, in a society where as the Masseur says people fatten their "maidens to prepare for fruition/Not to thwart them."<sup>30</sup> Ebiere's restlessness is justified on the grounds that in a society where feminine suppleness is synonymous with life and fertility her exasperation is caused by the fact that she has been frustrated and that she may no longer be able to contribute to the achievement expected of supple women in her society. Here if a woman's being supple is no indication that she is pregnant, it loses the feminine touch and becomes a thing of "showing," a form of perversion, emptiness and negation of life.

The dialogue which follows this discovery is a play on the words "stout staff" and "pith," again reinforcing Ebiere's plight, and in particular, for the interest of the crippled Masseur. Ebiere says

there "isn't just a pith to the stout staff," her declaration is made dramatically more effective because it is spoken to a half-man, the cripple, who more than anyone else understands the importance of a stout staff. Similarly, since Ebiere is being interrogated by a cripple who is also the symbolic representation of her husband's impotence, Ebiere is a character who knows her fate, and this knowledge explains why her anxiety is so intense. Hers is not a passion for love but one of survival. The woman says: "I who have suffered neglect and/Gathered mould like a thing of sacrifice/Left out in sun and rain at the cross-roads...what/Short temper have I when it is pulled and/Tugged at daily like a hook-line?"<sup>31</sup>

At the beginning of the third movement in Song of a Goat, "Ebiere is bathing Dode on the Verandah. A little away sits Tonve, working on FLOats for nets and hook lines, she smacks Dode on the head, Tonve protests";

Tonye: That's enough; we don't allow our children  
To be knocked on the head like that.

Ebiere: Don't you lecture me on how to beat my child.  
What do you know of child-rearing anyway?

Tonye: Enough to know that knocking a child on  
The head like that makes him prone  
To attacks from small-pox. We simply forbid  
It in the family. You may smack  
Him on the backside if you please  
But do not beat the boy on the head.<sup>32</sup>

In trying to assert his authority as a member of "the family" which excludes Ebiere, Tonye blundered; first, when he asserts to his brother's wife that "we do not allow our children/To be knocked on the head like that," he affirmed, without knowing it, the Masseur's argument early in the play that children belong to the group. The "we-ness" of Tonye's assertion ironically reminds the restless Ebiere of what the Masseur had proposed to her, that the families of Zifa and Ebiere should arrange and make it possible for Tonye to assume his brother's sexual duties, a proposition which both husband and wife had turned down. However, in

the scene quoted above Tonye reminds Ebiere and she begins to see possibilities of actually accepting him as a man (and as yet Tonye has not grasped the implication of the words he used). Tonye is awakened to the aggressive aspect of her response to him and in deference to it offers what amounts to an absurd reduction of the argument; that smacking children on the head makes them prone to attacks from small-pox may be a good way of digressing into folk belief but that simply does not interest Ebiere, whose instincts have been awakened to the reality of her position:

Ebiere: I can well see you people care for children  
A great deal.

Tonye: Yes, we do.<sup>33</sup>

Tonye's automatic repetition of "Yes, we do" compounds his ignorance to the extent that at this point, he is the symbolic sacrificial goat which is being led to the slaughter. Ebiere takes advantage of two aspects of Tonye's character, first, his naivete and his physical attraction-- Tonye is a local champion wrestler. Since Tonye lacks the sophisticated and rhetorical way of using words, Ebiere proves her superiority in this art (already tested in the "doctor and patient" scene) by leading Tonye to the event which he begins to evade.

Tonye: I said, Ebiere, I'm not your husband.

Ebiere: Well, aren't you? Since you know his duties better  
Than he does, why don't you take them up? If you  
Don't, I should laugh your whole race to scorn.<sup>34</sup>

Tonye's clumsiness in the sophisticated way of speaking is supported by the fact that he is represented as the champion wrestler, the man of action. The seduction scene is represented by having Ebiere evoke Tonye's wrestling instinct, but more important is the fact that the dialogue between Tonye and Ebiere revolves around words like "we" and "race" but Tonye's declaration that "I'm not your husband" reveals his own inability to find adequate words with which to beat back Ebiere. On the other hand, Ebiere emphasizes the fact that Tonye had originally suggested that she was the outsider in the family. Thus, had Tonye's

knowledge of what "a wife would want/In the world"<sup>35</sup> been less limiting he might have avoided his blunders (but he was never meant to). The language of the seduction scene reveals that to the less sophisticated of the community, those whose knowledge of the world is not as far-reaching as that of the more sophisticated, words can become snares. Even though Clark's language is used in a classless society a certain degree of sophistication and actual orientation is required for persons who happen to live even in the same household to be able to communicate; especially because people do not just say things but they make an effort to say them in a way to reveal their own apprehension of reality; therefore, it necessarily follows that in a society where hierarchy is respected the dialogue between a married woman and a boy must necessarily leave the boy the weaker and the loser. For example, in the dialogue between Ebiere and Tonye, she asks:

If I saw  
My period and stayed indoors and cooked  
For you and your big brother, that would  
Be irregular by all standards  
And practice, wouldn't it -- you that are so correct  
And proper you know all these things?<sup>36</sup>

One's stock of linguistic resources is determined by his knowledge of the world, and in spite of the classless nature of society, people are not born already equipped with an image-laden consciousness. Hence language can and does become a way of unifying just as it can easily turn into a tool for dividing and actually destroying society.

It has been argued that the society which Clark depicts in Song of a Goat is "alien," but as one critic has pointed out,

Clark's plays are, in a sense, a departure from the themes of contemporary African plays. There is none of the familiar conflicts between "the old" and "the new," no historical content or remembered legend, and no contemporary satire. Although J.P. Clark is essentially concerned with man's relationship to his world, what baffles many people is that this world appears remote from contemporary realities, a world inhabited by a people who adhere to an heroic code apparently long since forgotten

and in which tradition is law unto itself.

"Where are the chiefs, the lawyers, the teachers, the policemen?" is a question often asked....But if the society he depicts is alien, the reason is that he has concentrated on his own home area, the Ijaw territory of midwestern Nigeria, remote enough to Ibadan play goers....<sup>37</sup>

Even though Clark elected to work in archaic modes and to exploit habits and beliefs of an archaic community, like Synge, he is "no mere realist," to use Yeats's phrase. He recoiled from the thought of writing commercial plays which will "appeal to a group of emotions which for some reason or other are fashionable." Archaism, in Clark, Yeats, and Synge is an asset and it accounts for the absence of barristers, clerks, "traditional characters who exist," says Yeats, "in the world of imagination to suffer the wrongs the humanitarians heap upon them." Instead of elaborating on "topical interests" Clark expressed, as did Synge and Yeats before him, "the inner life of the emotions."<sup>38</sup> The retreat of Yeats, Synge, and Clark into the Irish and Ijaw rural communities gave them "time to experiment" and to create a new kind of awareness. Therefore, the fact that Clark was "never tempted to copy some popular favourite"<sup>39</sup> gave him the opportunities to work in unfamiliar modes; he was able thereby to escape the language, anxieties, and habits of the urban centres.

The dramatic effectiveness of Clark's verse owes a great deal to the fact that the dialogue usually revolves round a number of central images until the potentialities of the symbols have been exhausted, then a new set of central metaphors is introduced and its range explored ~~in~~ such a way that each character usually takes off from where the other had stopped. And to most of the characters the tendency is to select images from areas that affect their immediate concerns; hence language serves as a means of exploring, discovering significance, and actually of eliciting through imagery and metaphor the universe which they know. And since no attempt is made to introduce gestures, words,

images, and modes of thought that do not affect the characters directly, the connotation of most imagery and linguistic resources is partially exclusive to the "corporate audience."<sup>40</sup>

The image of the hunter and fisherman, for instance, dominates the structure of The Masquerade, revealing at once the ambitions of Tufa to marry Titi, and the possessiveness of Diribi, his unwillingness to release his daughter. The main characters in The Masquerade, Tufa and Diribi, look at each other as hunter or the hunted, or the baited. The neighbours in the play compare themselves to hunting dogs, while they also represent Tufa as the "young dashing stranger" who is about to carry away "the girl off to other creeks." During a brief retreat into the bush in the early part of the play by Tufa and Titi, the couple engage in enacting the hunter-hunted motif. Titi sees Tufa as the spear which will "dart out.../To possess the goal." Then she also taunts Tufa with the words, "He is no true hunter/If wattle or wood prove such barrier."<sup>41</sup> Then Tufa begins to look at Titi as a bird caged by her father, Diribi.

The rivalry between Diribi and Tufa, which forms a sub-plot in the play, is caused by the meaning both men attach to their roles as hunters at various points in the play. Quite early in the play, Tufa promises the girl that he will readily catch and retain her, assuring her that as a hunter he is capable of catching and keeping her. Her response is phrased in words that anticipate problems which will lead to the tragedy at the end of the play. She asks: "And what if some wild wind sweep the prize/Out of reach, or the lopp's tangle among/The woods?" But when Tufa manages to grab her she only sees the figure of her father, the old hunter: "Brute, you brute. Oh my father," and as she explains, her father is "himself a great hunter."<sup>42</sup>

In the final movement of the play when the girl has been shot and killed by her own father, the great hunter, the actual physical hunt between Tufa and Diribi for each other begins.

Third Priest: Some say Diribi has taken to the bush. So  
Overcome is he now by this terrible  
Act.

First Priest: Not if I know him well. He is  
Not the type to seek comfort among dwellers  
Of the forest. He hunts them all down. What  
Will he be doing among monkeys, who  
Single-handed has scalped several leopards?

Second Priest: He certainly has made many kills. Why,  
To kill his own daughter, and a bride all aglow  
With the cam too.<sup>43</sup>

The final encounter and confrontation between Tufa and Diribi leaves Tufa wounded by Diribi's gun. At this point in the play Tufa's words reveal that Diribi has been the better hunter, though in an ironic way:

The great hunter has made another kill!  
What, aren't you giving the great yell for a quarry  
Harried home? Your very last who should have been the first!<sup>44</sup>

By using a single image Clark unifies contradictory motives and by so doing Clark is able to keep his "characters bound together as far as possible in one mood,"<sup>45</sup> a practice which conforms with his own definition of the drama as "the physical representation or evocation of one poetic image or a complex of such images."<sup>46</sup> significant to a people.

In another context Clark's imagery also serves as an index of characterization. For instance, Diribi is the kind of hunter who "hunts them all" and has actually "scalped several leopards." Similarly, changes in characterization are effected merely by a change of the kind of imagery the character uses. After the information concerning Tufa's background has been made known to the Diribi family, the impact on the character of Diribi and this wife is visibly displayed. Prior to the revelation, Titi had always been their "pét," but after they heard the news concerning Tufa's dubious background, when Diribi knows that his fortune has changed, his attitude to his daughter also undergoes a change. Titi becomes the "witch and bitch," Tufa is referred to as a "mongrel." This change in Diribi's character parallels the moral disintegration of his personality. He says to Umuko and the women of the house:

Diribi: Woman, where is she then? Tell these good people  
 Where your virgin daughter is now, but  
 Somewhere mating, already stuck hind to hind  
 With that cur without pedigree.

Women of the House: Master, you are lashed by forces fit  
 To confound forests. But you are no simple  
 Reed, and therefore should ride this tide.<sup>47</sup>

Diribi's determination to "cleanse/The stream of corruption," is symbolically represented as an indefinite destructive force "fit/To confound forests," a hubristic element in his character which drives him to the extent that he destroys his own daughter. A similar change in character is revealed in the language of Titi's mother, Umuko. She dismisses the whole arrangement regarding Tufa and Titi's future marriage as "vomit" inflicted on "all that is divine and decent," and as a final act of denigration, she spits in the face of her would-be son-in-law, Tufa. Here, language and gesture are employed as a way of expressing Umuko's disgust with the abnormality of the whole situation. Essentially, the case which Umuko makes against the young couple is a moral one, more so because she believes that decency is a socially extensive fact. The following display reveals her moral conviction; she is addressing Tufa:

Do you think people just  
 Live on good looks and smart display?

She then answers the question by enumerating all the details involved in a marriage:

Where, if you had succeeded in your scheme  
 Would you have taken your bride? My daughter  
 Was brought up on a sound family  
 Structure, the most solid in all the Delta.  
 Pray, what mother have you  
 To fan her welcome, sing her beauties? Indeed  
 Have you the mother or sister to  
 Offer her home for the triple moon  
 Before the bride moves to her own household?  
 And what father-in-law had you in store  
 To shower my daughter with gifts that are  
 More than her due, the piece of land to farm,  
 Not to talk of the umbrella for wife

And grand children to take shelter in,  
 When owls beat the air? Yes,  
 Tell me, young husband without a broom  
 To his stock! (she claps hands in his face.)<sup>48</sup>

Not only is language and gesture dramatically effective it also leads us into the future.-- the realization that at one moment in the individual life the scavengers of time, symbolized by "owls," will "beat the air" and that at such times when nature asserts its superiority over the fragile existence of the individual life, only "a sound family/Structure" can offer any visionary hopes to the adult and aging world. The adult world and that of the ancestors transcend the capricious nature of time by placing their hopes in grandchildren. This knowledge compels Umuko to reject Tufa in the final reference to a "young husband without a broom/To his stock!"

The situation becomes more painful for Tufa if it is recalled that his future had been frustrated by events that predate his coming into the world (the tragedy in Song of a Goat). In Song of a Goat an Ijaw fisherman, Zifa, loses his potency and knowing that hopes of further procreation are not there he loses his will to live. The cause of his impotence is explained in this manner: Zifa's father died a "bad death," that is he was killed by an attack of leprosy. Tradition demanded that the corpse be interred in an evil grove, a ritual burial interment which the Zifa family performed. But for some unexplained reason Zifa hurriedly performed another ritual of retrieval by bringing his father's body back into the city, thereby thinking that he was performing an honourable act on behalf of the dead. As a reward for this action Zifa was stricken with impotence. The tragedy of the house of Zifa is caused by a combination of natural and human forces. At the end of Song of a Goat Tufa's father and his uncle destroy themselves. Tufa himself is actually the child of Ebiere and Tonye, therefore carries with him the curse of the family. This is the basis of the tragedy in The Masquerade. Thus each character in Clark selects his own language, the aim sometimes being to convey a thought, an attitude, or even to describe an event

that occurred off stage. The incident of the shooting of Titi is described by one of the priests in the following words:

The bride who was deep in the marble game  
 With her maids, had Umuko's new boy  
 Across her laps, when the storm burst: With a bound  
 She was up running, kneeling, presenting the baby  
 As a shield although clutching it back  
 From harm and all this in one motion --  
 Do forgive my running nose.<sup>49</sup>

When the priest says, "Do forgive my running nose," the gesture passes judgement against Diribi. The language of the play suggests that conventions had a great deal to do with the determination of the tragic, much more than the plot. For instance, does the fact that an angry father shoots and kills his daughter constitute a tragedy? Similarly, the wounding of Tufa at the end of the play is an accident rather than a tragedy. Indeed, the basis and meaning of tragedy in the plays of Clark must be sought not entirely in the plot but also, and more importantly, in the evocation of imagery. For example, one of the priests reveals that Titi's death is a waste:

Third Priest: Indeed, see with what heart she took  
 Her terrible fate when at last she knew  
 Her father would give in to nothing. Even  
 The trout that takes the bait more than often leads  
 The angler out of step. And when it does  
 In the long run swallow the worm, dies shining  
 In the slime. But what could this gazelle of a girl, so  
 Abruptly invested with the weedooof death,  
 Just when she was gathering her skirts of cam  
 To mount her bridal bed?<sup>50</sup>

The final question might have been asked about the Deirdre of Yeats and Synge, as in Clark's case when the girl gathers "her skirt of cam/To mount her bridal bed" she confronts her fate, and like the life-seeking trout she "dies shining/In her slime." Like Deidre of the Sorrows, Titi is the kind of beautiful woman who is "invested with the weeds of death," here symbolized by the skirts of cam. The tragedy is caused by this awareness that in nature the benign and the malign co-exist, and Clark obtains his tragic effect by evoking the two types of imagery.

Thus, Tufa's tragedy is presented as a disaster encountered by a young fisherman at sea:

Put out the nets, oh, put them out  
 To dry! And may the wildwindi and sun  
 Crackle and tangle  
 Them, float, lead and thread, till tides end.  
 The season is out. Because the tide  
 Has all of a sudden turned on us while  
 Others stayed out of sea, the nets we cast  
 With pride over shoals sure as shallows  
 Have had the floors cut from under them, and  
 The prime shark we set out to catch has got  
 Clean away, filtered right through and left  
 Us dangling adrift like star-fish all  
 Superflous of feet. So up we come without  
 A shrimp-drop of fat to stop hobs at home  
 From crack.<sup>51</sup>

Clark obtains his effects here by simply foregrounding imagery drawn from an area directly connected with a young fisherman's life. As a boy who has been born and brought up in the creeks Tufa definitely conveys his message to the world, which understands that one

can no more have the greater poetry without a nation than religion without symbols. One can only reach out to the universe with a gloved hand--that glove is one's nation, the only thing one knows even a little of.<sup>52</sup>

Because characters resort to the use of linguistic resources that pertain to and express an experience or social vision of a local community, and by trying always to communicate the deeper concerns of the community, this fixing of what Synge calls the "psychic state of the locality,"<sup>53</sup> gives rise to the evolution of the so-called sense of place. The fact that Clark's drama aspires for and actually creates an Ijaw world view constitutes a linguistic deviation from the main tradition of English poetic drama written in the context of the Judaeo-Christian tradition from which much of English verse drama has taken its power.

Clark's dramatic language is modern not in the sense of the modernism of a Bernard Shaw, an Ibsen (of the English translations),

not even of T.S. Eliot's poetic drama, but in the context of the "poetical" plays of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory. We find that only the Irish playwrights retreated from the main trend of modern drama and produced a drama whose language aspired to create an independent world view radically different from the cosmopolitan world.

Clark's use of recurrent nature symbols and imagery is similar to that of the Irish writers -- even though Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory wrote for the Abbey Theatre, they exploited beliefs and attitudes pertaining to very different communities. These basic and internal differences are revealed by the nature of symbols and imagery which they use. S.B. Bushrui observes Yeats's use of "recurrent images throughout Deirdre, the most obvious example being the hunting imagery, which symbolizes all the expectations, tensions, and struggle the theme presents." At the end of the action, Conchubar's purpose is revealed by Naoise's evocation of the image of the hunter:

A prudent hunter, therefore, but no king.  
 He'd find if what has fallen in the pit  
 Were worth the hunting, but has come too near,  
 And I turn hunter. You're not man, but beast.  
 Go scurry in the bushes, now, beast, beast.  
 For now it's topsy-turvy, I upon you.<sup>54</sup>

It is tempting to make a contrast between Yeats's use of the hunter-hunted image in Deirdre and Clark's use of hunter-fisherman image in The Masquerade, but the important thing is that both dramatists are working in modes and exploiting attitudes and beliefs pertaining to a homogenous, archaic society. In either case, the protagonists are contestants.

In Synge's The Shadow of the Glen the characters are made constantly aware of the "mist rolling down the bog" and "broken trees were left from the great storm, and the streams roaring with the rain."<sup>55</sup> In fact, in Deirdre of the Sorrows, the thunder storm symbolizes defiance and destruction as well. The symbol of the storm reflects the anxiety, conflict, and destruction dramatised in the play. The high king himself, Conchubar, says that a "night with thunder" is not safe

"to be abroad." Yet, ironically Conchubor also represents the "lightning" which will eventually "sing" Deirdre's beauty.<sup>56</sup> Since Naisi and his brothers are hunters they are the main antagonists in the contest for Deirdre.

The originality of the plays of the Irish dramatists and Clark's springs from the conviction that by excluding what Yeats calls topical interests<sup>57</sup> and by working in local terms they discover the main driving forces in their own backgrounds. One other effect on their style, for retreating into their own societies, is that they tend to emphasize what one critic calls the pagan element. In Synge's The Tinker's Wedding and The Well of the Saints, by disregarding practices like weddings and the use of holy water, they turn inward. In the first play a tinker, Michael and his wife, Sarah Casey, ~~have lived together~~ for sometime, decide to approach a local priest to marry them. A wedding, Sarah Casey hopes, may save her from becoming "an old drinking heathen"<sup>58</sup> like her mother-in-law, Mary Byrne. Indirectly, she wishes to escape the uncertainty and risks involved in surrendering herself to the cosmos by living a life of pagan self-abandon. The priest agrees to marry them on the condition that the young couple pays him an agreed price of ten shillings and a tin can.

But Mary Byrne, the "old flagrant heathen," with her excessive "godless talk"<sup>59</sup> steals the tin can, sells it in order to procure more drinks for herself. Mary Byrne's argument is that a wedding cannot save a beautiful woman from the vagaries of time. She asks Michael, the tinker, "And you're thinking it's paying gold to his reverence would make a woman stop when she's a mind to go?" And to Sarah Casey she asks:

Is it putting that ring on your finger will  
keep you from getting an aged woman and losing  
the fine face you have, or beessing your pains,  
when it's the grand ladies do be married in silk  
dresses, with rings of gold, that do pass any  
woman with their share of torment in the hour  
of birth, and do be paying the doctors in the  
city of Dublin a great price at that time, the  
like of what you'd pay for a good ass and a cart?<sup>60</sup>

Mary Byrne chooses the eternity of cosmic growth, decay, and destruction. This awareness came to her because she had "a great knowledge and a great sight into the world."<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, the young tinker woman and the priest "seem to believe that the mere performance of some ritual is enough"<sup>62</sup> to prevent her from becoming a heathen like Mary Byrnes. This return to primitive passions forms a dominant motif in the plays of the Irish writers and Clark's plays discussed above. These effects are obtained by a conscious exploitation of the "living speech" of the local peoples. Even though the "divinity that shapes" the ends of the people in Clark's dramatic world might lack "a sense of humour," the "beauty and aptness of his imagery"<sup>63</sup> compensate for everything. Professor Una Maclean, who was at Ibadan during the early 1960's, with respect to Clark's achievement in the shorter plays, says:

To write tragedy without merging into melodrama, to write poetry without descending into doggerel, to juggle symbols without dropping the ball, and require a very considerable skill and a sureness of touch which no one would expect from an author at his first attempt.<sup>64</sup>

Wole Soyinka is a good example of the playwright who combines imaginative inventiveness with reflection and makes it a dominant pattern in his theatre. The dramatic effectiveness of his language, the quality that distinguishes Soyinka's style from Clark's, is not a sense of place; instead what distinguishes Soyinka's style is that particular quality of the modern naturalistic style in the drama which Eric Bentley in another context describes as "a clear grasp of psychology and idea, ...urbanity and pace, ...colloquial tone and realistic" appearance, which makes character and the dramatic situation to fall within a basic "framework of more or less logical appearances."<sup>65</sup> Soyinka perceives his characters not in their social environment but as actors on the stage in virtual movement, and the problem of language is left to the improvisation of the characters themselves.

A second consideration of Soyinka's dramatic use of language concerns his preoccupation with the way people apprehend their own world

"in its full complexity, also through its contemporary progression and distortion."<sup>66</sup> Soyinka's subject is the Yoruba mind (not an environment) as it relates to contemporary history, myth, and legend; how the metaphysics of the Yoruba world are reflected in the Yoruba contemporary psyche.<sup>67</sup> According to Soyinka, art is the "encapsulation"<sup>68</sup> of the artist's apprehension of this metaphysical world.

Even though the settings of his plays may be less precise than is the case with the settings of the plays of Clark, Soyinka's drama unmistakably takes its power from visions and aspirations of the contemporary Yoruba. He says:

Man exists, however, in a comprehensive world of myth, history and mores; in such a total context, the African world, like any other 'world' is unique. It possesses, however, in common with other cultures, the virtues of complementarity.<sup>69</sup>

Soyinka's first premise is that the African world is an active one, and nowhere do we find this capacity to absorb "every new experience,"<sup>70</sup> more than in his dramatic language.

There are similarities and also differences of approach between Soyinka and Clark; some of which shall be discussed in chapters five and six. Basically both men acknowledge the gifts which their African background gives them: a living folklore and a living speech. But Soyinka further recognizes that besides myth and folklore, history and the mores of human society also constitute a social order for the artists to exploit. Essentially, Soyinka recognizes the historical (traditional) role of the artist in society, and this fact is also central to his own idea of cultural continuity. The result is that he works in archaic modes, exploits rural life as well as embraces the beliefs, anxieties, and habits of the "social classes among the polyglot populations"<sup>71</sup> of the urban society. These points shall be clarified presently but we should start with the "pastoral" scene of The Swamp Dwellers.

The Swamp Dwellers enacts the plight of a peasant family situated in the Niger Delta. In spite of the setting of the play the action

recreates the world which lies outside the swamps. For instance, Awuchike, Igwezu's twin brother "got sick of this place and went into the city."<sup>72</sup> Igwezu, in response to a similar impulse, joined his brother in the city, as Makuri says:

All the young men go into the big town to try their hand at making money...only some of them remember their folk and send word once in a while.<sup>73</sup>

But when Igwezu returns from the city as a defeated man, he makes it possible for the peasants to become involved in the anxiety of contemporary life. This way of intermingling the two worlds is further demonstrated by the number of articles in "the family workshop" of Makuri.

On a small table against the right wall is a meagre row of hairdressing equipment -- a pair of clippers, scissors, local combs, lather basin and brush, razor -- not much else.<sup>74</sup>

Makuri also owns "a barber's swivel chair, a very ancient one." Even though the characters happen to be peasants they happen not to have been totally alienated from contemporary life.

Similarly the introduction of the blind Beggar from the north of the country introduces an additional element in the language of the play. He tells his host and hostess the story of his journey southwards, of disasters in his own home town, and then the return of the rains and the interest in life which the end of the lengthy period of drought revived in the people of Bukanji:

now...we could smell the sweetness of lemon leaves, and the feel of the fronds of desert palm was a happiness which we had never known....We loved the sound of a man's passing footsteps, as if the rustle of his breath it was that gave life to the sprouting wonder around us. We even forgot to beg, and lived on the marvel of this new birth of the land, and the rich smell of its goodness....But it turned out to have been an act of spite. The feast was not meant for us -- but for the locusts.<sup>75</sup>

The narrator is blind and through his intuitive response to the world he also indirectly invites his listeners to enter in the world of smell and feeling but he soon releases them from there with the final, "it turned out to have been an act of spite. The feast was not meant for us--but for the locusts." Later on in the play the Beggar's interest to create and mould life arises from some knowledge of this kind, "let there be water," he urges, "because I am sick of the dryness."<sup>76</sup> At this point he assumes the role of a priest and creator-god, because when he notices Igwezu's anger he reassures him that life "will thrive again."<sup>77</sup>

Even though the Beggar has witnessed disaster and failure in his own hometown his intuition of life, enacted in the passage quoted above, enables him to believe in the regenerative wisdom of earth. On the other hand, Igwezu, the ironist, looks at the failure of the harvest with an attitude of disillusionment. He says:

It was never in my mind...the thought that the farm could betray me so totally, that it could drive the final wedge into this growing loss of touch....<sup>78</sup>

In Soyinka's symbolism "Harvests" as represented in Idanre signifies earth's forgiveness.<sup>79</sup> In spite of Igwezu's bitterness, the blind Beggar assures him that the world "will thrive again." But being the Atunda type of character, the evolutionary essence (Igwezu is represented as the "Slayer of serpents"), he chooses to retreat from the scene of action; he says: "I must not be here when the people call for blood" but Igwezu's retreat is meant to stand in counterpoint to primal innocence, because as he says, "Only the children and the old stay here....Only the innocent and the dotards."<sup>80</sup> The dramatic effectiveness of the language of The Swamp Dwellers is obtained by simply opposing interests; aspirations, visions, and world views.

Dialogue in The Lion and the Jewel is based on a similar opposition; especially in the scenes between Lakunle and Sidi:

Lakunle: No. I have told you not to carry loads  
 On your head. But you are as stubborn  
 As an illiterate goat. It is bad for the spine.  
 And it shortens your neck, so that very soon  
 You will have no neck at all. Do you wish to look  
 Squashed like my pupil's drawings?

Sidi: Why should that worry me? Haven't you sworn  
 That my looks do not affect your love?  
 Yesterday, dragging your knees in the dust  
 You said, Sidi, if you were crooked or fat  
 And your skin was scaly like a...

Lakunle: Stop!

Sidi: I only repeat what you said.<sup>81</sup>

A cursory examination of the dialogue between Lakunle and Sidi shows that the language dramatizes not only two opposing attitudes to the world but also two types of aesthetics. Lakunle insists that a wife must be slim not "crooked or fat," and that she should not be an "illiterate goat." Similarly Sidi's criticism of Lakunle's language stems from the assumption that literate people are apt to be pompous. She calls Lakunle the "madman/Of Ilunjinle, who calls himself a teacher," and uses "big words" which make "no meaning." She says:

You talk and talk and deafen me  
 With words which sound the same  
 And make no meaning.  
 I've told you, and I say it again  
 I shall marry you today, next week  
 Or any day you name.  
 But my bride-price must be paid.<sup>82</sup>

The repetition of "You talk and talk and deafen me" reinforces the point Sidi wishes to make; that Lakunle's conception of what makes a wife is totally alien to the spirit of Sidi's community. This alienation of Lakunle is confirmed by the last statement made by Sidi, "my bride-price must be paid."

However, in the scene described as Night Sidi encounters the ranting widow, Sadiku. Here, both women are drawn together, in the language of Professor in The Road, "on a wave of sympathy."<sup>83</sup> Sadiku whispers to Sidi that the Bale (the chief of the village) has lost his sexual powers

and that it was she, symbol of eternal woman, who caused it. Upon hearing the news Sidi "leaps in the air" and proclaims "Hurray for womankind."<sup>84</sup> Similarly, the dialogue between the Bale and Sidi is worked out on a similar wave of common or shared sympathies. As Sidi listens intently; Baroka, the Bale insinuates that he had "scattered kindness"<sup>85</sup> among other women:

Baroka: The old must flow into the new, Sidi,  
Not blend itself or stand foolishly  
Apart. A girl like you must inherit  
Miracles which age alone reveals.  
Is this not so?

Sidi: Everything you say, Bale,  
Seems wise to me.

Baroka: Yesterday's wine alone is strong and blooded, child,  
And though the christian's holy book denies  
The truth of this, old wine thrives best  
Within a new bottle. The coarseness  
Is mellowed down, and the rugged wine  
Acquires a full and rounded body...  
Is this not so-- my child?  
(Quite overcome, Sidi nods.)

Baroka: Those who know little of Baroka think  
His life one pleasure-living course  
But the monkey sweats, my child,  
The monkey sweats,  
It is only the hair upon his back  
Which still deceives the world...  
(Sidi's head falls slowly on the Bale's shoulder.)<sup>86</sup>

Baroka's selection of images and allusions from Sidi's world wins her sympathies for him; hence she yields to the Bale as much as she yields to the vision of the world defined by him. In the world of Baroka, Sidi, and Sadike, Lakunle hovers on its fringes as the "young sprig of foreign wisdom."<sup>87</sup> In the end, the women celebrate the Bale's victory because his vision coincides with their vision of womankind in that society.

In these two "mock-pastoral" plays Soyinka's choice to work in archaic modes and to exploit attitudes of rural communities is not entirely absolute; contemporary events still impinge upon the lives

of his peasants, other people's tragedies also become part of the experience of his own people. We have noted the examples of Igwezu and the Blind Beggar in The Swamp Dwellers, Lakunle and the Bale who use their knowledge of European fashions and the Bible to reinforce their arguments. One critic observes rightly that even though the "somewhat portentous and sagging prose of The Swamp Dwellers" may be difficult for an audience whose command of English is not as far-reaching as that of the author, yet the "biblical language in which the blind beggar describes his people's struggle with the soil is... not used out of literary pretentiousness; it serves to link their fate with that of all who have tried to sow the desert. It is particularly effective with a Nigerian audience which may not respond so readily to the play's other overtones of language."<sup>88</sup> Similarly the "longueurs" of The Swamp Dwellers give place in The Lion and the Jewel to "a frisking free verse."<sup>89</sup> Not only does Soyinka show the sense of development in his use of language, but also in his treatment of social relations; his symbols cohere with this themes in the latter play.

In A Dance of the Forests Soyinka combines various levels of language depending on the character and the effect he intends to create. The language which the crier uses to summon the forests spirits and the human protagonists for the trial scene in the court of Mata Kharibu is chanted in the form of an incantation.

(Another part of the forest. Approaching sound of a gong.  
Enter the forest Crier with a scroll. Strikes his gong.  
A few forest spirits emerge from hiding places. Mostly,  
only their faces can be seen. The Crier walks with a  
Kind of mechanical to and from movement.)

Crier: To all such as dwell in these forests; Rock devils,  
Earth imps, Tree demons, ghomids, dewilds, genie  
Incubi, succubi, windhorls, bits and halves and such  
Sons and subjects of Forest Father, and all  
That dwell in his domain, take note, this night  
Is the welcome of the dead. When spells are cast  
And the dead invoked by the living, only such  
May resume their body corporeal as are summoned  
When the understreams that whirl them endlessly  
Complete a circle.

And then,

Forest Father, unveil, unveil  
The phantasmagoria of protagonists from the dead.<sup>90</sup>

The language is a combination of that spoken by a priest during a regular festival and the language of a magician. There are instances when a character like the historian invokes a scene for purely moral purposes:

I have here the whole history of Troy. If you were not the swillage of pigs and could read the writings of wiser men, I would show you the magnificence of the destruction of a beautiful city. I would reveal to you the attainments of men which lifted mankind to the ranks of gods and demi-gods. And who was the inspiration of this divine carnage? Helen of Troy, a woman whose honour became as rare a conception as her beauty. 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?...But history has always revealed that the soldier who will not fight has the blood of slaves in him.<sup>91</sup>

The voice is that of the traditional hero of an epic tale like the ones told by Fagunwa and Tutuola. Chief D.O. Fagunwa, Yoruba novelist killed in a car crash in 1963, is one of the several men whom Soyinka admired. He translated Fagunwa's Ogboju Ode, which he describes as a "universal myth...the epic of man's eternal restlessness, symbolised as always in search"; he retitled it The Forest of a Thousand Daemons (Nelson, 1968). Most of the forest spirits in Soyinka's A Dance of the Forests were taken directly from Fagunwa's novel. Amos Tutuola is also one of Soyinka's favoured African novelists; especially he admires Tutuola's "largeness that comes from an acceptance of life in all its manifestations; where other writers conceive of man's initiation only in terms of photographic rites, Tutuola goes through it as a major fact of a concurrent life cycle, as a progression from physical insufficiency, through the Quest into the very psyche of Nature.<sup>92</sup> This quest motif

implicit in Yoruba myth and folklore is used by Soyinka in his own plays; but its importance derives from the fact that like his fellow Yoruba writers his independence play attempts to embrace "life in all its manifestations." The narrator, in the passage cited above, uses examples from his experience of a foreign environment to preach to his audience, mostly compatriots whose knowledge and experiences are not as wide as his own.

Sometimes in Soyinka's plays verses recited by a character or sung by a group serve as a way of heightening the theme of the play. The Dirge-man's verses in A Dance of the Forests enact the lyric element that underlies the theme of continuity in the play.

Dirge-man: Move on eyah! Move apart  
 I felt the wind breathe--no more  
 Keep away now. Leave the dead  
 Some room to dance.  
 If you see the banana leaf  
 Freshly fibrous like a woman's breasts  
 If you see the banana leaf  
 Shred itself, thread on thread  
 Hang wet as the crêpe of grief  
 Don't say it's the wind. Leave the dead  
 Some room to dance.<sup>93</sup>

The suggestion that "I felt the wind breathe" provokes the Dirge-man's insistent, "leave the dead/Some room to dance," affirming the fact that the dead are always present. This new attitude questions the original demand made by the human community reported at the beginning of the play, as Aroni says: "They asked us for ancestors, for illustrious ancestors." But if as the Dirge-man's song states the presence of ancestors is always "felt," how genuine was the original request of the human community?

The Dirge-man then evokes the image of plantain leaves and compares them to a "woman's breasts" which are "freshly fibrous." The comparison suggests that she is a nursing mother; but her breasts "Hang wet as the crêpe of grief" states that the child has died. The idea of enlarged breasts emitting milk represented by "Hang wet" is the mother's "crêpe

of grief." The cause of this grief is casually explained by the line, "Don't say its the wind." The next stanza proposes a solution:

Dirge-man: Daughter, your feet were shod  
 In eeled shuttles of Yemoja's loom  
 But twice your smock went up  
 And I swear your feet were pounding  
 Bust at the time. Girl, I know  
 The game of my ancestors.

Yemoja is Obatala's wife, and therefore the matriarch. The loom is her creative loom, "daughter" refers to mourning mothers who are reminded about Yemoja's creative loom. The last stanza of the song then evokes imagery of re-incarnation:

A tough, at the rounded moment of the night  
 And the dead return to life  
 Dum-belly woman, plantain-breasted  
 Mother! What human husband folds  
 His arms, and blesses randy ghosts?  
 Keep away now, leave, leave the dead  
 Some room to dance.

The separation of "A tough" from the rest of the line reinforces the sexual imagery used in the preceding stanza, quoted here again:

Daughter...twice your smock went up  
 And I swear your feet were pounding  
 Dust at the time.

Re-incarnation, that is the point when "the dead return to life," occurs through sexual spasm in the lines quoted above. Therefore, the "eeled shuttles of Yemoja's creative loom" anticipates the physical enactment; in addition the line suggests that child bearing is a kind of burden inherited by woman-hood. The "game of my ancestors" is none other than the Yoruba belief "in the contemporaneous existence"<sup>94</sup> of the past, the present, and the future, also represented by death, birth, growth. The Dirge-man's verses undercut the romantic idea implicit in the original thought of summoning the ancestors to be present in person at the festival of the gathering of the tribes. The final "Dumbbelly woman, plantain breasted/Mother!" brings us to the point where we began with the singer, the evocation of the image of the mother.

The Dirge-man's verses form a major idea in the play which affirms the aspirations of the community--survival. These verses can equally be related to the songs of the Half-Child later in the play as he hopes to go from "branded womb/To branded womb." Therefore, the original psychology that produced the phantasmagoria of protagonists in the play can be accounted for by simply comparing the Dirge-man's verses with those of the Half-Child and the Dead Woman. The Dead Woman asks:

Was it for this, ~~for~~ this,  
Children plagued their mothers?<sup>95</sup>

The Dirge-man's verses supply an answer: "Don't say it's the wind" (the ancestors) that is the cause of your plight. The Dead Woman's problem is that she has given birth to a Half-Child, so that her anguish is caused not by the ancestors but by an injustice inflicted on her by society. She is the individual who knows her fate:

Better not bear the weaning  
I who grow the branded navel  
Shudder at the visitation  
Shall my breast again be severed  
From its right of sanctity?<sup>96</sup>

The Dead Woman's sense of futility is expressed in words like "plagued," "branded" and "visitation." To be branded is to know one's fate and the additional fact that she has given birth to a Half-Child compels her to imagine herself in the actual process of repeating the sexual act in order to get another child; her apprehensions produce the reaction, "Shudder at the visitation." The impact of the verb "shudder" must be seen also in relation to the verses quoted earlier: "A tough..." and the "Shudder," therefore she is aware of the fact that "the dead return to life" through sexual action, but she complains that she cannot "bear the weaning" of a Half-Child because, as she rightly anticipates, re-incarnation in her case will be just a meaningless process of repetition. "A touch" and then the "shudder at the visitation" confirms her fear and she now regards pregnancies as visitations. This is confirmed in the last statement: "Shall my breast again be severed/From its right of sanctity?" This voice differs from that of the Dirge-man;

the woman seeks a solution and her plea coincides with that of the Warrior to Mata Kharibu to "turn the unnatural pattern of men always eating up one another." There is something unnatural about the mother of the Half-Child, and she aspires and asks Forest Father to change the unnatural pattern but she fails at the end of the play. Her plight dramatises the lyric aspiration of an individual victim and it heightens the idea of the tragedy of history being dramatised in the play. The songs of Soyinka therefore form an integral thematic aspect of the plays. From this analysis it is evident that by careful selection of materials from his own background Soyinka creates a real tragedy of a human situation. Like Synge and Yeats, he focuses on the victim and channels the aspirations of the community through the lyrical outbursts of the tragic victim. We are already familiar with this pattern in Synge's Riders to the Sea, The Shadow of the Glen, The Playboy of the Western World and Deirdre of the Sorrows. I have already cited Zifa's lament in Clark's Song of a Goat. This aspect of their method also dominates Lady Gregory's plays; the important elements are the use of local modes of expression to dramatize a basically human problem. In this way their individual backgrounds serve as a mirror through which they see reality reflected, that is, folklore contains the idioms, images, and symbols with which they require to invigorate their drama.

In Kongi's Harvest, a contemporary African political and self-proclaimed dictator orders the detention of a Yoruba king, Oba Danlola, demanding that the king submit publicly to Kongi. At the beginning of the play Oba Danlola is in detention. His retinue of drummers and Buglers sing the king's praises. But the songs happen to be directly aimed at debunking Kongi's presumptions. This transformation of Kongi from the self-proclaimed "spirit of the harvest" to the prophet of a new order whose only commodity is agony is sung by Danlola's men with the accompaniment of drums:

A roll of drums such as accompanies a national anthem... Grouped solemnly behind it are Oba Danlola,

Wuraola his favourite wife, his Ogbo Aweri, Dende,  
and Danlola's retinue of drummers and buglars.  
They break into the following anthem.<sup>97</sup>

Stanza one of the anthem asks the following question: "Who says there isn't plenty of a word/In a penny newspaper," and stanza two then mocks at those who ignore this simple truth and believe instead in "isms?" Kongi's new race is dismissed as the "mucus that is snorted out." The "new-ness" of Kongi-ism is also dismissed with the repetition of "Ism to ism for ismais ism/Of isms and isms onaabsolute-ism."<sup>98</sup>

In stanza three Kongism begins to harvest not only yams as did the ancient kings but "silent skulls." The symbolism of a harvest like the one enacted at the end of the play is central to the theme of the play. Meanwhile, the songs anticipate the final scene when Kongi is served with a head of one of his victims.<sup>99</sup> In this way, the emptiness of Kongism is already anticipated in stanza three of the anthem:

Who but a lunatic  
Will bandy words with boxes  
With government rediffusion sets  
Which talk and talk and never  
Take a lone word in reply.

The answer simply is:

I cannot counter words, oh  
I cannot counter words of  
A rediffusion set  
My ears are sore  
But my mouth is 'agbayun'  
For I do not bandy words  
No I do not bandy words  
With a government loudspeaker.<sup>100</sup>

The conclusion states the need for Danlola to be wise and maintain his sanity, more so because of the impersonality of the force against which he is fighting. The song shows that eventually Danlola must yield to Kongi. Danlola will have to yield, because as the argument of the old Aweri goes, kingship is a role. Finally, the musicians also defend the position of the traditional institution of kingship:

They say we took too much silk  
For the royal canopy  
But the dead will witness  
We never ate the silkworm.<sup>101</sup>

Like Danlola's retinue, the Carpenter's Brigade also sing the praises of Kongi. Their song is dedicated to "Ismland": "For Isma and for Kongi/We're proud to live or die"; yet in spite of their pride in "Ismland" they are represented as victims of Kongism. For instance, Kongi has ensured that the anxiety of the members of the Carpenter's Brigade be contained in a number of ways, first, through alcoholism. They are encouraged to drink a "local brew" called "Isma gin," and we are also told that only ~~cuts~~ "cuts of toughened leather" can "survive on Isma gin." Second, Kongi discourages individual expression by inculcating violence and mob tyranny. The Brigade sings: "We spread the creed of Kongism/To every son and daughter," but "heads too slow to learn it/Will feel our mallets' weight."<sup>102</sup> Similarly, on the national level members of the Carpenter's Brigade pay heavily for their chauvinism:

Our hands are like sandpaperr  
 Our fingernails are chipped  
 Our lungs are filled with sawdust  
 But our anthem still we sing  
 We sweat in honest labour  
 From sunrise unto dawn  
 For the dignity of labour  
 And the progress of our land. <sup>103</sup>

Thus the people become the means and Kongism the end; in this way Kongi is represented as the antithesis to Danlola and because of the inevitability of Kongism, the songs create a ~~dalaming~~ <sup>dalaming</sup> vision of the future. But for the Yoruba the phenomenon of Kongism is easily handled within its expansive cosmology, as Danlola's retinue see it:

A new-dug path may lead  
 To the secret heart of being  
 Ogun is still a god  
 Even without his navel. <sup>104</sup>

Like the Songs, proverbs can also be used to foreground linguistic components of given dialogue and situation. In this way proverbs and riddles can act as summary statements. In The Swamp Dwellers after the blind Beggar finishes telling his host and hostess the story of the

disasters in his own home town in Bukanji, Makuri concludes with a proverb which says: "the hands of the gods are unequal. Their gifts become the burden of [men]." The proverb also shows that Makuri actually analyses the blind Beggar's story from the point of view of the morphology of Yoruba apprehension of reality. The fact that an individual tends to understand his own situation better only after he has examined it in the context of the whole phenomenon of human society is also enacted by Igwezu who returns from the city equipped with a cynical attitude to reality. For example, his capacity to detect the deceptions of the Kadiye, the priest of the serpent of the swamps. He asks:

If I slew the fatted calf, Kadiye, do you think the land might breathe again? If I slew all the cattle in the land and sacrificed every measure of goodness, would it make any difference to our lives, Kadiye? Would it make any difference to our fates?<sup>105</sup>

The answer to Igwezu's question is provided by Makuri's proverb. Sometimes, however, proverbs can be misleading. At the end of The Strong Breed Jaguna and Oroge in pursuit of Eman as Carrier, learn that Eman was seen on the way leading to the well. Jaguna concludes at once, "The animal must come to drink."<sup>106</sup>

As we shall see in the discussion of the significance of the animal nature of the imagery below, the proverb and its logic do not seem to apply to Jaguna's society. A proverb of the kind spoken by Jaguna is usually used by some one who lives in a society in which things are organized and people know and perform their roles. But Jaguna's society does not happen to be an organized society. First they have no set tradition for the selection of a carrier; their practice being to pick any stranger who happens to be in the village at the time a victim is needed. From the beginning of the play, another rule had been established by Eman which stipulates that a "village which cannot produce its own carrier contains no men."<sup>107</sup> At the end of the play when the

sacrifice of Eman fails the criterion is confirmed.

Jaguna: I am sick to the heart of the cowardice I have seen tonight.

Oroge: This is the nature of men.

Jaguna: Then it is a sorry world to live in. We did it for them. It was all for their own common good. What did it benefit me whether the man lived or died. But did you see them? One and all they looked up at the man and words died in their throats.

Oroge: It was no common sight.

Jaguna: Women could not have behaved so shamefully. One by one they crept off like sick dogs. Not one could raise a curse.

Oroge: It was not only him they fled. Do you see how unattended we are?

Jaguna: There are those who will pay for this night's work!

Oroge: ~~By~~ let us go home.<sup>108</sup>

The dialogue between Jaguna and Oroge demonstrates that the certainty expressed in Jaguna's proverb, "The animal must come to drink," has been marred by a number of ill-considered motives which have been carried over into the new year. Therefore, the old year did not take away the evil as intended.

Even so the proverb can still be explained in the context of the flashbacks which reveal Eman's inherited duties as a carrier for his own home town. Here the importance of the animal nature of the imagery is evident. The flashback reveals that Eman is heir to a responsibility which he had abandoned. In one of the flashback scenes Eman had emphatically told his father that "nothing holds me here," and the old man reminded him that in spite of his son's determination to go away and abandon his duties, "Your own blood will betray you." Therefore, Eman's instinctive response to the role in another village confirms his father's convictions: "you will answer the urge of your blood."<sup>109</sup>

In spite of his absence from home Eman did not deliberately alienate himself from the spiritual forces of his own world. Jaguna's

proverb explains Eman's role in the latter's village. This is made evident by the fact that every statement which Eman makes in the play contradicts positions he had taken before he left his village. He said: "I will never come back."<sup>110</sup>

The question which The Strong Breed poses is not whether Eman should have been killed but whether the victim had the protection of the will to be able to resume his responsibilities. Eman says:

A man must go on his own, go  
where no one can help him, and test  
his strength.<sup>111</sup>

Presently Eman realizes that even though he may actually have an individual "life to fulfill," this can not be obtained in a world whose points of reference are alien to the spirit of the strong breed. Eman's death is a symbolic return to the legend of the strong breed:

I do not really know for what great meaning  
I searched....It was here all the time. And  
I threw away my new-gained knowledge. I  
buried the part of me that was formed in  
strange places. I made a home in my birth --  
place.<sup>112</sup>

The example of Jaguna and Eman shows that proverbs can become effective tools to a satirist and an ironist. A character like Jaguna might appeal to an aspect of wisdom inherent in the proverb but only to undercut himself with it.

The animal nature of the imagery reminds us of Eman's original concern with having cut himself "loose from all these -- ties of blood."<sup>113</sup> The proverb enacts Eman's instinctive response to the "urge" of his own blood. During one of the flashback scenes between Eman and his father, the latter warns his son that when the time does come for the "claim of blood" it "will surely bring the sadness of truth"<sup>114</sup> to Eman. Beneath Eman's self-possession lurks this primitive urge of the blood pulling him back to his sources. This argument forms a basis on which we can agree with Eman that his death symbolizes the conviction that he had "buried the part of me that was formed in strange places."

Instead he "made a home in my birth place." Therefore the retreat to one's sources is a big sacrifice since it means having to forgo all the attractions that the cosmopolitan world offers. The theme of a sacrifice which features in most of Soyinka's plays is central to the idea of a return to sources.

In A Dance of the Forests proverbs attributed to Agboreko introduce a comic idea peculiar to Soyinka's art. At one point in the play, Murete, the tree imp, imitated Agboreko's "Proverbs to bones and silence." Soyinka's art of undercutting Agboreko is a way of disowning the too frequent use of these so-called "quaint expressions." In this way the proverbs can serve as "soup and pepper," as brother Chume says in The Metamorphosis of Jere,<sup>115</sup> and in spite of the humour the proverb still performs its allotted purpose.

In Kongi's Harvest the new Aweri Fraternity are suspicious of proverbs because as they put it, proverbs do not reflect the "positive," "scientific" spirit of Kongism. At "Kongi's retreat in the mountains, the reformed Aweri Fraternity in session" seek a style:

First: I suggest we pattern ourselves on our predecessors. Oh I do admit they were a little old-fashioned, but they had er... a certain style. Yes, I think style is the word I want. Style. Yes, I think we could do worse than model ourselves on the Old Aweri.

Fifth: You mean, speak in proverbs and ponderous tone rhythms?

Fourth: I'm afraid that is out anyway. Kongi would prefer a clean break from the traditional conclave of the so-called wise ones.

First: They were remote, impersonal--we need these aspects. They breed fear in the common man.

Second: The paraphernalia helped too, don't forget that.

Sixth: I have no intention of making myself look ridiculous in that outfit.<sup>116</sup>

Self-conscious archaism tends to become picturesque and decorative unless the author understands that selecting to work in "old-fashioned"

modes, must have a purpose in the context of the individual play; otherwise it will just be a matter of reviving "proverbs and ponderous rhythms" for a perverse sense of novelty. But by constantly undercutting his characters Soyinka obtains objectivity in his use of these "quaint" linguistic resources in such a way that proverbs, riddles enjoy a vicarious existence in his plays. In a play like Kongi's Harvest, in which the major characters think in terms of "scientific exorcism" and "positive scientism," proverbs can provide a good contrast to the way of thinking, perceiving, of the traditional society. The dramatic effectiveness of these linguistic materials of folk culture is that they are not accepted by all the characters as an absolute mode of expression, and when the occasion arises, as it happens in Death and the King's Horseman, some one is bound to be irritated by the frequency of their occurrence as Pilkings asks: "Christ! Must your people forever speak in riddles?"<sup>117</sup>

In plays like The Road, The Jero Plays, Death and the King's Horseman foregrounding is obtained by deviating to the use of pidgin English and the ungrammatical use of the English language. In The Road, Samson, the passenger tout and driver's mate to Kotonu, represents the kind of character whose language does not only constitute a deviation but forms an effective way of organising experience. Samson and another driver trainee, Salubi, discuss an incident in Professor's past life:

Samson: You think they just put somebody in prison like that? Professor his very self? Of course you don't know your history. When Professor entered Church, everybody turned round and the eyes of the congregation followed him to his pew -- and he had his own private pew let me tell you, and if a stranger went and sat in it, the church warden wasted no time driving him out.

Salubi: Dat one no to church, na high society.

Samson: You no sabbe de ting wey man dey call. classo shurrup youromout. Professor ehn,

he get class. He get style. That suit he wears now, that was the very way he used to dress to evening service. I tell you, the whole neighbourhood used to come and watch him, they would gather in this very bar and watch him through the windows, him and his hundred hanker-chiefs spread out on the pew in front of him... 118

The sentences spoken in pidgin English can be heard anywhere in West Africa where pidgin English is spoken; they constitute Samson's way of summing up Professor's life. Their effectiveness for the situation is that they demand audience participation, for instance, "Dat one no to church, na high society" identifies a kind of church which every member of the group will recognize. Similarly, the statement that Professor, "enh, he get class" identifies another recognizable type; although as Samson says this class now is only an anachronism.

Even though Samson happens to be illiterate, it is characteristic of him to switch, casually, from one form of language to another.

He says:

Wait small you no hear de proper fight yet. That was the day the wall of Jericho (he points) fell down. 119

One of the virtues of Samson's way of speaking is connected with his power to create the world outside the situation being dramatized by merely varying the form of English. For instance, in the dialogue quoted above Samson and Salubi reveal that at one time in his life Professor who now runs an AKSIDENT STORE was a member of the "high society," and that he attended a church where he "had his own private pew," and insisted on always reading the sermons. Not only does Samson tell us what Professor used to be, he actually identifies the Professor who has survived: "That suit he wears now, that was the very way he used to dress to evening service." Samson's description happens also to coincide with the author's: "Professor is a tall figure in Victorian outfit - tails, top-hat etc., all thread-bare and shiny at the lapels from much ironing." 120

Since Professor's AKSIDENT STORE is located directly adjacent to,

his former church, the Store symbolises everything that is a direct reversal of the things which Professor cherished when he was still a member of the high society. Samson uses the two forms of language to obtain flashback effects. In another passage Samson leads the audience back to an incident in his life as a driver trainee in a lorry driven by Kotonu.

Samson: A driver must have sensitive soles on his feet. Unlike his buttocks. His buttocks would be hard. Heavy-duty tyres. But not the feet you see. Because he does not walk so much, and he has to be able to judge the pressure on the pedals exactly right. I have such thick soles you see so I always revved the engine too much or too little.

But he suddenly switches over into pidgin English:

Then it was Fai! Fai! Fai! You think say I get petrol for waste? Take your foot commot for accelerator! Small small! I say small small -- you tink say dis one na football game. Fai fai fai! You de press brake -- Gi - am! -- as if na stud you wan' give centre back. [You apply the brakes as if you are tackling a centre back.] I say do am soft soft! Fai fai fai!

Samson, at this point, switches back into regular English:

All a waste of time. Every time I started the lorry it went like a railway -- gbaga gbaga -- like clinic for hiccup. Other times it would shoot off like sputnik -- fiiiiiom! That was when I got it worse of all -- Fai fai fai fai! You wey no fit walk na fly you wan' fly? [You can't walk but you want to fly] Ah, sometimes I wonder why I didn't go deaf. 121

The first of the three passages is spoken by Samson and they are his own words, possibly translated from the Yoruba which he speaks. The second passage is Samson's attempt to reproduce Kotonu's words. When Kotonu and Samson were still active on the road, occasionally Kotonu gave driving instructions to Samson. But Samson had "thick soles" and never benefitted from Kotonu's lessons.

Pidgin English is used as a manner of reporting, or of putting Kotonu's words in parenthesis. In the third passage Samson speaks in his own words but one sentence is quoted from Kotonu: "fa- fai fai fai! You way no fit walka na fly you wan' fly?" Samson introduces contemporary history by bringing in his own knowledge of football, the clinic, and even of the Russian "sputnik." The last statement of regret shows that Samson's ambitions to be a driver and become an active member of the new industrial world of lorries and sputniks did not materialize. Samson's obtuseness, his inability to adapt, is symbolised by the lack of sensitive soles on his feet. Samson's awareness is revealed in the statement, "Ah, sometimes I wonder why I didn't go deaf."

The liveliness of Soyinka's drama, one must confess, derives as much from his deviation into dialect and "old-fashioned" and "ponderous rhythms"<sup>122</sup> as from his use of colloquial prose. Soyinka's originality, like Synge's and Lady Gregory's, springs from the fact that he works in modes of speech currently spoken in his society; he adopts these modes to enable him to convey, as did Synge and Lady Gregory, "multifarious experiences in one extravagant whole."<sup>123</sup>

On the other hand, there are people like Say Tokyo kid who have embraced the world of motor lorries and trucks to the extent that they have become the heroes of the new world of timber lorries. "Timber is my line," Say Tokyo says:

A guy is gorra have his principles. I'm a right guy. I mean you just look arrit this way. If you gonna be killed by a car, you don't wanna be killed by a Volkswagen. You wanna Limousine, a Ponriac or something like that. Well thas my principle.<sup>124</sup>

The dramatic effectiveness of the language in The Road derives from the fact that the issues are social in nature and the number and forms of languages employed tend to clarify each other; hence they help to unify the experience of the characters. Characters like Say Tokyo who are

developed on one main comic idea use one level of language; others like Samson who are made to perceive action beyond the stage adopt a variety of poses. Professor's quest, for example is spiritual in nature and he asks: "do you think my sleep was broken over... a meaningless event?"<sup>125</sup> Say Tokyo's response is simply that "I reckon this has gone too far. I aint scared like all these people so I'm telling you, you're fooling around where you ain't got no business."<sup>126</sup> But the language of Say Tokyo is not West African pidgin English; it is influenced by the "Western" motion pictures.

In The Trials of Brother Jero linguistic deviation in a character like Brother Chume "unearths... cosmic uncertainties which pervade human existence."<sup>127</sup> Brother Chume is one of the "strange, dissatisfied people"<sup>128</sup> who, in search of possible solutions to their different problems, have joined the revivalist church of Prophet Jeroboam. The Prophet recruits mostly disgruntled and ambitious people, from almost every sector of Society; a member of parliament consults Prophet Jeroboam to intercede for him so that he may be made a Minister of War. Brother Chume, an office messenger, would like to have more money to enable him to afford "all comforts and necessities."<sup>129</sup> But Chume is also plagued with a nagging wife and wishes to have her beaten. Under normal circumstances Chume speaks standard English but when confronted with a difficult situation, he plunges into pidgin English:

Jero: Brother Chume, what were you before you came to me??

Chume: Prophet....

Jero I sternly I: What were you before the grace of God?

Chume: A labourer, Prophet. A common labourer.

Jero: And did I not prophesy you would become an office boy?

Chume: You do am, brother. Na so.

Jero: And then a messenger?

Chume: Na you do am, brother. Na you.

Jero: And then quick promotion? Did I not prophesy it?

Chume: Na true, Prophet. Na true.

Jero: And what are you now? What are you?

Chume: Chief messenger. <sup>130</sup>

The more Jero acquires power over Chume, the more miserable and disintegrated Chume's personality becomes; Chume also plunges deeper into dialect. The more Chume recognizes how desperate his position has become, he reverts to a sort of incoherent jabber. For instance, at one point the disciple Chume discovers that Brother Jeroboam knows his wife to the extent of even owing her some money. Early in the play Chume wants to beat his wife but the Prophet tells his follower that "this woman whom you desire to beat is your cross--bear it well."<sup>131</sup> After Chume's discovery that the Prophet knows his wife, Chume tries to account for the relationship between the prophet and his wife, Amope. He becomes suspicious that the Prophet has been protecting his own wife from him. Chume says:

...What for...why, why, why, why? e do am? For two years 'e no let me beat that woman. Why? No because God no like am. That one no fool me any more. 'E no be man of God. 'E say 'in sleep for beach whether 'e rain or cold but that one too na big lie. The man get house and 'e sleep there every night. But 'in get peace for 'en house, why 'e no let me get peace for mine? Wetin I do for am? Anyway, how they come meet? Where? When? What time 'e know say na my wife? Why 'e de protect am from me? Perhaps na my woman dey give am chop and in return he promise to see say 'in husband no beat am. A-a-ah, give am clothes, give am food and all comforts and necessities, and for exchange, 'in go see that 'in husband no beat em...Mmmmmmm. (He shakes his head).<sup>132</sup>

Chume's complete loss of a sense of dignity is revealed as a break down in language.

In a play like Jero's Metamorphosis deviation is used as a way of giving life in a local context to the medium being used. In a scene between Major Silva of the Salvation Army and Chume, the latter is being taught music by Silva.

Silva: Oh, flourish. Well, flourish is er...extra, you know, frills, decoration. What we want is pure notes, pure crystal clear notes. (Chume looks blank.) Look,

just play the first bar again will you.

Chume: (more mystified still): Bar?

Silva: Yes, the first...all right, start from the beginning again will you and I will stop you when you come to the flourish... (Chume plays. Silva stops him after a few notes.) That's it. You played that bit Ta-a-Ta instead of ta-ta.

Chume: Oh you mean the pepper.

Silva: Pepper?

Chume: Enh, pepper. When you cook soup you go put small pepper. Otherwise, the thing no go taste. I mean to say, 'e go taste like something. After all, even sand-sand get in own taste. But who dey satisfy with sand-sand? If they give you sand-sand to chop you go chop?

Silva: (beginning to doubt his senses): Mr. Chume, if I tell you I understand one word of what you're saying I commit the sin of mendacity.

Chume: What! You no know wetin pepper be? Captain Winston, as soon as I say pepper 'e knows wetin I mean one time.

Silva: I do not know, to use your own quaint expression, wetin musical pepper be, Chume.

Chume: And condiments? Iru? Salt? Ogiri? Kaun? And so on and so forth?

Silva: Mr. Chume, I'm afraid I don't quite see the relevance.

Chume: No no, no try for see am. Make just hear am. (Blows a straight note.) Dat na plain soup. (Blows again, slurring into a higher note.) Dat one na soup and pepper. (Gives a new twist.) Dat time I put extra flavour. Now, if you like we fit lef' am like that. But suppose I put stockfish, smoke-fish, ngwam-ngam... 133

Chume's self-conscious deviation or what he calls putting "extra flavour" to the music is the practice of the artist; of making the music "real" by simply adding "condiments," and these condiments give a new life to the music. Therefore, the practice of working in archaic idioms, deviation into dialect forms, are all central to the quest for ways of creating a new style in the drama.

Even though a writer like Clark may find inconsistency in Soyinka's

practice of using these quaint expressions,<sup>134</sup> one tends to agree with Brother Chume that linguistic deviation adds an "extra flavour" to the language of the plays. The actual selection and use of words rather than the mere addition of them is important for the dramatic effectiveness of the language. In Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest, for instance, Danlola the deposed King bursts out at his servant in the following words:

Do you dare call this a scepter?  
 This dung-stained goat prod, this  
 Makeshift sign at crossroads, this  
 Thighbone of the crow that died  
 Of rickets? Or did you merely  
 Steal the warped backscratcher  
 Of your hunchback uncle.<sup>135</sup>

We are soon relieved of Danlola's grotesqueries when Dende, the servant, continues to plead in a frivolous form of language that recalls Kongi's Carpenter's Brigade that he, "got no co-operation at all/From the blacksmith," Danlola returns to his tirades with "find me/Such another ladle and I'll/Shove it up your mother's fundaments."

Danlola's frustrations and indignation are enacted in disgusting and brutal words and the humorous side of his actions is explained by the fact on this day Danlola is preparing himself for an act of public submission to Kongi, the self-proclaimed spirit of the harvest. The sense of futility experienced by Danlola usurps any sense of decency that the king has had, worst of all the modern blacksmiths, have all deserted their trades and joined Kongi's Carpenter's Brigade. Even Dende defects and joins the Carpenter's Brigade on the pretext that the King did not provide him with a uniform of khaki and brass buttons. Oba Danlola loses the battle against Kongi because the artisans who supported kingship are no longer available; therefore it is history rather than Kongi who is the victor. Danlola, realizing this point sublimates; and in desperation he reverts to cursing, indulging in sex and also in the drinking of schnapps. Thus, by a careful selection and organization of forms of language Soyinka is able to

reveal the many sides of the social reality of his own society in its contemporary turbulence.

The form of pidgin English used by Soyinka in his plays happens to be a dialect. In Death and The King's Horseman, however, Soyinka employs language that is ungrammatical. At the beginning of Death and the King's Horseman the assistant District Officer, Pilkings, and his wife, Jane, are practicing a tango in anticipation of a party to be held in the evening of the same day:

(They are wearing what is immediately apparent as some form of fancy-dress. The dance goes on for some moments and then the figure of a 'Native Administration' policeman emerges and climbs up the steps onto the verandah. He peeps through and observes the dancing couple, reacting with what is obviously a long-standing bewilderment. He stiffens suddenly, his expression changes to one of disbelief and horror. In his excitement he upsets a flower-pot and attracts the attention of the couple. They stop dancing.) 136

Pilkings: What the hell is the matter with you man!

Jane: Your costume darling. Our fancy dress.

Pilkings: Oh hell, I'd forgotten all about that. (Lifts the face mask over his head showing his face. His wife follows suit.)

Jane: I think you've shocked his big pagan Heart bless him.

Pilkings: Nonsense, he's a Moslem. Come on Amusa, you don't believe in all this nonsense do you? I thought you were a good Moslem.

Amusa: Mista Pirinkin, I beg you sir, what you think you do with that dress? It belong to dead cult, not for human being.

Pilkings: Oh Amusa, what a let down you are. I swear by you at the club you know -- thank God for Amusa, he doesn't believe in any mumbo-jumbo. And now look at you!

Amusa: Mista Pirinkin, I beg you, take it off. Is not good for man like you to touch that cloth. 137

Amusa's repeated mispronunciation of Pilkings's name, "Mista Pirinkin...Mista Pirinkin" reflects not only Amusa's superficial grasp of the

language but also achieves comic effects. Although Amusa had arrested the "ring leaders" of the egungun cult and had actually been responsible for confiscating the costume of the cult, instinctively he still regards the institution itself with awe and respect. Amusa knows that the egungun is always a "dead cult, not human being," but Pilkings and his wife think this is just "nonsense". The dramatist capitalizes on the fact that Pilkings (and most of the European characters) did not take into serious consideration the deeper religious life of the Oyo people. This obtuseness is revealed in the language he uses: he thinks Amusa reacts to the scene because of Amusa's "pagan heart," and the egungun costume is only some sort of "fancy dress." Amusa's emphatic "I no fit....How can man talk against death to person in uniform of death?" reveals this lack of communication and widens the cultural gap. The significance of Amusa's object, to "talk against death," becomes known when it is realized later that the policeman had come to report to the senior officer in charge of the station, events regarding the possible death of the chief, Elesin. The report which Amusa eventually leaves at the ADO's desk is characteristic of his style:

I have to report that it come to my information that one prominent Chief, namely, the Elesin Oba, is to commit death to night as a result of native custom. Because this is criminal offence I await further instruction at charge office. 138

The selection of words, emphasis, are all geared to emphasize the point that Amusa is using a functional form of the language; here, the emotional element contained in Chume's "What for...Why, Why, Why, Why 'e do am?" is lost. In Chume, language and feeling are expressed in a way that the objectivity of Amusa's prose cannot approach. Amusa's style is the ungrammatical use of the official form of standard English, Chume's language is a popular form spoken by the people, and possesses the additional qualities of being living language.

Similarly language is used in Death and the King's Horseman in the way it was used in The Lion and the Jewel to create a distinction between two ways of interpreting reality. In Death and the King's Horseman

Mr. Pilkings and Jane, his wife, think that African music is a "bloody excuse" to make noise. When the sound of the drumming happens to come from a distance they call it "bush drumming." Similarly, the sacrifice of Elesin is seen as a "horrible custom," a "barbaric ritual murder." In contrast to the opinions expressed by Pilkings and his wife, the Oyo people represent Elesin's death as a journey, passage, and a response of the child-man to the pull of the umbilical cord. On the one hand, Pilkings is actually rattled by music coming from the festivities; on the other, Elesin actually immerses himself in it, "dances and sings with that infectious enjoyment of life which accompanies all his actions." Language in Death and the King's Horseman represents and actually helps to keep the Europeans and Africans as two opposed social orders.

The opposition is dramatized in one sense as a conflict between pagan and christian views of things, African and European concepts of sacrifice, African and European attitudes to death, and in the larger sense it is done in the way of having the African world assert and validate its uniqueness, in spite of the presence of colonial power. For instance, Pilkings describes the Elesin as the "old ram" and the "old pagan," but the Oyo women welcome the Elesin in their company as the "husband of multitudes." The effectiveness of the language is distinguished by the meaning each group attaches to the words in the context of their own social values. A similar incident, showing how communication between the two groups fails is the point where the young African, Olunde, and Mrs. Jane Pilkings discuss the affair of Olunde's father's death. In the process of presenting their differing points of view both finally realize that their separate world views have in reality drifted far apart; when the truth dawns on Jane Pilkings, she collapses.

The dramatic effectiveness of Soyinka's language derives from a number of factors, important among which are, the fact that the colloquial tone and the shifting life of the psyche reflected in the

irregularity of usages give a naturalness to the language of plays like The Lion and the Jewel, The Jero Plays, Kongi's Harvest, Madmen and Specialists, and Death and the King's Horseman. Another factor which affects the dramatic nature of his language in a positive way is the fact, which he himself emphasizes, of visualising his characters in the context of the stage. Hence giving variety and objectivity to the language he uses. For example, the use of narrators and other leading characters like Samson in The Road, Aafaa in Madmen and Specialists, and the Secretary in Kongi's Harvest, unifies experience by providing a social context for the action and also by generating continuity in the action of the play. Lastly, Soyinka's language cannot be studied independently of the other theatrical idioms like parody, satire, ritual etc. which he employs in the plays and which have been discussed in detail in chapter six below.

There are fundamental similarities between the African and Irish writers in choosing to work in the language of their own people. The first consideration is the advantage which everyone of the dramatists gets from his own background. We have seen in the example of Clark and Soyinka that they chose to work in archaic modes, diction, symbolism, and rituals. Like the Irish dramatists, archaism forms a dominant motif in their plays. I have already demonstrated that these archaistic modes are already implicit in the folklores of the Irish and the African dramatists. The question of influence then is not a matter of borrowing, it is as Clark says a matter of recognizing valid correspondences between the folklores of different peoples.

Another dominant motif in these plays is the practice of emphasizing older codes of conduct, this is much in evidence in the plays of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, and in the plays of Clark and Soyinka. We have even mentioned themes like fertility, family structures, sacrifice as dominant driving forces in the works of Clark and Soyinka.

Lastly, Clark exploits beliefs and attitudes of rural communities and as one critic points out Clark's imagery is not only "appropriate

to any rural community, in Ireland, or Africa, the movement of lines suggests Synge's influence."<sup>139</sup> In the following chapters I shall show that a dramatist like Soyinka does not only benefit from his background but actually enjoys exploiting its humour, wit, irony and other rhetorical devices for his comedies.

## Chapter 5

### Stages in Rebellion: J.P. Clark

In Chapter Two I showed that Clark's choice and use of the English language as a medium of representing upon the stage the inner thoughts and emotions of his own people led him to adopt the poetic rather than the naturalistic style in his plays. And that unlike playwrights like Synge, Lady Gregory, and Wole Soyinka who use dialect both primarily and incidentally in their plays, what distinguishes Clark's plays in the contemporary literary drama is his consummate use of natural imagery drawn from the Ijaw area of the Niger delta. In general, the naturalistic style, in contradistinction from the poetical, is characterized by "a clear grasp of psychology and idea...urbanity and pace...colloquial tone and realistic" appearance which make character and the dramatic situation fall within a basic "framework of more or less logical appearances."<sup>1</sup> Clark recognizes, quite early in his career, that the African writer who chooses to work in English is faced with the problem of how to overcome the temptations of recognizing and perpetuating the "popular method exploited by the 'naturalists';"<sup>2</sup> one whereby "class and education determine a man's manner of speech and by implication the level of his mind as well as the limits which his ambition may vault?"


In the discussion of the cultural aspect of the revival movements in Ireland and Africa I pointed out that a central preoccupation of these writers is the desire to turn away from popular literary conventions and their willingness to recognize an authentic social order -- their own racial background. Similar attitudes of revolt and quest form the basis of Clark's ideas about the African drama. He thinks that the question is primarily one of propriety; the African writer, he contends, "stands in a relationship to his characters and subjects completely different from that obtaining for the English writer, some of whose characters and situations happen to be African or 'native'"; his originality and objectivity will largely depend on the attitude which he adopts to his

subjects. First, the writer must "find for himself the right level of language before he chooses for his characters who in fact are his compatriots, brought up in the same environment, and fed upon the same diet of life." Secondly, not only must the writer exploit the beliefs and attitudes of rural communities, he should belong to the re-discovered life of the community. Viewed in this way, the writer's "view of his characters," he insists, "springs directly from the inside, unless he deliberately chooses to adopt a standpoint of seeing things from the outside." The modes in which the writer chooses to work will naturally be determined by the social order with which the writer identifies himself. The problems of language, attitude, and modes of expression are inevitably subsumed under the more important question of "form and communication," or what Clark calls the African writer's search to "find his own voice." Therefore, to rely on a "simple use of dialect"<sup>4</sup> as a way of differentiating African characters from European characters, Clark maintains, is an easier but too often defective method. The fact that the forms are already implicit in the writer's background solves the problem of communication.

Yet in a number of instances he has been accused of striving for poetic and literary effects in his plays.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Professor Anthony Graham-White even suggests that "Clark is a literary playwright in a far wider sense than literary borrowings alone would suggest."<sup>6</sup> Since I have not seen a Clark play in production, it would be presumptuous to defend the theatricality of his drama. But judging from what Eric Bentley says with respect to the work of T.S. Eliot, a dramatist becomes "literary," in a vulgar sense, when he fails to think "out his plays in theatrical terms," that is to say, he fails to see his characters and situations in the "highly unnatural setting of the stage."<sup>7</sup> In which case the work becomes poetry and literature rather than dramatic poetry. In fact, there are instances, like the passage quoted from The Masquerade below, which tend to reinforce the argument that occasionally Clark tends to focus the reader's attention on to the poetry rather

than on the dramatic poetry. In the passage cited below, a neighbour tries to recreate a first hand impression of the first meeting between Titi and Tufa:

First Neighbour: You should have seen their first meeting

 It was  
 On the market place. Nine maids all aglow  
 Each came fresh from stem formed her vanguaged train.  
 Another four of a bigger blossom,  
 All of them wearing skirts trimmed with cowrie  
 And coins, mounted props for a canopy  
 Of pure scarlet and lace, and cool under it  
 Walked Titi, in fact some said afloat, doing the last  
 Of her pageants. How can I describe  
 The bride? Oh, you should have been there!  
 Her head high in that silver tiara so  
 Brilliant it was blindness trying to tell  
 Its characters of leaves and birds, and  
 The ivory stick between her lips, the rings,  
 The necklaces especially fashioned by a goldsmith  
 All the way from Yoruba country, and  
 Then those bangles, those beads of coral! But  
 What is this I'm saying? The bride herself  
 Beat this treasury flung so lavishly  
 Upon the world.<sup>8</sup>

It was apparent in this passage that there is a lack of coherence between the modes employed and the social structure; as we shall see below in the discussion of Ozidi, self-conscious decorations like the one cited above are not often ways of playing with objects. To be dramatic a poetic line or dialogue must have what Johan Huizinga calls the play-element in poetry,<sup>9</sup> and Eric Bentley aptly describes as "the histrionic longing."<sup>10</sup> Huizinga maintains that the play-element in human culture is more primordial than culture itself:

It is an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility.<sup>11</sup>

In poetry, the play-element is the

...rhythmical or symmetrical arrangement of language, the hitting of the mark by rhyme or assonance, the deliberate disguising of the

sense, the artificial and artful construction of phrases--all might be so many utterances of the play spirit. To call poetry, as Paul Valery has done, a playing with words and language is no metaphor: it is the precise and literal truth.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, Huizinga's play-element in poetry is what Francis Fergusson calls the "histrionic sensibility." Fergusson thinks that "histrionic sensibility" is "a basic, or primary virtue of the mind." It is the ability to "perceive the shifting life of the psyche directly, before predication...before imitating it in the medium of words." Just as the perception of music is based upon the ear, which "discriminates sounds; the histrionic sensibility (which may also be trained) perceives and discriminates actions."<sup>13</sup> Dr. James W. Flannery in W.B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre says that Yeats, "working with the eye of a painter, displayed an extraordinary ability to create striking histrionic actions in order to express his dramatic intentions on the stage...to establish mood and create the sense of an actual environment within which characters/actors might function."<sup>14</sup> W.B. Yeats himself often refers to this particular quality of Synge's work as the "Playboy's love of mischief which must have been instinctive in the depths of Synge's soul."<sup>15</sup> Vivian Mercier identifies this play-element in the writers of the Anglo-Irish Revival but ascribes it to Gaelic survivals;<sup>16</sup> however, it is possible to agree with Huizinga, Fergusson, and Yeats that the histrionic sensibility, the play-element is basic in all cultures and pre-dates any literary tradition. Therefore, it is essential that we recognize this aspect of Clark's dramaturgy, this playfulness that characterizes the works of Lady Gregory, Synge, and Soyinka, in plays like Ozidi and The Raft. I shall show that it is part and parcel of the archaistic motif in Clark's plays.

Evidently, Clark's desire to work in the more primitive modes is different from the practice of merely incorporating articles, customs, beliefs, and events in a decorative way, as he does in the passage quoted from The Masquerade; instead the practice of working in archaic

modes has helped him to overcome the purely literary problems evident in plays like The Masquerade. Clark's revolt against "naturalism" has given him the freedom to experiment with forms pertaining to the more primitive modes of his society. This awareness gives Ozidi, for example, its dramatic force.

In the 1960's when he wrote Song of a Goat, The Masquerade, The Raft, and Ozidi, he had already begun to reconsider his position with respect to what he calls the esoteric style of writing which characterized the work of the first generation of writers from the University College of Ibadan; and he was already striving also for a kind of "poetical drama" which would appeal to an audience equipped with multiple linguistic backgrounds so as to be able to diminish the gap of communication separating the English language speakers from the non-English speaking part of his audience. He revealed to an interviewer that he had given up writing "chamber poetry, that is the occasional piece....I believed this was a bit snobbish, esoteric...and I thought the thing that can really get in to everybody, however different in background or in upbringing, is what can be put on the stage. I mean this is not a question of what type of stage now, but I believe this is the type of thing that you can go to, all sorts of people can go to and then each man gets what he can out of it."<sup>17</sup>

Evidently Clark feels that the African writer who writes in English alienates himself from a part of his public--the non-literate part of the population, or that part of his public whose knowledge of English is not as far-reaching as that of the author himself. In fact, I should not hesitate to say that Clark's ambivalent attitude towards the use of English is responsible for his eagerness to take poetry into the theatre:

poetry is a very literary art....I think the theatre is a better way, I think the most solid way, if we write in English..., in the theatre, even if they don't get the dialogue, they get the actions, as it were...they appreciate the sets, they appreciate the gestures, expressions, movements, they partake of the mood and the dramatic atmosphere, they take part

in the music. I think it is the theatre that gets to a non-reading public...you may not be literate but you can see the sets, you can hear the dialogue, you can hear the music, you can hear all that...poetry is the pet-medium and better still if it's used in the theatre.<sup>18</sup>

The point which Clark makes is that not only does folk culture offer the playwright literary and linguistic materials, it also presents him with an enormous amount of theatrical idiom from the masquerades, masks, dances, festivals, ritual ceremonies of the gods etc. Therefore, language and speech are "Simply one, not the only all-important sources of pleasure" in the theatre; hence the playwright who makes speech the "be-all and end-all of everything" in the theatre alienates himself from a part of his public.<sup>19</sup>

Appendix A shows how the Irish dramatists self-consciously sought to incorporate music, costumes, and other theatrical idioms into their drama. W.B. Yeats's later experiments with forms of the Nō plays of Japan reveal that the kind of "poetical drama" he wanted to produce in Four Plays For Dancers (At the Hawk's Well, The Only Jealousy of Emer, The Dreaming of the Bones, and Calvary) "must be played to the accompaniment of drum and zither and flute, but on no account must the words be spoken 'through music' in the fashionable way."<sup>20</sup> Yeats thought that "masks and costumes" used in the performances "may suggest new situations at a moment when the old ones seem exhausted." The "value and beauty of the mask" and other costumes was that they created "great pictorial effect" without detracting from the poetry; he even thought that perhaps "in the end one would write plays for certain masks" so as to have "no realism, no objects represented in mass"<sup>21</sup> in the theatre. Therefore, Yeats "was not merely a poet in the theatre but a poetic dramatist who combined the arts of literature and the theatre so as to create effective and profoundly significant drama."<sup>22</sup> This practice of attempting to combine all the arts together so as to have them "recover their ancient association"<sup>23</sup> is made evident by his practice in the dance plays. Central to Clark's desire to take poetry into the theatre is the desire

to obtain a similar effect from the practice of combining the arts.

The important thing about Yeats's experiments is that he shows the enthusiasm for novelty; he is still remembered for his experiments with the form of the Japanese Nō plays. Yeats himself acknowledges that despite his recognition of the need for a total theatre, "there was much to discover." Therefore, what makes his thoughts worth dwelling on is the encouragement which he himself shows, the fact that he knew only "vaguely" what he wanted: "I do not want any existing form of stage dancing, but something with a smaller gamut of expression, something more reserved, more self-controlled, as befits performers within arm's reach of the audience."<sup>24</sup> Even though Yeats was unable to harness his own enthusiasm in the context of the Irish Dramatic Movement, his theories and experiments anticipated the work of Clark and Soyinka. The use of dramatic devices like narrators, rituals, songs, and magic; the combination of lyricism with violent actions in the plays of Clark and Soyinka are some of the means adopted by the Africans to bridge or narrow the gap separating performers and audience in the way Yeats suggests above. Perhaps the most striking aspect of these movements for the return to the archaic is the desire to create total theatre, and that these archaic modes are already implicit in African folklore.

Clark's revulsion from the naturalistic style of having to rely on the "simple use of dialect" is determined by a distrust of realism similar to that of Yeats. Similarly he wants what Yeats calls "poetical drama," the kind of poetic drama worked out in modes that give it "histrionic force," the combination of "ritual and pure lyric utterance with short scenes of relatively realistic conflict."<sup>25</sup>

When he was a child, Clark says, he "had...taken part in festivals and performances at the town square or market-place,"<sup>26</sup> and he wishes to see this aspect of his background integrated into the purely literary medium. In a play like Ozidi Clark not only incorporates the literary medium to drum, song, and dance, he plunges beneath the

visual modes of African theatre and exploits the more primitive forms of play and acting typical of ancient heroic literature like boasting, bragging, contests, fantasy and most of the other aspects of African theatre, the "ancient constants,"<sup>27</sup> which he examines in his "Aspects of Nigerian Drama." Clark's development as writer of poetical drama evolved concurrently with his awareness of the potentialities of these existing idioms and expressive modes of the folk theatre. The latest development among Clark's Nigerian contemporary dramatists, like Soyinka in Kongi's Harvest and Death and the King's Horseman; and in Clark's Ozidi, "show", in Clark's words, "a definite tendency towards this composite art of the folk theatre."<sup>28</sup>

In Ozidi the people of Orua, a delta community, want a new king and their tradition demands that each district of Orua should supply a candidate who will then be proclaimed king by the council of state. It happens that it is the turn of Ozidi's district to provide a candidate, but owing to the ravages of small-pox every member of Ozidi's district, excepting Ozidi and his elder brother Temugedege, had died. Though younger than Temugedege, Ozidi happens also to be the acknowledged hero of the society; the king makers anticipate that Ozidi may use the opportunity to present himself as candidate for the throne of Orua; instead he declines, stating that since they were barely two of them from their own district, even if they won the throne of Orua they may never retain it. Ozidi then suggests that another district, more populous than their own, should provide a candidate for the throne of Orua. Temugedege decides to disagree with his brother, and eagerly presents himself before the Council of State of Orua.

Temugedege: I Staggering in to the surprise of all; he is dribbling with drink.

There, there, you speak for yourself, my young  
And strong one. So is this why you locked me in  
With chicken? You see, good people, this is how  
Your champion treats his own elder brother  
Born of the same vagina. Now, turning  
To this business of King, who is

Temugedege to refuse the offer of royalty  
 If Orua wishes it? Of course, Temugedege  
 Agrees to sit on the royal throne if only  
 For a day!<sup>29</sup>

There is dramatic rhythm in this passage: Temugedege not only says something, he plays with his thoughts, very often at his own expense. He says Ozidi ought to have supported him merely on the grounds that they were both born "of the same vagina"; here language, character, and vision cohere. All over the world there exist people like Temugedege; those to whom as Yeats puts it "there is nothing as passionate as a vested interest disguised as intellectual conviction," whose worthlessness as statesmen is compensated for by passionate politics. This degenerate figure, Temugedege, enters the council of state, an "august gathering," "staggering...dribbling with drink." He confesses that among the many detractions that kept him locked up at home was "chicken." In this way Temugedege undercuts his eagerness to "sit on the royal throne if only/For a day!" The humour arises from the incongruity created by the difference between his ambitions and the meanness of his detractions. Here Clark is working on multiple levels: speech, action, and character cohere in a single playful movement. The dramatic element is there; we are now able to perceive the action, speech, and character simultaneously, and this playfulness is channelled through Temugedege's naive and idiotic behaviour.

Immediately after Temugedege's coronation, Ozidi's apprehensions become a reality as the king makers retire into their separate districts and forget to enact important rituals.. Later in the action we are told that from the start the king makers knew that the crowning of Temugedege was "children's play"; Temugedege, they say, is a "king/No child will accept." In doing so they forgot that "a god is/A god once you make him so. After/The ceremony, he ceases to be mere wood. Give him/ Palm oil then, and he'll insist on blood."<sup>30</sup>

We shall see in our discussion of Ozidi's anger that its origins spring from the original travesty of the ceremony by the king makers.

We should not be surprised to notice that "play" becomes a central motif in Ozidi; each character, in one way or the other, self-consciously plays a part in the ensuing contest between the house of Ozidi and the conspirators. Ozidi is the kind of play which Clark calls the myth play. In this type of play, "the story derives directly from an ancestor or founder myth well known to the audience, and the development is not so much by logic and discussion as by a poetic evocation of some religious experience shared alike by performer and spectators as in ancient Greece."<sup>31</sup> In poetical dramas like Ozidi, Clark says, the dramatist is not engaged in "logic and discussion" but in "a poetic evocation of some religious experience." Our point of departure as "spectators...settling down...into an open area of play,"<sup>32</sup> is to take part in this experience.

For example, the story-teller in Ozidi begins by welcoming his audience who have "come to see our show" and asks them that "before we can perform for your pleasure" they wish to offer sacrifices to placate the water spirits. He also apologises that perhaps his audience may "think this a quaint custom, that we are propping up cobwebs that with broom and brush we ought to sweep clean out of the house." Indeed, we shall see in our discussion that Clark's archaism does pay enormously. The narrator begins to remind his audience that we are "living in a free, democratic country," and that he will engage in no "show that looks down on tradition." The form which Clark adopts for his prologue is the form of the masquerade. It gives him the audacity to switch from contemporary events to antiquity. This omnidirectional consciousness of time is also obtained during the ritual sacrifice when the human community asks the dead to give them money, good children, and good women. Finally, even though the play is going to be a tragedy, spectators are enticed by the exhilaration of the narrator:

...who was it said our country lacks the fertile soil to produce sweet innocent flowers? Let him come and view these sprigs to the garland we have gathered in one spot, all of them undefiled still by bird or wind.<sup>33</sup>

The playfulness of the narrator is made plausible because we have been told that we are witnessing a "show." No attempt is made to be "realistic" except in scenes where violent action and conflict are simulated. In fact, this method is not peculiar to Clark; the Cuchulainn plays of W.B. Yeats, and the two versions of Deirdre written by Yeats and Synge, adopt similar techniques of putting "those tumultuous" heroic "centuries into tale or drama"<sup>34</sup> by structuring their actions around familiar objects. Similarly, when the Council of Orua is first introduced, we find a similar spirit of playfulness and familiarity at work:

Azezabife: More cause why one must be elected  
Immediately. This state needs a head to put  
It on its feet.

Elder: I was not aware we were lying down.

Ofe: You were never one to care in what position  
You stood in the eye of the public.  
Right now, if I may tell you, Orua  
Is like a tree fallen in the open.

Elder: Let it lie there then for a while; a little  
Respite should do our body politic some good.

Azezabife: How you talk, old man! A tree fallen is free booty  
For all.  
Women in long skirts  
May even walk over it, that is, if they  
Don't cart it off for firewood right away.<sup>35</sup>

The humour derives from a pervading feeling that there is something incongruous with deliberations about the election of a king losing their solemnity and drifting into trite comparisons. It is the playfulness with words that creates the sense of humour and of the dramatic. A few lines later in the same scene, Azezabife says of Oguaran, "The man's plucking leaves to cover somebody"; the play with words and metaphors becomes more dramatic because it anticipates the scene in which Ozidi's head is wrapped in cocoyam leaves by this same group of people. Poetry is dramatic, therefore, to the extent of its playfulness and we shall see this presently. When Ozidi is asked by the group to speak, he begins by first taking a roll-call of names:

Ozidi [rises]: Ofe, your praise name?

Ofe [beating his chest]: I am Ofe-begbulumane, Ofe  
The Short, so they call me.

Ozidi: Ofe, the Short, I greet you.

Ofe: That is my name, And yours?

Ozidi: Ozidi.

Ofe: Ozidi, then I greet you too.

Ozidi: Thank you. Azezabife, your own?

Azezabife: I am the Skeléton Man --  
Azezabife --that's ~~the~~ name  
In full.

Ozidi: Azezabife, our Skeleton Man,  
I salute you.

Azezabife: I greet you also. And your own?

Ozidi: Ozidi.

Now, you Oguaran, how shall I greet  
You in this august gathering?

Oguaran: Oguaran buo-asi braeasi, of course.  
That means a man possessed of twenty toes,  
Twenty fingers. Call me that!

Ozidi: Man of Twenty Toes  
And Twenty Fingers, I greet you then.

Oguaran: I give you back your greetings, Ozidi.  
You are a great man though one often  
Frothing over like the palm-wine. Now,  
Pour me more drink!

Ozidi: And you Agbogidi, your name?

Agbogidi: Agbogidi patu-patu, that is,  
The Warrior in the Nude, you fellow. ~~And you're~~  
Is Ozidi, the latest born in town knows that. <sup>36</sup>

The theatricality of this passage should be seen in the perspective of the medium which the author is using; Clark has returned to the tradition, common in all heroic literature, wherein the protagonists boasted and bragged about their roles and performances. The technique is primitive enough to be ignored by the reader brought up on the naturalistic style, but to do so in Ozidi would be to miss an essential element

in the play. In fact, bragging, boasting, and contests implicit in the relationship between the groups, is central to its theme and structure. The roll call scene has two effects on the action: the protagonists are committed to further action in the play in the context of their individual strengths; each time someone repeats his name as a challenge he takes an oath. It also anticipates the real context: it forms the moral basis of Ozidi's anger discussed below. Indeed, Ozidi's attack on the leaders of Orua takes the form of a challenge to a contest as he vilifies and ridicules his opponents. The conspirators respond accordingly, claiming that their action is taken as a means of protection. Examined closely, Ozidi's speech contains all the elements of the boasting and bragging-match:

Ozidi: You elected my brother king. You knew  
 He was soft in the head. But you placed upon him  
 The supreme burden, knowing well he lacks  
 The pad to bear the weight. It is now  
 The fifth day of his ascension. Or have  
 You already forgotten you have a new king?  
 Has the beetle made empty craters of your barns,  
 And cockroaches invested your fish-baskets  
 That none of you has brought tributes  
 To your new king my brother? When Alale  
 Was king, although for three moons only, did I not lead  
 A raid among the Urhobo that returned with several slaves  
 To build your state? When Zitare  
 Was chosen king of all Kolobiri and  
 He passed out with the going of the Flood,  
 Did I not spread wild-fire among the Itsekiri  
 And ravish all the territory? But enough!<sup>37</sup>

But his friends, he reminds them, have become morally vile. This degradation and disparagement is registered through the incongruous contrasts he makes between former lions, now turned "cats in the laps of women without seed."

...when the crown comes the way of my family, service  
 Becomes crippled at once, and lions that should be out  
 Prowling are purring by the fireside like cats in  
 Laps of women without seed.<sup>38</sup>

Now, with contemptuous scorn, he depreciates them with abusive language:

...may you all  
Be matcheted piecemeal a thousand times and left  
Over to rot by the wayside. Your flesh is  
Not fit for the fish in the stream to feed on;  
Your bones are no good, for beasts of the bush to maul  
At. Nor will fowls of the air peck at your entrails.  
As a body corporate, you are one carcass  
Filled to bursting with excrement and stench.  
If there is any hiding behind empty  
Covers, I shall call the crier now and have him beat  
My message to you on the back.  
Of the calabash. And should one of you,  
Hearing me, go sour in his bowels  
Or feel like spitting in my face,  
Let him step out now; I am all set  
To wrestle with him, but if he prefers the spear  
Or sword, I should be glad to meet him  
At the market-place.<sup>39</sup>

Shaken by Ozidi's invective, the citizens and leaders of Orua regroup and react accordingly:

Fourth Citizen: Here comes Ofe, a man more  
resourceful than  
The tortoise itself. Between him and  
Ozidi there is much love lost.

Ofe: Have you risen, good people of Orua? I see  
You are sweating. Have you seen Osuosala  
The stick-insect?<sup>40</sup>

Ofe's ironic reference to the citizens as "good people" is worth noting; as a politician Ofe requires their support before he can plan how to tackle his opponent, Ozidi. This attitude of trying to win the people's favour is reinforced by the observation, "I see/You are sweating;" he reminds them that not only have Ozidi's insults affected the leaders of Orua, they were actually aimed at the whole public. In this way, Ofe transforms what would ordinarily be a quarrel between Ozidi and the leaders of Orua to an act of arrogance on the part of Ozidi. Ofe's last remark about Ozidi is then registered in the form of a witty riddle: "Have you seen Osuosala/The stick-insect?" The Citizen's reply is that he saw Ozidi. On the other hand, the Citizens

reveal that between Ofe and "Ozidi there is much love lost." This witty statement is dramatically effective because it reinforces our notions of Ofe's attitude to Ozidi, and it also anticipates Ofe's role as a major antagonist to Ozidi in the action. Ofe subsequently ridicules Ozidi's physical strength by suggesting that Ozidi "roars all the time" and it is always "like filtering a torrent/Trying to catch all he said in one basket."<sup>41</sup> By the end of the scene Ofe successfully turns the citizens against Ozidi and in his victory, represented in characteristic animal imagery, Ozidi becoming the leopard which has strayed into a human community:

Third Citizen: The coils of the python certainly  
Are growing thick and fast about our necks!

Fifth Citizen: And where, if I may ask, shall we collect  
That human head to pay our ultimate tribute?

Ofe: Good citizens of Orua, will you  
Please hear me through before you place stakes on  
My path? You'll admit this had been  
A surprise leap on our persons. Now what foil  
I have to get us out of the leopard's spoor  
We walked in of our own will I cannot in  
The open street unfold to the full.  
.....

First Citizen: We are right behind you, Ofe.

Fourth Citizen: Just show us the way.

Second Citizen: Any path to lead the leopard out of town  
Before he despoils our goats.

Ofe: Come on then, friends; I see you will be saved.  
I They troop out after him.<sup>42</sup>

Since Ofe is "a man more resourceful than/The Tortoise itself," he wins the respect of the citizens through careful manipulation of their instincts of fear and insecurity. Therefore, in order for the community to survive, from Ofe's point of view, dangerous elements like Ozidi must be eliminated. The dialogue between Ofe and the citizens is dramatically forceful, it anticipates future violent conflict between Ofe and Ozidi. The element of suspense arises from the fact that at the end of the dialogue between Ofe and the citizens, the irrational element is introduced by the Second Citizen who declares that "Any path to lead the

leopard out of town/Before he despoils our goats" will be accepted. Therefore, the contest between Ozidi and the forces led by Ofe and the other conspirators will be fought on these irrational terms; the general movement reveals the rise of Ofe to power and the fall of Ozidi. The simplicity of Clark's verse can sometimes, as it does in Song of a Goat and in Ozidi, be deceptive; its dramatic power owes a great deal to the resourcefulness and playfulness of his characters. All or part of these advantages are directly related to the fact that Clark is exploiting the beliefs and social vision of a real African society, the Ijaw.

Even the scene in which Ozidi is killed and his head cut off by the conspirators is enacted in the manner of contest between the conspirators themselves as they compete for power and leadership:

First, Azezaife, to his theme of the skeleton song and dance, tries to lift up Ozidi's head but, failing, falls aside in much discomfiture. Agbogidi and Oguaran also try, each to his own special tune and dance. Finally, Ofe, strutting on the outskirts moves in to loud cheers and cries of 'Make way for Ofe! Make way for him! Who stands in his path kicks a stump.' Ofe does his own special dance and song three times round the fallen Ozidi, then swiftly he stoops down and, although staggering like the others, successfully lifts up Ozidi's head, carrying it aloft for all to see. There is a great burst of applause, and all the Orua host take up the theme of their new found leader. A procession forms, led by Ofe who is now possessed.<sup>437</sup>

A similar spirit of playfulness is evoked in the contest scenes between Oreame and the conspirators later in the action, often ending in a "great burst of applause" from spectators. The humour is caused by the exaggerated use of magical powers by a protagonist to subdue his antagonist, in this case, Ozidi's head. But because the performance is done before a corpse, the humour is grotesque. There is a similar kind of humour in Synge's Riders to the Sea; a grave digger says about Maurya, the old woman, who has lost all her sons, "It's a great wonder she

wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already."<sup>44</sup> In Synge's The Shadow of the Glen, a young herdsman woos Nora while her husband supposedly dead is still lying on the bed. Similarly, the Tramp reminds Nora that "A man that's dead can do no hurt" but when the owner of the house supposed to have died suddenly sits up in his bed the Tramp is shaken, and naively asks "Is it not dead you are?"<sup>45</sup> The humour originates from the beginning of the play when Dan Burke himself decided to play the part of a corpse in order to witness his own wake, and to listen to his wife make plans about her future with the young herdsman. In Lady Gregory's Spreading The News the whole comedy evolves on a misunderstanding summarized by one of the characters to be "some dispute I suppose it was that rose between Jack Smith and Bartley Fallon, and it seems Jack made off, and Bartley is following him with a hayfork!" But we know that there was no dispute and that nobody, in a vindictive mood, is following the other with a hayfork. Later on Jack Smith appears and reinforces the rumours by threatening that "I'll break the head of any man that says that!"<sup>46</sup> In both instances, the humour derives as much from the original distortion as well as from the living imagination of the people.

In Clark's Ozidi, the play element is sustained by the contest motif. At the end of the first movement in Ozidi after the idiot king, Temugedege, abdicates and flees into the bush, the dead Ozidi's young wife, Orea, tries to commit suicide, but she is rescued by an old woman who comforts her that

You do not know I am of the same club as  
 Your Mother Oreame who's our president.  
 Do not wail more; do not seek to take  
 Your life. Or don't you know you are heavy with  
 Another life, yes, a son who Oyin Almighty  
 Herself is sending forth to put to right  
 This terrible wrong done to his father?<sup>47</sup>

In the original saga, Orea appeals directly to her witch mother, Oreame, who uses her magic wings to fly to Orua to rescue her daughter. Clark's introduction of the old woman is important for the development, in the

play itself, of Oreame's role in the contest. The fact that Oreame and the old woman belong to the same club emphasises a number of points: the dead Ozidi was probably the leading champion of the club; it also justifies Oreame's role as a grandmother to young Ozidi. She is a powerful challenger, finally the passage anticipates the birth of the avenger, young Ozidi. Orea then returns to her own mother's home in a neighbouring settlement; after staying there for seven months she gives birth to the second Ozidi. The announcement of young Ozidi's birth confirms the old woman's prophecy that the son will be born to avenge his father's death. Even nature responded to the birth of young Ozidi.

In the seventh month of Orea seeing  
Her belly, she bore the dead Ozidi  
A son safe away in her mother's town  
Ododama. That day it rained barrels  
Of water through a sieve of sunshine. You  
Could say of the storm that a giant wind  
Had taken the sea as an orange by the mouth  
And sucking it, had spat in face of the sun  
Who winced lightning, and then hurled it all back  
At earth as rain and bolts of thunder. Observing  
The phenomenon, men said a leopard  
Had generated in the forest.<sup>48</sup>

The animal imagery in the last line re-enacts the old woman's prophecy. Here the contest is taken over by the grandmother who trains him to undergo tests of endurance and other initiatory rites. The motif of contest is central to the play and accounts for Oreame's determination to train young Ozidi to prepare him for the eventual fight with his father's assassins. The evocation of the image of the leopard reverses the determined effort made by the conspirators and the Citizens of Orua to symbolically rid their town of that beast.

The second act begins with Orea, now a widow of thirty-two; she and her mother bring up young Ozidi. The grandmother, Oreame prepares him for the eventual confrontation with his father's enemies. Throughout the play, she looks at young Ozidi as an avenger; for instance, she appeals to Oyin Tamara for justification of her case:

Ay, Oyin Tamara, you who are mother  
 Of all mankind, moulder of earth, sky and sea,  
 I beseech you, is my child in the right  
 In this matter? Twenty years ago, men of Orua  
 Turned upon his father's head the mortar aimed  
 At the enemy and pounding the man to pulp, served him  
 As a royal dish to his brother. Where has it  
 Been heard said a son of the soil was sacrificed to the spirits  
 Of his land? Where has it been seen one dog ate  
 Another? Only in Orua, only in this city  
 Are such abominable things taken in jest.<sup>49</sup>

She then begins in earnest to state her case:

The seed you were pleased to grant the man, even  
 As he fell splintered in the afternoon like  
 An oil bean tree, seeks today all agents to that mortar  
 So that the feast begun before his birth may find  
 A finish. The boy has no left pay of the leopard;  
 He is not possessed of the cunning of the cobra.  
 He is a fledgling eagle flying for the first time  
 To call home his father-forgotten in some dungpit  
 In the swamp, so he can take his seat among  
 The worthy dead and have served to him his own dish  
 At times of sacrifice. And now as after,  
 He flies forth under the shadow of your great wings.  
 If I am in the wrong inciting the boy forth,  
 Sever right now the string that binds him  
 Firm to my hand, for I do not want him shot down  
 As a duck.<sup>50</sup>

Since Ozidi is also attached to Oreame by the umbilical cord, or what she calls "the string that binds him/Firm" to her hand, she symbolizes all the spiritual, creative, and demonic forces which inspire young Ozidi; hence the closer the hero keeps to these forces the greater his strength. Ozidi engages in the fights in order to "call home his father forgotten in some dung pit/In the swamp," his combats form part of a ritual which he must perform; in this way, his initial task is performed in the context of the social vision of his society. Since Tamara, the supreme deity, is also a creator and the source of moral justice, Ozidi and Oreame justify their actions against the conspirators by evoking the religious significance of the conflict. As a point of natural law, Ozidi must raise the compound of his fathers; but socially

Ozidi's fights gradually exceed their mark.

Clark reveals in Ozidi that working in Archaic modes, exploiting attitudes and beliefs of an archaic society, can be and does serve as an asset to the dramatist; Clark therefore benefitted from the dominant revival motif in Irish drama. I hope to examine two other aspects of his dramaturgy that are central to his theory and practice -- the nature of the tragic experience and Clark's humour.

In Act One of Ozidi, Orea tries to convince the first Ozidi to stay away from the raid which the village crier had announced the previous day. But at the moment that Ozidi is about to listen to his bride, "the drums and horn in the square draw to a crescendo"; Ozidi's heroism is roused:

Ozidi: No, I must go, Orea, I really must.  
I called this tune and now they are  
Playing it, do you say I may not dance?  
It is my brother they seek to decorate,  
Remember that, Orea! Am I to forfeit  
My brother and king his prerogative  
To tributaries?

Orea: But the lizard, my husband, the lizard  
Ran ahead of you! And what use  
Will tributes be to anybody if you trip?  
(Drums and horn come closer still, and strains  
of the song Puba erein fill the morning sky.)

Ozidi: Let go, Orea, let go at once.  
You are asking me to eat my words like sand.  
Tell me,  
Where have you heard it said  
The lizard tripped up a leopard in the fight?  
There, hold on,  
My comrades, I am coming direct  
To you, I am coming!  
(He breaks off, tears into the shrine and in less  
than a minute is back dressed as for battle....  
He throws his wife one last look and rushes off  
to join in the raid.)<sup>51</sup>

Here, the action in the scene is stimulated by a public ritual which occurs off stage; Clark does not describe the ritual; he uses it to create the necessary emotional tension and also to effect change of scene. She begins her marriage life as a heroine of deferred hopes; her

husband never returns from the raid. Weighted down by failure, humiliation and frustration, she returns to her own hometown to meet her mother. Even here we find that she constantly reproves her mother for bringing up her only son to re-enact her husband's unfinished heroic combats. Throughout the play, Clark presents Orea in her domestic roles as a wife and mother. On the other hand, Oreame represents the heroic and the power of natural law.

The life of Orea represents the antithesis of the heroic code of conduct enacted by the two Ozidis and Oreame. In fact, Orea and Temugedege have lived with two heroes; at the end of the play, they do not wish to see heroic events re-enacted. Orea's life as widow develops side by side with the domestic side of young Ozidi's career; her own ambitions are reflected as a young widow's aspirations for continuity. Here, she expresses her disapproval to her mother for training and preparing young Ozidi for a heroic life.

Orea: I have only this one child and I do  
 All I can to keep him under cover of  
 My roof. But you always incite him to fly out  
 Among black-kites. Is it not enough that I'm turned  
 Into wood for fire in my time of flower?  
 Do you want me to fall down fruitless as well?<sup>52</sup>

The retreat from the heroic to the homely is also revealed in the way Orea is presented. She is "a widow of about thirty, sits by the doorway cracking palm kernels." We also find the tendency of dramatizing the unheroic in the life of Temugedege. When young Ozidi and the two women return to the deserted homestead of the Ozidi family, Temugedege is represented as a tramp:

(The party has now beaten a way within a few yards of the umbrella tree. Beneath it is a small clearing where a man has set up his keep. Pots, pans, and cans, many broken, and brown and black with wear and weather, lie scattered about. On three blocks of stone a decrepit and unkempt old man is cooking himself a miserable meal over a fire that refuses to respond to

his weak puffs of breath. When the party descends on him, he is in the grip of a fit of asthmatic coughing, and at the sudden sight of the strangers he falls back on his haunches in great fear.)<sup>53</sup>

Clark's use of epithets like "decrepit and unkempt," "miserable," "idiot," uncharacteristic of the shorter plays, forms one way of characterisation in Ozidi. Similarly, he makes Orea recoil instinctively from all actions that relate directly to heroism; in a way, to ensure the safety of her only son.

Owing to Orea's withdrawal from taking part in any heroic actions, she suppresses her bitterness; her consciousness is full of sorrow, a bitterness caused by the knowledge that she has been defeated from the beginning of her marriage life. At the end of Act One and at the end of Act Five her anguish is enacted in the form of the lament over her husband's head and as she bathes her son.

The peasant plays of Synge and Lady Gregory reveal that just as the heroic life is a fit subject for a tragic drama, peasant life can just as well form subjects for a tragic drama. Even in a play like Deirdre of the Sorrows in which the action is based on a heroic legend, Synge reduces his characters to peasants by having them speak the regular dialect he used in his other peasant plays. Lady Gregory bases the action of her tragedy, The Gaol Gate, on lives of members of a peasant family, like Synge in his Riders to the Sea. In these Irish plays, tragedy is a moment of heightened self-knowledge. W.B. Yeats notes that in

...poetical drama there is, it is held, an antithesis between drama and lyric poetry, for lyric poetry however much it move you when read out of a book can, as these critics think, but encumber the action. Yet when we go back a few centuries and enter the great periods of drama, character grows less and sometimes disappears, and there is much lyric feeling....<sup>54</sup>

What Yeats calls "character" is the contestant, the one who starts or takes part in a bragging and boasting-match. Because there is playfulness

with objects and words at such points in the drama, Yeats says, "Suddenly it strikes us that character is continuously present in comedy alone"; it is in the moment of comedy that character is defined. On the other hand,

...while amid the great moments, when Timon orders his tomb, when Hamlet cries to Horatio 'Absent thee from felicity awhile,' when Anthony names 'Of many thousand kisses the poor last' all is lyricism, unmixed passion, 'the integrity of fire.'<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, "tragic art" is "passionate art" which plunges its victims "into personal thought and metaphor." Because the tragic victim is "a mind that waited the supreme crisis,"<sup>56</sup> the tragic experience is "self-knowledge after defeat."<sup>57</sup>

African tragedy, Soyinka says, "plunges straight into the 'ghothic realm', the seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and being. Into this universal womb once plunged and emerged Ogun, the first actor, disintegrating within the abyss." Nor had his "spiritual re-assembly" required even a "copying of actuality in the ritual re-enactment of his devotees." Instead, the tragic experience is "the celebration of cosmic struggle"; moments during which tragic victim plunges into "the abyss of transition, "sings and dances in authentic archetypal images," revealing "a consciousness of the loss of the eternal essence of his entity."<sup>58</sup> African rituals and funerals provide appropriate moments for the re-enactment of the tragic myth. The closest archaic example I can find for this great tragic moment revived in Irish drama is the keening which Synge describes in his Aran Islands. Synge witnessed the burial of an old woman in the Aran Islands and he tells us that while "the grave was being opened the woman sat down among the flat tombstones...and began the wild keening, or crying for the dead." He then says:

This grief of the keening is no personal complaint for the death of one woman over eighty years, but seems to contain the whole passionate rage that lurks somewhere in every native of the island.

In this cry of pain the inner consciousness of the people seems to lay itself bare for an instant, and to reveal the mood of beings who feel their isolation in the face of a universe that wars on them with winds and seas. They are usually silent, but in the presence of death all outward show of indifference or patience is forgotten, and they shriek with pitiable despair before the horror of the fate to which they are all doomed.<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, Irish and African tragedy is the celebration of man's isolation in the face of immense, chaotic, cosmic growth and decay. In practice, Synge exploited this attitude in plays like Riders to the Sea, The Shadow of the Glen, The Playboy of the Western World, and Deirdre of the Sorrows. In Riders to the Sea, Maurya ends her keen with a statement of reaffirmation and reconstituted wholeness: "No man at all can live forever, and we must be satisfied."<sup>60</sup> In The Playboy of the Western World, Christy Mahon's "impetuous sweetheart, the tragic Pegeen Mike... loses her nerve at the moment of crisis, Pegeen with her wild lamentations at the end of the play -- 'Oh my grief, I've lost him surely, I've lost the only Playboy of the Western World.' -- Pegeen who has been terribly defeated by her unfortunate loyalty to those enslaving household gods."<sup>61</sup> Yet Deirdre's lament over the bodies of her dear companions, the sons of Usna at the end of Synge's Deirdre of the Sorrows, is unsurpassed in Anglo-Irish drama:

Deirdre [showing Naisi's knife]: I have a little key to unlock the prison of Naisi, you'd shut upon his youth forever. Keep back Conchubor, for the High King who is your master has put his hands between us. [She half turns to the grave.] It was sorrows were foretold, but great joys were my share always, yet it is a cold place I must go to be with you, Naisi, and it's cold your arms will be this night that were warm about my neck so often... It's a pitiful thing to be talking out when your ears are shut to me. It's a pitiful thing, Conchubor, you have done this night in Emain, yet a thing will be a joy and a triumph to the ends of life and time.<sup>62</sup>

It is characteristic of these laments that they end in a note of lyric self-assertion, or what Soyinka calls "spiritual re-assemblage."

It is to be realized then that lyrical outpouring is an important aspect of the archaistic tendencies in Synge and Lady Gregory. The Gaol Gate, by Lady Gregory presents us with another example of this revival motif in the Irish drama. In Lady Gregory's Gaol Gate two illiterate country women receive a letter sent by the local prison authorities containing information about the fate of a relation of the women, Denis Cahel; the latter has been detained on a false charge of murder. The two women bring the sealed letter to the gate-keeper of the gaol, who reads it and callously tells them that the man they came to see has been hanged. The women break down into an instantaneous keen, which examined closely reveals a suppressed nationalistic feeling, a negative attitude shown against the penal system:

There is lasting kindness in Heaven when no kindness is found upon earth. There will surely be mercy found for him, and not the hard judgement of men.<sup>63</sup>

In Clark's plays the lament is a moment of emotional crisis. At the end of Act One of Ozidi the conspirators bring home Ozidi's head and triumphantly present it to his brother; Temugedege; the latter recoils from it while Orea "gathers the head of her husband and sitting herself down on the ground, cradles" it in her laps and begins to lament.

Orea: Let me blow the flies from off your face  
 Before they pass worms upon it.  
 So they have killed you dumb, my husband,  
 Before I bore you a son? This morning  
 I said do not go to the raid. The lizard said  
 Do not go to the raid. But you would not  
 Listen, you would not hear us, stubborn man.  
 Last night my body was your bed. Sleep on, I said,  
 But the cocks woke you up, the drums summoned you  
 Forth into the night. So it was to death!  
 ...my man, the champion, now gone across  
 The stream before the ferryman heard his coming call.<sup>64</sup>

She then reflects on the nature of the other women of Orua who have not joined her in her lament:

Oh, as I wail alone today, like a bird  
 That has wandered far out of flock and clime

So may you wail, so may you wail, and falling  
 Asleep, wake up again wailing  
 As truly, the moon at every fresh tide shall spill  
 Her bowl full over your house, full over your head. 65

Like Deirdre and all the other women in the Irish drama, Orea expresses her hopes, ideals, and renews her beliefs and then resolves her conflict in the end by anticipating that history must repeat itself when the wives of the conspirators will "wail, and falling/ Asleep, wake up again wailing."

Similarly, at the end of the play after her mother has been killed by Ozidi during one of their combat scenes, Orea is bathing Ozidi, but unlike the end of Act One, when she had been combating human forces, at the end of Act Five, she confronts the forces of nature: cough, fever, and smallpox. Her lament represents a culmination of her aspirations, the struggle between the forces of creation and destruction which forms the basis of the conflict in Ozidi:

No, it cannot be! Tamara-- You cannot  
 Let this happen to me. My mother no longer lives  
 In this house; so it cannot contain you.  
 She grew wings, she walked on clouds, trespassed  
 On sacred grounds, and for that you struck her down  
 By the hand of one born of her own daughter.  
 No, I am only a poor hen roosting  
 Here in a hut by a hearth at which only one chicken  
 Nestles -- my one child bigger than a crowd!  
 A child sees home his parents in the dusk  
 Of their lives; so should his in his own turn.  
 No such duties has my boy done; indeed  
 He still has not caught yaws. This  
 He is now doing as every child cuts teeth.  
 Here's common water then, here's common soap,  
 And here's sponge crushed from leaves of plantain--  
 I need nothing more before I scrub dry a mere riot of yaws  
 Broken over my son. When a guest  
 Comes on a visit, he goes home after.  
 Return therefore, our late visitor, taking your flesh  
 With you, but leave behind for us  
 Our skin and bones. 66

In the last scene Clark uses ritual to dramatize two moral attitudes: first, Oreame's belief that only blood can cleanse society, second

Orea's opposite moral view that "common water" can equally be an effective way of cleansing society. The contrast is worked out again in the comparison which she makes between her mother who "grew wings... walked on clouds, trespassed/On sacred ground" and was stricken down by the deity, and herself whom she compares to "poor hen roosting/Here in a hut by a hearth at which only one chicken/Nestles." She humbles herself because she has been chastened by events of history she had lived. Her moral vision is the opposite of her mother's heroic code of conduct. In the scene, ritual is used as way of concentrating the thoughts of the characters, and Orea's lament is matched only by Deirdre's lament over the grave of the sons of Usna in Synge's Deirdre of the Sorrows, a culmination of the lyric aspiration dramatized as the theme of love in Deirdre of the Sorrows and Orea's other lament over the head of the first Ozidi at the end of Act One. In the plays of Synge, Lady Gregory (in Gaol Gate), and Clark, the impact of the laments is determined by the importance which the events have for the survival of the group. In Ozidi, Orea is a victim to two generations of heroism; in her lament she appeals for justice from Tamara, the supreme deity. In order to justify her plea she repudiates all the heroic values which her mother and her son had fought for. Here, Clark uses ritual as a means of creating a dramatic situation. We can agree with Yeats that the great moment of tragic experience whether in Deirdre, Maurya, or Orea is always "self-knowledge after defeat." This experience is resolved in a reconstituted action, which reaffirms or renews belief in certain things. We have shown that there is tragedy in the heroic and well as in the peasant soul. The totality of achievement of the Irish dramatists and of Clark is that they hoped "to make" in Yeats's words, "that high life mix into some rough contemporary life without ceasing to be itself."<sup>67</sup> Synge, we have seen, could write his Deirdre in peasant dialect and yet preserve its passion; Yeats brought his The Countess Cathleen into a peasant cottage and still preserved its spirit. We have seen that Clark's interest to exploit life

in contemporary rural Ijaw society has taken a similar approach and has gained thereby.

At the beginning of this chapter I indicated that Clark is a humourist of significant power who obtains his effects through the "conscious exploitation of language for purposes of persuasion and pleasure."<sup>68</sup> In practice, it means exploiting linguistic and rhetorical devices of folklore: magic and myth create humour; folk speech is full of playfulness and wit. Comedy and satire, I pointed out above, deal with social situations; like Synge and Lady Gregory, Clark exploits life in archaic rural society and adopts its beliefs and sense of humour. Therefore, Clark does not produce what Soyinka calls "broad comedy of the most hilarious situation"<sup>69</sup> -- stage comedy. In Clark, comedy and satire spring directly from the rhetorical categories of folk speech: proverbs, riddles, parables, and magic.

For example, the following scene between Temugedege and his brother, Ozidi, shows that even after the crowning of Temugedege as king he has not yet grasped the implications of his situation.

Ozidi: (Coming upon him.) Temugedege, what are you doing with a chewing-stick in your mouth at this time of day?

Temugedege: (Starts but retovers himself quickly.) You forget yourself, young man. I am King now, you know. So learn not to talk to me as you have done in the past. I am King of Orua now.

Ozidi: And have any of your subjects come to salute you yet?

Temugedege: Subjects, oh no, come to think of it. <sup>70</sup>

The dramatic effectiveness of the scene derives from Clark's ability to undercut Temugedege by carefully revealing the man's self-importance in being a king. The "chewing-stick" used at a wrong hour of the day is a dramatic reduction of Temugedege's idea of kingship and leisure. This ridiculous side of Temugedege is revealed in the following list of priorities enumerated by him:

I shall myself  
 Select a caretaker committee of seven virgin girls who will  
 whisper  
 Appropriate words into our ears. Do you  
 Hear that? One shall fetch me my royal chewing-stick,  
 another my goblet  
 On morning glory, three shall pick the grey hair  
 And lice on our sacred head, and any climbing up  
 Our arm-pits; all this as we recline  
 Basking in the evening glow of our life,  
 Two shall pare our finger and toe nails, and one  
 Shall scratch our tender back although we both know  
 The itch in the flesh is far down elsewhere.<sup>71</sup>

Temugedege persistently and frivolously mis-places emphasis until the humour spills over into the grotesque; Temugedege reveals that he is invested by vermin. Yet, to be effective, satire must have a target and a powerful one for that matter; the satirist also takes risks when he pokes fun at authority; hence Temugedege threatens his brother, Ozidi for mocking at him: "I warn you, mind what you say/As from now on, young man, I'll have you/Arrested for treasonable felony."<sup>72</sup> Clark is using Temugedege to satirize the vice in men who peddle self-interest for public good. Temugedege is the kind of character who sees kingship as a way of getting more wives, becoming important for selfish reasons; here personal interest masquerades grotesquely for public good. The vice forms the basis for the continued survival of autocracy.

Omoni's speeches, made in a broken form of English at the end of the play, reinforce Ozidi's criticism of Temugedege. Young Ozidi's attendant, Omoni, does not speak pidgin; his is a broken form used for the first time in a Clark play. Clark was probably working on the assumption that since Omoni is a slave, he does not speak original Ijaw. Ozidi and Omoni are on the way to the market:

Attendant: Masa, papa Kuku leaf shed for market sef?

Ozidi: None that I know of. The man was no mean Shopkeeper; war was his business, and that He always pursued in the interest Of the state.

Attendant: An' he nor leaf any property at all at all. I day hask sake of all them big big

people way day say dem day  
 sarvice publick nor day froget for  
 put plenty plenty insi'e dem ~~own~~ pocket.<sup>73</sup>

Linguistic deviation is obtained by a self-conscious distortion of words like "sarvice publick," "froget," "hask" for comic purposes. Omoni's concern with the acquisition of personal property in the name of the public service should be read in the context of the narrator's lengthy speech in which he criticised the modern way of getting big, at the beginning of the play.

Both Omoni and the narrator criticize modern leaders who use public roles as a means of acquiring personal power over others. The humorous scenes enacted between Ozidi and his brother relate to the dialogue between Omoni and young Ozidi; they also reinforce the ironic comment made by the Story-Tellers at the beginning of the play that "we're living in a free democratic sountry."

In general, in Ozidi, humour can be caused by enthusiasm as well as by ridicule. In Act Two the boy, Ozidi, and his grandmother are walking on a bush path leading to the farm. Oreame tries to test the boy's will by herself acting scenes from the masquerade.

Oreame: ...Here, will  
 You wait for me while I step aside and shit?

The Boy: Go on in and be back soon, mother.

Oreame: You won't be afraid?

The Boy: (beating his chest) There's nothing can scare me in this world.

Oreame: Good boy!  
 Good boy, brave as the big gorilla!  
(She steps into the bush and the boy unconsciously wheels round to look about him, half curious, half afraid. Meanwhile Oreame smartly comes back dressed up as the 'hill masquerade', taking up the whole road. Consequently, when the Boy faces round again, there is this huge 'hill' planted direct in his front where there was none before. The sight makes him jump.)

The Boy: Mother, oh, Mother, I am dead, I am dead!

Oreame: (issuing from cover of the 'hill' which she has made collapse deftly and thrown back into her basket.)

What is it,  
Child? Now what's the matter?

The Boy: The hill, look, there was a hill here just now.  
I could swear it by Tarakiriye.

Oreame: It must be a phantom hill  
For I can't see any around.

The Boy: I could swear it.

Oreame: All right, all right, my son,  
What about letting me go back to passing  
The water you cut short?<sup>74</sup>

Presently, Clark is collaborating with Oreame who is using the material of the masquerade to train her grandson while the dramatist exploits her imagination for the purposes of entertainment. By introducing a variety of the aspects of folk theatre into the play, Clark deliberately slows down the pace of the action. For instance, an important aspect of young Ozidi's quest is the eagerness to know his name and that of his father. For a long time, the women hide it from him but only playfully does he eventually know his name; and when it happens it comes to him when he is in a state of possession. This is how Clark represents the scene:

Oreame: Here, young man, you are a child no longer.  
Whether or not you have a father and he is  
Above or below the earth, it is for you  
To fly out and find the fact of the matter.

The Boy: I have always wanted to but which of you  
Has as much as shown me the way? Or  
Am I to fly out like a kite without tail?  
Sometimes I do believe those boys outside  
When they say I may be a falcon but one that  
You have tied to a rope tight in your hand.

Oreame: So that's what they say and you believe them, did you say?  
All right then, go there into the house  
And fetch me the bowl with potassium salt  
In it, and I'll tell you a secret.<sup>75</sup>

The scene becomes the final test and revelation once the Boy obeys his grandmother and goes into the house:

The boy though reluctant is curious; he goes in to fetch the bowl. He crosses the verandah into the house which, like many Ijaw buildings, has a living room opening out direct and down its entire length into the verandah. The boy can therefore be seen clearly all the way in and back. On entering the house, he trips on the floor which he does not know has been highly polished with a special preparation by the witch. As the boy moves farther on to where the bowl of potassium stands on a rack against the back wall, the passage for him becomes one of progressively tripping up. Because as a true Ijaw man he regards a fall, even outside the wrestling ground as a matter of great dishonour to his manhood, the boy though sliding dangerously does all in his power to stay standing in one continuous struggling movement. Meanwhile, his grandmother has jumped up and, prancing about the place, cheers the boy on in his dance on the slippery floor....The cheers bring Orea to the scene and before long she too is cheering and jumping. The boy eventually reaches the rack and, holding out the bowl of potassium salt, returns shouting in a complete state of possession. As he dances his way out, his words become coherent. And hearing them, both women run-after him awestruck and dumb.<sup>76</sup>

The boy announces, "I am Ozidi! Ozidi ay!" While Ozidi's dance on a slippery floor is dramatic and theatrical, Clark uses possession as a way of suspending disbelief, especially because it is believed that an individual under the state of possession can communicate with the gods and the ancestors; in fact, the god is said to enter into the individual, as Wole Soyinka shows in the case of Muzano, the mute, in The Road.

Sometimes the violation of a convention can become a means of obtaining information. In Act Three, Ozidi and his attendant, Omoni, are on their way to the market to find out the names of his father's assassins. On their way to the market Ozidi and his attendant arrive at a road junction Ozidi decides to lie across the path, and falls

asleep.

Later three market-women come by carrying huge baskets of wares on their heads. In the poor evening light, made dimmer still by the surrounding thick foliage, the women trip one after the other over the sleeping Ozidi.

However, when Ozidi wakes up he kicks "the first woman quite viciously on the shin."

First woman: He slept on the crossroad to market  
And when I try to lift up the beast, see how  
He goes and breaks my foot.

Third Woman: The foolhardy fellow, does he know  
Whose wife you are?

Second Woman: Not since that man Ozidi was killed  
Has such effrontery been seen around here.  
.....

Third Woman: He must be put back in the pit  
Where he belongs. Look here, young man  
Nobody insults me, the wife of Azezabife  
And lives to tell the story. When Ozidi  
Took on more feathers than the eagle's  
My husband it was who first plucked off  
His shock of feathers.<sup>78</sup>

Ozidi's attendant, who acts as chorus, sums up the scene in these words:

Massa, waytin my eye see today my  
mouth no fit talk. So na so ~~de~~ttin  
happ'n. But una country people dey  
too do wicked oh!<sup>79</sup>

At the beginning of this study of Ozidi, I showed that Clark was working in the form of the masquerades and that this form contains a certain logic: the evocation of the water spirits to bring prosperity to the human community; the audience being told that they are here to see a show, the performance of which then follows. In the action itself certain virtues are extolled and vices satirized. In doing so, the dramatist obtains his objectivity in that he is working in ancient traditional modes. In fact exemplary situations are carefully shown and the despicable grotesquely paraded. We have already examined the end of Orea, how she performs her rites of purification in a domestic scene between herself and her son. But not so the end of Oreame, who "grew wings."

Her reward is that she was struck down by her own grandson whom she had trained; the end of her heroic career is a reverse of all that she believed in and fought for heroically.

Oreame: [crawling dazedly on the ground.]

Oh, what an end! What an end!

To fall by the hand of my own son here.

I held up a shield for mine and myself

Against all-- comers, but none for me

Against him-- my son, my son!

[Oreame falls back on her haunches, with one hand trying to stop her scarlet cap of many feathers from falling, the other reaching in vain for her magic fan that has dropped. Dying, she catches a handful of earth and at the same time digs the ground with her left big toe.]<sup>80</sup>

Oreame's is not the ~~stricken~~ cry of the tragic victim which we have discussed above, instead her career ends in a most despicable fashion. She expresses a sense of regret and defeat, there being no suggestion that she has gained a dimension of awareness at all. Her end is a warning to all who abuse power. If Temugedege is the pathetic and humourous side of autocracy, Oreame is the violent, grotesque, terror-inspiring, and absurd side of heroism. Even though she had used her magic powers to humiliate and ridicule her opponents in the contest for power, the artist has also used his own magic power to subdue her in the face of a wider world.

The preceding discussion of comedy, humour, and satire in Clark has been done in order to show that there are tendencies and prospects in Clark to work towards this direction rather than actual study of Clark's achievement as a satirist; his work as a satirist is slight for the reasons which I shall reveal presently. Clark has not located fixed targets for his satire. To be effective satire has to attack powerful persons, institutions or dominant vices; Clark's work reveals that he has identified none of these for satirical purposes. Another reason is that Clark seems to be directly involved with the political and social problems of his society; and has not been detached from them sufficiently

to be an effective ironist and satirist. Finally, like Synge, Clark is exploiting the attitudes and beliefs of rural communities; the tendency is for Clark to satirize and poke fun at types of persons and vices. Even so we shall see in The Raft that his effects spring directly from the exploitation of rhetorical categories of linguistic materials of folklore, proverbs, riddles, and parables.

In a play like The Raft Clark also demonstrates through the four lumber men, Kengide, Ogro, Ibobo, and Olotu what I have been discussing:

Kengide: With the swift ebb tide coming  
And some better lot, we ought to get out  
Before the sun goes down.

Ogro: Won't that take us to sea?

Kengide: Not if we court and hug the tide. We need  
Not stay on its breast after our release.

Ibobo: It calls for careful navigation.

Olotu: What, to swing from one tide  
Into another?<sup>81</sup>

Expressions like to "court and hug the tide," "careful navigation," "to swing from one tide/Into another" entail no physical movements; instead the point being made by the lumbermen concerns human adaptability. Hence Olotu's "to swing from one tide/Into another" questions the optimism implied in the thoughts of Kengide and Ibobo. Their playfulness is reinforced by the question which Kengide asks later on in the play: "So what's/So new about our position?"<sup>82</sup>

The four lumbermen then present themselves as those who are "doing the drifting" of logs down the river while the "rogue," their employer is on the mainland at Warri "rolling on the laps/Of his innumerable wives."<sup>83</sup> Even so, Kengide and his friends employ the playful spirit as a way of analysing their problem, containing their bitterness; they suggest that the problem is caused by historical materialism:

In this game  
Of getting rich, it is eat me or I eat  
You, and no man wants to stew in the pot,  
Not if he can help it.<sup>84</sup>

The four men use a system of juxtaposition as a way of apprehending reality. For example, forest guards employed by the Government to issue licenses and supervise the exploitation of forests are "putting up buildings at Warri" with money earned in corrupt ways. Similarly, corrupt administrative officers wring "dry the tear ducts of the people."<sup>85</sup>

Kengide, the most experienced of the group also reveals that in the forties the workers reacted against social tyranny by organizing a general strike but the strike failed because

The politicians  
 And papers who had promised Pericho itself,  
 By their own divisions, caused a breach  
 In the wall we workers had at their incitement staked  
 All to build. So, Government or Niger  
 Company, two faces to one counterfeit coin,  
 As usual won the field.<sup>86</sup>

Another object of their criticism is the Christian Church represented in imagery characteristic of Clark's Ijaw country. According to Kengide the missionary

~~Chose~~ poor building ground though. Today  
 Not one beam of his house stands. What the flood  
 Didn't sweep away, elephant grass  
 Has overgrown. Worse, the net he cast out  
 Attracted many, but could not retain  
 A single fish. It had too many loopholes.  
 There never was a worse fisherman afloat  
 In all the rivers.<sup>87</sup>

Kengide is punning on the words "net," "fish" and "fisherman." Similarly, the traditional African society, once governed by benevolent kings, now is run by greedy and rapacious chiefs who "drain/The Delta of all that is in it, and not/A Shrimp slips past their fat fingers."<sup>88</sup>

On spite of Clark's experiments, as I have sketched out in Ozidi and The Raft, his plays appeal mainly to the admirers of his "enchanted verse." Hence what distinguishes Clark and constitutes his "major contributions"<sup>89</sup> to the Nigerian and African repertoires remain Song of a Goat, The Masquerade, and The Raft.

A reason for Clark's apparent unpopularity is his early revolt against the conventions of the so-called naturalistic style of representation in the contemporary drama; and in doing so he was also revolting against the main trend in modern drama, exemplified by the plays of Ibsen, Chekhov, Shaw, O'Neill, O'Casey, and Brecht. What I have tried to show is that when a dramatist in Clark's position chooses to evolve a conception of the drama which is antithetical to the contemporary style, he runs the risk of courting hostility and indifference from the public and critics, and obscurity for himself. The example of Synge, Yeats, and Lady Gregory reveals that when the Irish playwrights revolted against what Synge called the "intellectual modern drama" they founded their own theatre where verse was spoken, chanted, or cantilated as Bernard Shaw said of Yeats's experiments.<sup>90</sup> The "obscurity" of the Irish dramatists made it possible for them to create a new kind of acting, for it gave them time to prepare and to experiment.<sup>91</sup> In Nigeria, Clark needs just such a theatre to be able to take poetry into the theatre.

## Chapter 6

### Stages in Rebellion: Wole Soyinka

Perhaps the most significant factor in the discussion of theory and practice in the writings of Clark and Soyinka is the short period of time during which much of the developments have occurred. Within a decade, 1960-1970, the development of theory and practice in the dramas of the two Nigerian writers went through roughly three stages: consensus, confrontation, and anxiety. In the first two chapters of this study I showed that "consensus" is the moment in the cultural histories of the Irish and African dramatists when events achieve coincidence with the aspirations of writers.

One critic points out that "the first quarter of the twentieth century" was a "period of crisis" in Ireland, "when the nation's new literature began to emerge out of the seemingly irreconcilable struggle between political necessity and the creative imagination." Even so, he argues, "Irish nationalism and literature had an urgent need of each other's vitality and vision". Hence the development of the literary renaissance and the movement for national independence naturally coincided after the death of Parnell, each force guiding and inspiring the other in the early days as they worked towards the common goal of liberating the country from British domination.<sup>1</sup> In Africa the "background," says Soyinka, "...begins at the united opposition by the colonized to the external tyrant. Victory came, of sorts, and the writer submitted his integrity to the monolithic stresses of the time. For this, any manifesto seemed valid, any "ism" could be embraced in clean conscience. With few exceptions the writer directed his energies to enshrining victory, to reaffirming his identification with the aspirations of nationalism and the stabilization of society."<sup>2</sup>

Not only did these mass movements shape the future of the "New-Born" States in Ireland and in Africa, these events acted as an "abrasive stimulant"<sup>3</sup> on the artistic temperament.

However, the organising principle in the anti-colonial propaganda was not art but political nationalism; hence its central actors and heroes were politicians. In Ireland there were "three main pressure groups...the political, religious and the Gaelic language propagandists." When the Irish artist began to assert himself by refusing to adapt his personal vision to the aspirations of fashionable national politics, he was looked upon by the three pressure groups as "a decadent intruder, and by...nationalistic standards a fabricated idealism was more palatable than the ironic reality."<sup>4</sup> In Africa confrontation between art and popular nationalism also begins at the point where the artist chooses to stand aside. In the discussion of Clark's Ozidi and Soyinka's A Dance of the Forests, I showed that the central metaphor adopted by the dramatist to reflect this conflict is the contest between the forces of creation and those of destruction. In Yeats's The King's Threshold, Seanchan, the poet, represents the artist of the agonistic phase. Yeats's biographer, Joseph Hone, reveals that Seanchan is the first modern artist to have adopted the hunger strike as a political weapon.<sup>5</sup> In the drama itself the heroes of the agonistic phase are what Yeats calls "combatants" or contestants like Cuchulain in On Baile's Strand, the heroes of the Red Branch in the Deirdre legend; Ogun and Eshuoro in A Dance of the Forests, Ozidi and the conspirators in Ozidi.

Johan Huizinga notes that in order to excel in a contest "one must prove one's excellence; in order to merit recognition, merit must be made manifest. Competition serves to give proof of superiority. This is particularly true of archaic society." In a contest, he adds, the contestants strive "for honour, dignity, superiority and beauty."<sup>6</sup> The revival of ritual, or what Soyinka calls "the drama of the gods" is a recognition of this principle by Clark and Soyinka. Soyinka argues that confrontation is the drama of "hero-gods"; its stage is the "ritual arena of confrontation" which "came to represent the symbolic chthonic space and the presence of the challenger within it is the earliest

physical expression of man's fearful awareness of the cosmic context of his existence." Since its setting "is the cosmic entirety...it is within their framework that traditional society poses its social questions or formulates its moralities." Therefore, these archaic traditions are revived at the moments in the cultural history of a people when there is a strong desire to reconstruct national idealism. As Soyinka says, forms like the epic which celebrate the "victory of the human spirit over forces inimical to his self-extension"<sup>7</sup> are revived. In selecting to adopt these archaic modes, the Irish and African dramatists betray their desire and search for a genuine form of leadership; the quest for leadership in societies reviving old myths and symbols is central to the revival motif in the Irish and African drama. This analysis leads us naturally into the next phase, anxiety. Anxiety is what Harold Bloom in another context calls "self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism."<sup>8</sup> Here the artist discovers that "irreverent comedy is a more recognisably subversive weapon than [the] literary martyrdom" of a poet like Seanchan. The art of this phase is comedy and satire. Its weapons are parody, wit, dialect, word play, mimicry, humour, and irony. The artist employs the technique of "comic desecration"<sup>9</sup> as a weapon to subvert the idealised image of the nation.

The other thing to be remembered is that Clark and Yeats rightly do not belong to the stage of anxiety; even though in Ozidi and The Raft there are indications that Clark is capable of employing humour, ridicule, and wit for satirical purposes, he has not been able to produce a tragic comedy the sole purpose of which is to denigrate the idealized national character as is the case with Synge and Soyinka.

The tragic art, which is mainly the field of Yeats and Clark, was the first art and by implication the comic and the satiric are late comers. On the one hand, tragedy deals with human origins, with primal terror in the face of "immense chaotic growth."<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, comedy and satire reveal how the artist awakens to the reality of his own situation

in a human society, how he deals with social conflict. "Its character is public exposure and its method is reflection."<sup>11</sup> Comedy, therefore, is social criticism, and revolt in a human situation. W.B. Yeats says:

...all great literature is a battle. Tragic literature ...is battle in the depth of a man's soul... Realism is a battle in the outer world; it is the contest of two realities, and we have come to realise that Ireland is in the midst of that contest. Out of that battle is coming our art, and it is because of the stupidity of our opponents... The battle that began with Synge is going on for generations, and there is growing up among the young a passionate hatred of that row of China figures. They are beginning to break them one by one and as they continue our Press becomes more and more indignant.<sup>12</sup>

Yeats did not live to witness how another admirer of Synge, Soyinka, would use comedy and satire as a weapon to "affront the row of China figures"<sup>13</sup> in Nigeria. Like Synge, Soyinka is a tragi-comedian. I shall show that the development of comedy and satire in the plays of Soyinka fulfills the needs of cultural continuity; they are employed as effective weapons of rebellion and revolt against political and social tyranny. Since comedy and satire deal with events in the recent human society, a central concern of Soyinka is the search for ideal leadership; a dominant motif in these plays then is the failure of leadership and the ~~travesty~~ travesty of hopes. The basis and meaning of this revolt is contained in the argument often made by cultural nationalists that the introduction of "scientific materialism" is no adequate substitute for the loss of a sense of communality among the dispossessed. We are therefore examining a practice that evolved beyond the "grand passion" of decolonization; yet which kept its feelers in contact with public events. Soyinka says:

Even after a revolution has taken place a handful of people will still have to stand aside and question every move of the new regime. As a writer I have special responsibility because I can smell the reactionary sperm years before the rape of the nation takes place.<sup>14</sup>

Standing aside is the result of a discovery, one which reveals that the colonized is not always the victim:

I think that one of the most humble discoveries any African can make is just the fact that he can actually interpret the good and...the general evil of--what you call the European world in the faces of his own personal and intimate companions. I think that after years of self-delusion, a very chastening discovery--I should say rediscovery, because one lives with this all the time--the chastening rediscovery is to find that--and it's a terrible knowledge--that given the chance and the circumstances your best friends are capable of....

I think this is really why I'm opposed to this idea of singling out one's own race as being a leaven of White flour.<sup>15</sup>

Like Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, Soyinka chooses to stay and fight.

Why do I take it upon myself to protest? Because acquiescence in political crime is a hideous form of surrender. It is very tempting and very contemptible.<sup>16</sup>

Basically, there are three main categories of satires in the plays of Soyinka: political, class (élite), and social. Political comedy and satire are aimed at the "demagogic opportunists of the new aggressive national consciousness...the new visionaries--the politician." These "woolly-thinking nationalists had," in Clark's words, "only to fire a string of -isms unknown to the masses and they went delirious with thunderous cheers for a hero who was a walking book."<sup>17</sup> Since the writers and the politicians were members of the same class, the only persons who had the power and prestige to enable them to expose the follies, rhetoric, masquerades, and presumptions of political leaders were the artists.

In general, class comedy and satire are directed at the professional groups who also form part of the elite; those who are crushed "under a load of guilt for [their] dare in expressing a sensibility and outlook apart from, and independent of the mass direction"; some of whom have surrendered their own personal sense of integrity to the "tyranny"

of the "revolutionary mood in society." Lastly, the other writers who choose to become cultural ambassadors explaining African culture abroad; who turn to "resuscitated splendours of the past," a romantic attitude of mind which glorifies "an artificial society";<sup>18</sup> while at the same time they ignore "the actuality of internal betrayal experienced everywhere by the new African polity."<sup>19</sup> These groups ensure that they are on the right side by remaining indifferent to "the whole trend towards dictatorship, on all sorts of spurious excuses, in the newly independent states in Africa." All, or most of the situations arise, Soyinka argues, because of the "narrowness of vision" and impatience characteristic of new nations. Rather than succumb "easily to the prospect of sharing in power, of making sure he is on the right side, the artist must choose "the risks involved in opposition."<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the professional groups choose to adapt to the new situation rather than stand aside.

In plays like The Road and The Trials of Brother Jero the satire is social in nature; its heroes, more precisely, its anti-heroes, are the dispossessed and powerless. There are few instances in Soyinka's drama when he engages in anti-colonial satire. I have examined the latter aspect of his work together with the development of a social vision in plays like The Strong Breed and Death and the King's Horseman.

In the discussion of comedy and satire in the plays of Soyinka "It will be seen that the three categories of satire -- political, class, and social -- overlap. In fact the development of Soyinka's dramatic art, therefore, entails more than using his drama as a weapon of political and social protest. What distinguishes Soyinka's theatre, however, is the characteristic side of him which Gerald Moore calls his "histrionic flair."<sup>21</sup>

Eric Bentley, in another context, points out that the histrionic mask is "an essential attribute of every dramatist":

The true playwright has an actor's nature;  
and if he turns out not to be a great stage  
actor, he will probably act all the better in  
private life.<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Bentley finds this particular trait in Yeats:

With Yeats, acting begins at home. He was himself histrionic....To Yeats, as to Bernard Shaw, the histrionic pose, the theatrical mask, was indispensable.<sup>23</sup>

In Nigeria Clark says, "Soyinka is the perpetual dramatist who insists on a starring role in every drama of his own manufacture"<sup>24</sup> (Clark's explanation for Soyinka's involvement in the Nigerian crisis). On the other hand, Soyinka argues that he employs his histrionic sensibility to give "liveliness and freedom"<sup>25</sup> to his theatre:

my prime duty as a playwright is to provide excellent theatre, in other words....I have only one commitment to the public...and that is to make sure they do not leave the theatre bored. I don't believe that I have any obligation to enlighten, to instruct, to teach: I don't possess that sense of duty....<sup>26</sup>

And

I write in the firm belief that there must be at least a hall full of people who are sort of on the same wave-length as mine from every ~~stratum~~ of society and there must be at least a thousand people who are able to feel the same way as I do about something.<sup>27</sup>

Generally speaking, and in practice, Soyinka engages himself in eliciting from the material of his African background those aspects which will make his plays theatrical with respect to the audience. For instance, during the first production of A Dance of the Forests in Nigeria he found out that the so-called illiterate group of the community,

the stewards, the drivers--the really uneducated non-academic world--they were coming to see the show every night, and...they always felt the thing through all the way, and they came night after night and enjoyed it tremendously.<sup>28</sup>

The second point about Soyinka's theatre, which concerns the present study, is that he not only accepts the traditional idioms of the African theatre, he is constantly "conscious of the potentialities"<sup>29</sup> of the theatricality of these idioms. I want to show how his consciousness

of the theatre aids him in developing his style, characterization and dramatic situation. Since his methods evolve in the form of what he calls "a realistic reaction to the actuality of internal betrayal experienced everywhere by the new African polity,"<sup>30</sup> his theme is tyranny, and he adopts comic and satiric techniques as weapons to subvert internal tyranny. My studies of his plays aim at examining these weapons which he uses to diagnose contemporary tyranny.

A Dance of the Forests was written for an occasion, the celebrations of Nigeria's independence in October 1960. In the play itself the "tribes" have gathered to celebrate their accumulated heritage; they invoke Mali, Songhai, and Chaka. However, on their retreat into the forests, the three sensitive humans, Demoke, Rola, and Adenebi, are being led, ironically, by the Forest Spirits to witness the splendours of the court of one of the emperors who ruled Africa's ancient empires, that of Mata Kharibu.

The trials of the Warrior take place in this court of one of Africa's ancient emperors. In this play Soyinka employs the metaphor of a voyage into the past undertaken by the three humans, Demoke, Adenebi, and Rola. Through the (contemporary) vision of the three the playwright reveals the court of Mata Kharibu, a burlesque of the compound of some local or village chief in contemporary Africa:

Aroni waves his hand in a circle. The Court of Mata Kharibu lights up gradually. Two thrones. One contains Mata Kharibu, the other, his queen, Madame Tortoise, both surrounded by splendour. A page plucks an African guitar. Mata Kharibu is angry; his eyes roll terribly; the court cowers. His queen, on the other hand, is very gay and cruel in her coquetry. She seems quite oblivious of the King's condition. The court poet (Demoke) stands a few feet from her....Those not involved in the action at any time, freeze in one position.<sup>31</sup>

Our impression of the court of this "illustrious" emperor is that only "terribly" does he manage to acquire power over those around him, and

he also knows how to use his power: the emperor "is angry, his eyes roll" hawk-like over the court; it "cowers." Since we are examining the author's attitude to the emperor, it is worth noting that even those persons "not involved at any time, freeze in one position." There is a deliberate effort to deflate the image of this "illustrious ancestor." This deflationary method tackles the emperor and his court from a number of points. First, it portrays an image of a Queen who is "very gay and cruel in her coquetry," indulgently "oblivious of the King's condition"; the latter is desperate since he must win the war to keep the Queen. This portrait of Madame Tortoise is reinforced by the artist, Demoke, who makes sly and slanderous comments about the Queen's virtue by emphasizing the point overtly, "slut." Later the delineation of her character spills over into the grotesque and the macabre; in a seduction scene she tells the warrior, "call me by me ~~name~~, Madame Tortoise. You are a man, I swear I must respect you."<sup>32</sup> Thus, the playwright transforms Madame Tortoise into a penis-fated troll.

But more significant for us is the fact that this portrait of the court of one of Africa's illustrious emperors must be seen in the perspectives of the cultural history of Africa in the late 1950's. It was a decade when the need for leadership was so pressing that internal blemishes were often ignored; but after the revolution, after the decade of consensus, Africans needed to re-examine themselves; whether, indeed, Africans have always been the victims of history. It seems, as we have seen in this discussion, that the younger generation of writers argued that Africans have participated in the history making process. This knowledge was necessary, especially at a time when as Clark says, "the flagellated black skin" had "become a fine fetish like the thorn-and-nail marks of the man who died on the cross."<sup>33</sup> The question which Soyinka re-enacts in A Dance of the Forests is posed by Mphahlele: "Can the image stand up to the irony of the black man's actual situation?"<sup>34</sup> The scene of the court of Mata Kharibu reveals that it cannot. What Soyinka has done in this play then is to dig

deeper into the essential aspects of humanity and he finds that myth liberates the individual from a preoccupation with fashionable, and passionate concerns. Armed with this knowledge, the trials, castration, and sale of the Warrior become means of exposing the tyrannical nature of the court of Mata Kharibu. Because Mata Kharibu and his Queen have been made, through the juxtaposition of archetypal symbolism, to represent the reverse of our hero-worshipping expectations, the deflation of Mata Kharibu from an illustrious ancestor to a degenerate autocrat becomes, in our own contemporary perspectives, a sort of self-criticism and a warning. What we have been witnessing then is how history is made; how one man acquires power over others and how that power can be abused. Therefore, in spite of the Warrior's refusal to lead his men into "battle merely to recover the trousseau" of Madame Tortoise, we tend to sympathize with him as he has become the defender of our own moral values.

An affair of honour? Since when was it an honourable thing to steal the wife of a brother chieftain?<sup>35</sup>

The humour springs from the Warrior's playful juxtaposition of "honour," "honourable" "steal" with "brother chieftain", thereby reducing the conflict into childish play. By taking command of the moral implications of the situation, the Warrior reduces Mata Kharibu to the status of an emperor who engages in trivialities.

The court is also filled with a professional and learned service, men whose popularity springs from the fact that they are either astute defenders of the system or those who benefit from it; one of such public men of knowledge and wisdom is the court historian, Adenebi. He adapts his learning to the capricious nature of the court, and uses his position and presence to prove that the Warrior is wrong.

Historian: Don't flatter yourself. Every blade of grass that has allowed its own contamination can be burnt out. This thing cannot last. It is unheard of. In a thousand years it will be unheard of. Nations live by strength; nothing else has meaning. You only throw your life away uselessly.<sup>36</sup>

The other professional who uses his learning to prop Mata Kharibu's power is the Court Physician. He, too, thinks that the Warrior's refusal to fight is a sort of folly.

Physician: Unborn generations will...

Warrior: Unborn generations will be cannibals most worshipful Physician. Unborn generations will, as we have done, eat up one another. Perhaps you can devise a cure, you who know how to cure so many ills. I took up soldiering to defend my country, but those to whom I gave the power to command my life abuse my trust in them.

Physician: Liar! Is Mata Kharibu not your general!

Warrior: Mata Kharibu is leader, not merely of soldiers but of men. Let him turn the unnatural pattern of men always eating up one another. I am suddenly weary of this soldiering where men must find new squabbles for their cruelty. Must I tell the widowed that their men died for another's trousseau?<sup>37</sup>

The collaborative power of learned men and professional thugs can become an effective weapon to be adopted by tyrants against iconoclastic individuals like the Warrior. Soyinka's originality in the Mata Kharibu scene derives from the fact that he compels us to sympathize with the Warrior rather than with the establishment. He obtains his effects through the careful use of language as a weapon of exposure and ridicule. In the trial scene this method works on two levels: the reduction of the Court of Mata Kharibu through a subtle use of irony, focusing attention on the iconoclastic side of the Warrior's character. The Warrior's superiority over the Court of Mata Kharibu is dramatically made effective by Mata Kharibu's soothsayer, who says that there are always going to be men of the Warrior's nature, those who will not succumb to the attraction of power. In the end, either from mere failure to convince the Warrior or from the fear of losing his credibility at court, Mata Kharibu listens to the Soothsayer tell him that even though people like the Warrior are rare, they form a permanent part of history.

Once in every million years, one of the sheep  
 that trail the moon in its wanderings does dare  
 to wipe its smutty nose on the moon. Once in a  
 million years. But the moon is there still.  
 And who remembers the envy-ridden sheep?<sup>38</sup>

The tragedy of history is the re-enactment of the life of challengers and combatants like the Warrior, men whose struggles are seen in the context of the total human history. Like Synge, Soyinka's victors are the practical people, while the victims are the sensitive ones. Even though Nora Burke is expelled, at the end of The Shadow of the Glen, from the house of her husband who has always been as cold as a "dead sheep" she and the Tramp believe that "a dangerous freedom is preferable to a safe incarceration."<sup>39</sup> In The Playboy of the Western World Michael says to Christy: "A daring fellow is the jewel of the world, and a man did split his father's middle with a single clout should have the bravery of ten." At the end of the play, in spite of the reappearance of Old Mahon, Christy leaves the scene as a victor: "I'll go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgement day. He goes out." Old Mahon also makes it clear that he prefers the bravery of his son to the servility of the people: "my son and myself will be going our own way and we'll have great times from this out telling stories of the villainy of Mayo and the fools is here."<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, in A Dance of the Forests we are made to agree with the Warrior that, sometimes, it is preferable to resist temptations than to succumb to the lure of power. The moral position expounded by the Warrior is not very different from the espoused by W.B. Yeats, and which asserts that popular movements are apt to be dominated by irrational and chauvinistic motives; therefore, only those who seek "the truth about man, the quintessential nature of his character and his world," can rise above the crisis of passionate politics. This awareness forms the basis for the conviction that events of contemporary history have given birth to the lack of moral conviction. In contemporary society,

The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, only the superior person, like the Countess Cathleen and the Warrior in Soyinka's plays, can rely entirely on a personal sense of moral justice.

Even though Soyinka wrote A Dance of the Forests at the beginning of his career, his dramatic world is already fully sketched out -- the tyrants, collaborators, professional thugs, rebels, and victims. And what happens also to be true of human history is what the Warrior calls the "unnatural pattern of men always eating up one another." Only those, like the Warrior, who possess "the indestructible continuum of ordeal-survival-affirmation,"<sup>42</sup> only they can afford to affront the sadistic power of tyranny. The individual requires the "deepest protection the mind can conceive"<sup>43</sup> of to be able to ride the tides of "mere anarchy" masquerading as public opinion. The protection of the mind is, however, only one way of overcoming the pressures of social tyranny.

In Kongi's Harvest Soyinka adopts the metaphor of "play-acting" as a means of saving his victims from insanity. In fact, it is this very "flair for gestures" which saves Oba Danlola from Kongi's "timeless detention order."<sup>44</sup> Danlola knows that history is repetition, that "the old order changeth"<sup>45</sup> and that he and Kongi are engaged in a play, one at the end of which roles will be exchanged. On the other hand, Kongi lacks this additional dimension of awareness, a weakness which leads him to proclaim himself the spirit of harvests -- an act of hubris. The humour and irony are sustained by the fact that Kongi tends to present himself as the one man in whose life ~~time all prophecies will be fulfilled~~. The absurdity of these claims arises from our own awareness that Kongi lacks just this feeling of ~~humility~~ before the forces of human history characteristic of Oba Danlola's actions. Hasty decision-making and a narrow vision of human history make Kongi ~~undertake~~ the erection of monstrous projects in the course of which the humanity he wanted to save is brutally abused. The song of Kongi's Carpenter's

Brigade is an ironic comment on the horrors of Kongism:

Our hands are like sandpaper  
 Our fingernails are chipped  
 Our lungs are filled with sawdust  
 But our anthem still we sing  
 We sweat in honest labour  
 From sunrise into dawn  
 For the dignity of labour  
 And the progress of our land.<sup>46</sup>

Like the Ants in A Dance of the Forests, the members of Kongi's Carpenter's Brigade are another type of victims, "the ones remembered/When nations build...with tombstones/...the headless bodies when/The spade of progress delves."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, history as repetition becomes a comic event, a parody, when the protagonists lack a higher vision of reality.

Throughout a major part of the action, Kongi and his New Aweri Fraternity retire into the mountains to meditate on how to pass re-prieves. Soyinka uses the idiom of retreat as a means of exposing Kongi's animality. The New Aweri Fraternity are in one of their sessions, but they are all "dozing."

Kongi: (descends from his cell): I can't hear their voices.

Secretary: I think they are meditating.

Kongi: Meditating is my province. They are here to hold disputations. (He looks over the partition.) That is no meditation. They are fast asleep.

Secretary: (Joins him at the screen.) You're right. They are sleeping.

Kongi: They are always sleeping. What is the matter with them?

Secretary: I heard one or two of them mention hunger.<sup>48</sup>

The use of words like "meditation" "disputation" and "sleep" highlights the absurdity in Kongi's rhetoric, whose retreat into the mountains is in reality a parody of Christ on the mountain. The reduction of Kongi is systematic, because instead of meditating his sleepy Aweris are "dozing." Since sleeping and meditating mean the same thing to Kongi's Aweri, spiritual nourishment is easily equated with food.

A typical session is run in the following manner:

Fourth: Now, a systematic examination of the data.  
What have we got on our plates?

Fifth: A few crumbs of mouldy bread isn't it?

Third: What did you say?

Fifth: I said a few crumbs of bread. What else  
do we ever get on our plates?

Fourth: Can't you keep your mind on the subject? I  
used a mere common figure of speech and  
you leap straight onto the subject of food. <sup>49</sup>

The idea of a retreat and abstinence which underlies any serious consideration of the practice of meditation is adopted by the sleepy Aweris who tend, however, to think solely in terms of food rather than spiritual nourishment.

Fourth: We need an image. Tomorrow being our first  
appearance in public, it is essential that we find  
an image.

Fifth: Why?

Third: Why? Is that question necessary?

Fifth: It is. Why do we need an image?

Third: Well, if you don't know that...

Fourth: He doesn't, so I'll answer the question. Especially,  
as he seems to be staying awake at last.

Fifth: Don't sneer. I've heard your snores twice at least  
this session.

Fourth: Kindly return to the theme of this planning session.  
The problem of an image for ourselves.

Second: Isn't it enough just to go in as Kongi's disciples?

Fourth: Magi is more dignified. We hold after all the position  
of the wise ones. From the recognition of us as the  
Magi, it is one step to his inevitable apotheosis.

First: Which is to create a new oppositional force.

Second: Kongi is a great strategist. He will not take on too  
many opponents at once.

Fifth: I still have not been told why we need an image.

Third: You are being very obstructive.

Fifth: Why do we need an image?

First: I suggest we pattern ourselves on our predecessors. Oh I do admit they were a little old-fashioned, but they had er...a certain style. Yes, I think style is the word I want. Style. Yes, I think we could do worse than model ourselves on the old Aweri.

Fifth: You mean, speak in proverbs and ponderous tone rhythms?

Fourth: I'm afraid that is out anyway. Kongi would prefer a clean break from the traditional conclave of the so-called wise ones.

First: They were remote, impersonal--we need these aspects. They breed fear in the common man.

Second: The paraphernalia helped too, don't forget that.

Sixth: I have no intention of making myself look ridiculous in that outfit.<sup>50</sup>

It is this playful way of using language that creates the humour and sustains the irony in Kongi's Harvest. The idea of seeking to remain "remote, impersonal" in order to "breed fear in the common man" suggested by the Aweri Fraternity reinforces Kongi's attitude towards the common man. The effectiveness of the scene becomes apparent if it is remembered that Kongi, "The Giver of Life," had given the sleepy new Aweri Fraternity, an assignment to,

Dispute...whether it is politic to grant  
reprieves to the five men awaiting execution.  
And DISPUTE you hear! I shall go and meditate  
upon it.<sup>51</sup>

In a similar way the whole idea of Kongi retreating into the mountains to plan how to execute prisoners is again a presumptuous travesty of Christ's retreat into the mountains. The force of passages like the ones cited above derives from the recognition of the irony, the marked disparity between what Kongi claims to be and what he actually does. As a self-made prophet, his ambitions are fanned by adaptable professionals like the Secretary.

Secretary: It's all part of one and the same harmonious idea my Leader. A Leader's Temptation...  
Agony on the Mountains...The Loneliness of

the Pure...The Uneasy Head...A Saint at  
 Twilight...The Spirit of the Harvest...The  
 Face of Benevolence...The Giver of Life...  
 who knows how many titles will accompany  
 such pictures round the world. And then my  
 Leader, this is the Year of Kongi's Harvest!  
 The Presiding Spirit as a lifegiving spirit  
 --we could project that image into every heart  
 and head, no matter how stubborn.<sup>52</sup>

Soyinka knows that the only way to know who wears the mask is to unmask him; so in spite of these attributes, in another scene Kongi is presented as a ferocious monster who terrifies the secretary when he is made to understand that some of his prisoners escaped. This is the contrast, the exaggeration, the absurdity, and the grotesque and macabre about Kongi and his new era of scientism.

(Kongi's retreat.)

(Kongi, shaking with anger, the secretary cowering before him.)

Kongi: Escape?

Secretary: Not from my camp my leader. It wasn't from my camp.

Kongi: Escaped? Escaped?

Secretary: Only one sir the other hanged himself.

Kongi: I want him back. I want him back you hear?

Secretary: He shall be caught my Leader.

Kongi: I want him back-- alive if possible. If not, ANY OTHER WAY! But I want him back.

Secretary: It shall be done at once my Leader.

Kongi: Get out! GO AND BRING HIM BACK...GET OUT!  
 GET OUT!...AH...AH...AH

(His mouth hanging open, from gasps into spasms and violent convulsions, Kongi goes into an epileptic fit...)<sup>53</sup>

The final reduction of Kongi from the self-proclaimed spirit of harvests to "a demonic mass of sweat and foam at his lips" occurs during the harvest festival celebrated at the end of the play. It turns out that the Yam festival is used as a parody of the original festival:

(The rhythm of pounding emerges triumphant, the dance grows frenzied. Above it all on the dais, Kongi, getting progressively inspired harangues his audience in words drowned in the bacchanal. He exhorts, declaims, reviles, cajoles, damns, curses, vilifies, excommunicates, execrates until he is a demonic mass of sweat and foam at the lips.)<sup>54</sup>

At this point, Segi, whose father has been shot by Kongi's men, returns and

...disappears into the area of the pestles. A copper salver is raised suddenly high; it passes from hands to hands above the women's head; they dance with it on their heads; it is thrown from one to the other until at last it reaches Kongi's table and Segi throws open the lid. In it, the head of the old man. In the ensuing scramble, no one is left but Kongi and the head, Kongi's mouth wide open in speechless terror." A sudden blackout on both.)<sup>55</sup>

Here the ritual is used as a way of contrasting Kongi on the Mountain, as "the Uneasy Head...A Saint at Twilight...The Spirit of Harvest, ...The Giver of Life,"<sup>56</sup> with Kongi the Prophet of agony. The symbolic use of the harvest festival is theatrically effective in an ironic way. In the drama of Wole Soyinka "the harvest/Is this moment due for gathering"<sup>57</sup> but Kongi, the new political demagogue, gathers human skulls. The original religious significance of harvests is abused; hence words like "benevolent spirit of harvests" attributed to Kongi are used in an ironic sense.

A single ritual like the harvest in Kongi can work in Wole Soyinka's plays on a number of levels; at the end of the play Kongi's "second coming" is dramatized as the arrival of the irrational and destructive bestial part of humanity which had been anticipated by Eshu in A Dance of the Forests. At the end of the play even Kongi himself is filled with horror at his own work; in this way Kongi's "positive scientificism" becomes an affliction inflicted on the people. There is nothing new about the New Awéri -- consider the brutality and violence of A Dance

of the Forests. In Kongi's reign of terror the majority of people have simply learnt to adapt to the new spirit. This is revealed in the songs which have been discussed above.

In a play like Kongi's Harvest adaptability usurps the place of moral vision completely, and everything is possible but nothing goes right. The metaphor Soyinka adopts here is the materialist conception of history. Kongi plans to transform Ismaland through scientific materialism, and under a number of five-year development plans he has built "Kongi Terminus, Kongi University, Kongi Dam, Kongi Refineries, Kongi Airport." Yet, this is only a world of "make-believe,"<sup>58</sup> as Dende, Danlola's attendant says, quoting his master:

Wise partymen must learn the cunning  
To crab and feint, to regroup and then  
Disband like hornets.<sup>59</sup>

The "ultimate" reality in Kongi's world is survival and adaptability, since those who fail to adapt may have the detention orders applied to them. Kongi's secretary tells the deposed King that

You'll learn Kabiyesi, you'll learn.  
Survival turns the least adaptable  
of us  
To night chameleons.<sup>60</sup>

In Madmen and Specialists human ferocity has advanced, ironically, to the point where we are made to acknowledge the unregenerative reality of man's latent cannibalism. As the old man says, "I put you all beyond salvation."<sup>61</sup> After his release from detention in 1969, Soyinka wrote Madmen and Specialists; it was first performed at the 1970 Playwright's Workshop Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre, Waterford, Connecticut, U.S.A., by actors specially chosen by Soyinka himself among University of Ibadan undergraduates in Theatre Arts. Charles R. Larson in a review article of the play notes that the detention of Soyinka which is also reflected in Madmen and Specialists, "illustrates the political tensions that were increasing in Nigeria during the mid 1960's .... Madmen and Specialists is the product of those months Soyinka spent in prison, in solitary confinement, as a political prisoner. It is not

surprisingly, the most brutal piece of social criticism he has published."<sup>62</sup> Martin Banham also thinks that even though Soyinka "has always been a predominantly satiric writer, but now the satire, still incisive and witty, has become violent and bitter."<sup>63</sup> Three groups of characters are central to the story of the play: Dr. Bero, the Old Man, and the Mendicants. Events in the play concern a war that has just been fought and the three groups have been at the front. While there every-one of them undergoes a change. First the Medical man, Bero, now in military uniform tells his sister that while at the front he changed his vocation.

Bero: I told you. I switched.

Si Bero: But how? You have your training. How does one switch, just like that?

Bero: You are everything once you go out there. In an emergency...[He shrugs.] The head of the Intelligence Section died rather suddenly. Natural causes.

Si Bero: And that's the new vocation?

Bero: None other, sister, none other. The Big Braids agreed I was born into it. Not that that was any recommendation. They are all submental apes.

Si Bero: [studying him avidly, a slow apprehension beginning to show on her face.]: But you have...you have given that up now. You are back to your real work. Your practice.

Bero [turns calmly to meet her gaze.]: Practice? Yes, I intend to maintain that side of my practice. ~~of~~ Laboratory is important. Everything helps. Control, Sister, control. Power comes from bending nature to your will. The Specialist they called me, and a specialist is-well-a specialist. You analyse, you diagnose, you-[He aims an imaginary gun.] -- prescribe.<sup>64</sup>

On the otherhand, there is Bero's father, the old man, who has also been to the front, but while there his "mind broke under the strain:"

Dr. Bero tells us that his father's "assignment"

...was to help the wounded readjust to the pieces and remnants of their bodies. Physically. Teach them to make baskets if they still had fingers. To use their mouths to ply needles if they had none, or use

it to sing if their vocal chords had not been shot away. Teach them to amuse themselves, make something of themselves. Instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK! Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body?<sup>65</sup>

Dr. Bero imprisons his own father in the basement of their house and eventually shoots him. But in the background lurks the power that controls even Bero himself. The force which the mendicants try to bring to the fore for us. The Mendicants, Aafaa, the Cripple, Goyi, and Blindman are first seen squatting by the roadside, throwing the dice. Aafaa begins to act:

Aafaa (posing): In away you may call us vultures.

We clean up the mess made by others. The populace should be grateful for our presence. (He turns slowly round.) If there is any one here who does not approve us, just say so and we quit. (His hand makes the motion of half-drawing out a gun.) I mean, we are not here because we like it. We stay at immense sacrifice to ourselves, our leisure, our desires, vocation, specialization, etcetera, etcetera. The moment you say, Go, we... (He gives another inspection all round, smiles broadly, and turns to the others.) They insist we stay.

Cripple: I thought they would. Troublesome little insects but...they have a sense of gratitude: I mean, after all we did for them.

Goyi: And still do.

Blindman: And will continue to do.

Chorus: Hear hear hear hear. Very well said, sir.<sup>66</sup>

The Mendicants present a parody of the style of speaking that characterized Nigerian military rulers after the 1966 Coup d'Etat. The love of power enacted by Aafaa's "half-drawing out of a gun" causes the soldiers to vacillate between handing back government to civilians or persisting in playing the role of saviours. But the soldiers are also represented as vultures, birds which visit the battle field after the battle is over; this comparison is reinforced by the

sly choric chant by the Mendicants, "Hear hear hear hear," revealing the hypocrisy involved in the empty promises being made.

The old man's philosophy of "AS" chanted by the creatures of "AS", the Mendicants, shows that the soldiers have not cleaned up the "mess made by others"; instead they have caused another mess, dramatically made evident by the tortured humanity, the Mendicants who chant "AS IS WAS NOW/AS EVER SHALL BE etc. etc."

(As Blindman begins the re-run, the other Mendicants commence their chant, Aafaa taking the lead. The song goes faster and faster and louder and they clap him down until Blindman gives up and bows.)<sup>67</sup>

The parody of the Bible reminds us not of the sense of optimism implied in the original "world without end," but enacts instead a philosophy of futility: "As is, and the system is its mainstay though it wears a hundred masks and a thousand outward forms."<sup>68</sup> Here, we are not too far away from the world of Kongi and Jeroboam. The Bible statement which was meant to affirm the permanent nature of God's world and eventual justice, becomes a means of enshrining human tyranny and the image of a fallen world. The humour of Madmen and Specialists is macabre and absurd; its basic idea is nihilism and here we are witnessing a world turned upside down.

A Dance of the Forests and Kongi's Harvest anticipate the theme of cannibalism being enacted in Madmen and Specialists; here, individuality and its attendant virtues like thought and moral conviction have been subsumed under the overriding principle, "collaborate."<sup>69</sup> In Madmen and Specialists truth "hurts" to the extent that Bero switches vocations on the battle front, all "in the line of duty,"<sup>70</sup> choosing to "Compromise" his convictions as a medical doctor and become a spy rather than endure the isolation that comes as a result of standing aside. The old man, Bero's father is mad because he happens to possess independent moral conviction. He tells his son:

I am the last proof of the human in you.  
The last shadow. Shadows are tough things

to be rid of. He chuckles. How does one prove he was never born of man?<sup>71</sup>

In spite of his insanity the Old man is still in command of the moral situation to the extent he tells Bero "I put you all beyond salvation."<sup>72</sup> But even so the Old man is ironically the "cyst" in the corrupt system. Therefore, the Mendicants are symbolic representations of humanity and being the creatures of "AS" they are caught in the "timeless parade" of "As"; Humanity is, so to speak, incapable of moral regeneration. To the Old man, history is the distorted progression of deformed humanity. The four Mendicants chant to celebrate this absurdist vision of history.

Even though the leading actors in plays like The Jero Plays, The Road, and The Swamp Dwellers are the dispossessed, Soyinka's comedy and satire are used as tools with which to study a variety of human types, ranging from the hypocritical priest of the serpent of the swamps to the drug-peddling politician, Chief-in-Town, in The Road. In The Swamp Dwellers, the Kadiye is able to juggle with the beliefs of his peasants so artfully and speaks with such ~~wiliness~~ that in the end he becomes a local tyrant. The Kadiye is not a person without belief; only in his own case he adapts his beliefs to suit the demands of his power-seeking instincts. As the priest of the serpent of the swamps he takes the gifts of the swamp dwellers and offers them to placate the serpent of the swamps. Since in reality the serpent of the swamps is none other than the priest himself, the Kadiye dons the mask of remoteness, impersonality; armed with it he breeds fear in the swamp dwellers. On his arrival at Makuri's home he reveals to the peasant and his wife that while the swamps were flooded he had taken a vow of abstinence.

Kadiye: The protection of the heavens be on us all. Drinks and smacks his lips. Then he looks round the room and announces gravely. The rains have stopped.

Makuri: Shakes his head in distrust. They have stopped too often Kadiye. It is only a lull.

Kadiye: No. They have stopped finally. My soothsayers have confirmed it. The skies are beginning to open: what few clouds there are, are being blown along the river.

Makuri: [shrugs, without much enthusiasm]: The gods be praised.

Kadiye: The floods are over....The river will recede and we can plant again....I am now released of my vow.

Makuri: Your vow, Kadiye?

Kadiye: Yes, when the floods began and the swamps overran the land, I vowed to the Serpent that I would neither shave nor wash until the rains ceased altogether....

Makuri: [Drops his cup]: I had no idea...is that the reason for your visit?

Kadiye: Yes, of course. Did you not guess?<sup>73</sup>

But the Kadiye is not the scapegoat he professes to be. We are told that he is "a big, voluminous creature of about fifty, smooth-faced except for little tufts of beard around his chin."<sup>74</sup> The reminders by the dramatists that Makuri "shakes his head in distrust," "shrugs without much enthusiasm" and finally "drops his cup" points out that these gestures undercut the moral significance of the Kadiye's vow of abstinence.

Furthermore, the arrival of Igwezu, the rebellious son of Makuri, on the scene and the subsequent discussion of the Kadiye by him and the Beggar also illuminate the sham and fallacious side of the Kadiye's character.

Makuri: Yes, Now that the rains have ceased, his vow is come to an end. He wanted me to [shave him] but I said, No, Kadiye; I am still strong and healthy but my fingers shake a little now and then, and your skin is tender.

Igwezu: Yes. Is it not strange that his skin is tender? Is it not strange that he is smooth and well-preserved?

Beggar [Eagerly]: Is he fat, master? When he spoke, I detected a certain bulk in his voice.

Igwezu: Ay, he is fat. He rolls himself like a fat and greasy porpoise.

Alu: Son, you must speak better of the holy man.<sup>75</sup>

Strangely enough, the Kadiye's "skin is tender," his body "smooth and well-preserved." Igwezu adopts animal imagery as a tool of ridicule, reinforcing the Beggar's suggestion that he "detected a certain bulk" in the Kadiye's voice. The contrast drawn between the Kadiye as a professed "holy man" and the one who "rolls himself like a fat greasy porpoise" on the meagre earnings of the gullible swamp dwellers reveals the deceptions of the priest. Thus his vow of abstinence is shown to have been a spurious excuse to deprive the swamp dwellers of their food. The blind Beggar's sly concern with the bulk of the Kadiye's voice justifies Igwezu's distrust of the kind of sacrifice avowedly supported by the priest. Kadiye, according to Igwezu, "takes the gifts of the people, in order that the beast may be gorged and made sleepy-eyed with the feast of sacrifice"; he identifies the Kadiye with the sleepy-eyed beast" which lies "upon the land" and chokes "it in the folds of a serpent," re-enacting the grossness of the Kadiye's deceptions. Since Igwezu and the Blind Beggar are attacking a vice, the grotesque embodiment of which is represented by the Kadiye, The Swamp Dwellers is not a dramatization of a conflict between tradition and modernism represented by Kadiye and Igwezu respectively. Like A Dance of the Forests, The Swamp Dwellers is not a play about tradition and modernism; its main concerns are with the theme of leadership and the sacrifice it entails. In these two plays the professed leaders, those who claimed that they have sacrificed so much for the interest of the public, fall short of what they say they have done; instead they tend to exploit popular jargon and practices, and armed with these they hoodwink their followers to believe in them. The peasants, like all who have faith and belief in the earth, are what Igwezu calls "the children and the old...the innocent and the dotards." Igwezu is the evolutionary essence, the "slayer of serpents." Since tyranny thrives on the faith and beliefs of the dotards, Igwezu leaves the stage convinced that he is one of those to whom the understanding is given but whose case is never understood by the people. He says, "I must not be here

when the people call for blood."<sup>76</sup> Like the Warrior in A Dance of the Forests and the Old Man in Madmen and Specialists, Igwezu is the ironic "cyst in the system" which must be removed in order that the system should persist, unchanged. In Soyinka's drama repetition and recurrence form a sound basis for the development of a comic and tragic drama, one in which each new generation is a parody of the preceding one, in which what changes is the outward form; humanity is caught on the eternal wheel of "As it was in the beginning..." and "the System is its mainstay though it wears a hundred masks and a thousand outward forms."<sup>77</sup> In this way Soyinka's comedy and satire are used as weapons to unmask the pretensions of humanity and also to reveal its original nakedness.

In the discussion of The Swamp Dwellers I pointed out that the form and degree of tyranny perpetuated in a community seems to be born of the psychology of the community. In The Trials of Brother Jero, Prophet Jeroboam announces that the "call of prophecy is in my blood and I would not risk my calling with the fickleness of women. So I kept away from them. I am still single and since that day when I came into my own, no scandal has ever touched my name."<sup>78</sup> From the beginning then, Jeroboam thinks that all the protection he requires for his trade is the acquisition of all the superficial trappings like the fear of women and the growing of long hair. Even though he professes that he is an ascetic, the dramatist reveals that Jero is "a heavily but neatly bearded man; his hair is thick and high, but well-combed, unlike that of most prophets. Suave is the word for him. He carries a canvas pouch and a divine rod."<sup>79</sup> These things breed fear in his followers.

Jeroboam gathers around him worshippers, mostly "strange, dissatisfied people," dispossessed people under social pressures seeking solutions to their personal problems. Jeroboam promises to intercede on their behalf, but in reality, he says:

My disciple believes that I sleep on the beach,

that is, if he thinks I sleep at all. Most of them believe the same but, for myself, I prefer my bed. Much more comfortable. And it gets rather cold on the beach at nights. Still, it does them good to believe that I am something of an ascetic...<sup>80</sup>

The Prophet's assistant, Brother Chume, represents the ordinary individual under contemporary social pressures. In his prayer to God he says:

...Tell our wives not to give us trouble.  
 And give us money to have a happy home.  
 Give us money to satisfy our daily necessities.  
 Make you no forget those of us who dey struggle daily. Those who be clerk to day, make them Chief Clerk tomorrow. Those who are Messenger today, make them Senior Service tomorrow.  
 Yes father, those who are Messenger today, make them Senior Service tomorrow.<sup>81</sup>

Brother Chume's case is that of the individual to whom all the passionate "isms" do not mean much; in his prayer to God he asks for a "happy home" and for enough "money to satisfy our daily necessities." Certainly, in an age of bombast, one ~~dominated~~ by those Clark calls "woolly-headed nationalists," the tendency is for these demagogic visionaries to ignore the domestic problems of people like Brother Chume. In fact, Prophet Jeroboam begins his career as a Prophet by first ignoring the reality around him, one which appears to Jero daily in the shape of a girl and taunts him with her buttocks--Jero's faith in himself as the perfect man is threatened:

Jero: I had a premonition this morning that women would be my downfall today. But I thought of it only in the spiritual sense.

Chume: Now you see how it is, Brother Jero.

Jero: From the ~~moment~~ I looked out of my window this morning, I have been tormented one way or another by the Daughters of Discord.<sup>82</sup>

Here the real significance of the symbolism of long hair and the fear of women becomes apparent. He wishes to grow long hair, avoid

women, sleep at the beach, abstain from all luxuries; all or part of these things he probably read from the Bible, and there are things which reveal that this Prophet on a Lagos beach may be only a burlesque version of a Biblical Prophet. He needs the symbols, like Kongi, to remain remote and impersonal, and to breed fear in his followers. He begins, "You've got to have a name that appeals to the imagination -- because the imagination is a thing of the spirit -- it must catch the imagination of the crowd. Yes, one must move with modern times."<sup>83</sup> He then adopts irrational methods like prayers, or encourages his converts to revert to what he calls "animal jabber," and "spiritual excitement";<sup>84</sup> in this way he remains remote and impersonal. He learns to leave people like his "good apprentice, Brother Chume," eternally discontent; for as "long as he doesn't beat" his wife "he comes here feeling helpless, and so there is no chance of his rebelling against me."<sup>85</sup>

In spite of his mercenary attitudes, there is a pathetic side to Jero's charlatanism; he thinks that adaptability and sheer prankishness is all that is required for one to be a Prophet. The folly of Jero's "mendacities" is exposed when the curse of his former master begins to have an effect on him: "May the wheel come right round again and find you just as helpless as you make me now."<sup>86</sup> Jero's new profession was, at best, a parody of his former master's profession, and worst, a burlesque version of it. At the end of the play Jero begins to have the premonition that the wheel is turning, there "is no end, no beginning";<sup>87</sup> he ponders, and just as he had ignored the Old Prophet's warning that women will be the cause of his fall, he begins to realize, to question himself, and to have second thoughts: "But how does one maintain his dignity when the daughter of Eve forces him to leave his own house through a window?"<sup>88</sup>

Eventually, the disciple, Chume, discovers that Brother Jero's idea of abstinence and retreat on the beach is false.

'E say 'in sleep for beach whether 'e rain or cold but that one too na big lie. The man get

house and 'e sleep there every night. But 'in get peace for 'in house, why 'en no let me get peace for mine? Wetin I do-for am?<sup>89</sup>

Chume's problems are those of Noah and his stubborn wife. Like Noah's wife, Amope has "to monkey" on Chume's bicycle "with a mat,...a large travelling bag, with a woman's household stool hanging from a corner of it." Amope is also Chume's cross in a social sense. She asks, "Am I to go to my grave as the wife of a Chief Messenger?" Chume wants to beat his wife because like every man who happens to marry a woman like Amope, with a "kill me" attitude of mind, he thinks that the solution will be for them to beat their wives; Chume's problem is compounded by the fact that he expects much from Jeroboam who has nothing to offer him. His tricks are revealed in the end when the disciple discovers that "'E no bi man of God,"<sup>90</sup> and at this point the prophecy of the old master comes true.

In these tragi-comedies Soyinka persistently wishes to impose a kind of image on the reader, the image of the so-called anti-hero. Perhaps the most striking aspect of his drama is the evolution of an image of leadership antithetical to the one celebrated by the age. Therefore, Soyinka possesses the strong personality that places him above contemporary sham and deceptions; he is an ironist. By donning the mask of moral superiority, the artist reveals the multifarious reality that lurks beneath passionate politics.

In Kongi's Harvest Soyinka debunks political demagoguery and chauvinism, but in a play like The Road the satire is aimed at social abuses; its main actors are the dispossessed anti-heroes of the new urban culture. The Road was produced at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, London, during the Commonwealth Arts Festival in September 1965. The impact of the play springs from the imaginative power of the characters, the juxtaposition of the beautiful with the grotesque and the macabre, despondency and vitality, fantasy and realism; it is this total acceptance of reality that makes The Road a rare work among Soyinka's plays, and among the works of his contemporary playwrights in Africa.

I shall examine a number of ways through which Soyinka compels us to join in this banquet to celebrate the fragility of humanity in the face of immense, chaotic, cosmic forces of growth and decay. Soyinka suggests that the only way we can accept the eternity of our own individual existences is for us to participate and indeed belong to this cosmic force of growth and destruction. The Road is symbolic of that paradox; "there is no end, no beginning"<sup>91</sup>...and to those who survive the tragedy of the road, their single prayer is, "let us see only what earth has fattened, not what has withered within it," and "only life is worth preaching"<sup>92</sup> not death, not terror.

One of Soyinka's tools which he employs in The Road is what Samson and Salubi call "cinema show," a way of exposing by reflection, a combination of speech and action, the real art of mimicry. One of the social types mimicked by Samson and Salubi is the millionaire:

He lifts the Professor's chair, dumps it on the big table and climbs on to it, leaps down almost immediately and whips the coverlet off Kotonu who stirs and slowly wakes up later. Wraps the coverlet around his shoulders and climbs back on the table. Takes out the Professor's glasses and wears them low on his nose. Puts on an imposing look and surveys a line in front of him with scorn. Breaks into a satisfied grin.<sup>93</sup>

Samson: E sa mi [Sing my praise.]

Salubi: [down on his knees, salaams.] African millionaire!

Samson: I can't hear you.

Salubi: Delicate millionaire!

Samson: Wes matter? You no chóp this morning? I say I no hear you.

Salubi: Samson de millionaire!

Samson: Ah, my friends, what can I do for you?

Salubi [in attitude of prayer]: Give us this day our daily bribe. Amen.

Samson dips in an imaginary purse, he is about to fling to them a fistful of coins when he checks his hand. Now remember, officer first. Superintendents! Flings the coins. Salubi scrambles and picks up the money. Inspectors! Action is

repeated. 7 Sergeants! Again Salubi grabs the coins. 7  
 Now that is what I call a well disciplined force. Next,  
 those with one or two stripes. Flings out more money.  
Salubi retreating to a new position, picks up the largesse. 7  
 Excellent! Excellent! And now, those who are new to the  
 game. Same action. 7 You may go now. And good hunting  
 friends. He and Salubi collapse laughing. Kotonu has  
sat up watching. 7

Salubi: Haba, make man talk true, man wey get money get  
 power.<sup>94</sup>

In Salubi's prayer to the millionaire he plays on the words "bread" and "bribe" by inserting the latter at the end of his requests. In response the millionaire takes a roll call of those who will receive the "largesse" and it so happens, ironically, that all the recipients are members of a well disciplined police force. At the end of their acting, Salubi defines what constitutes a criterion of power and social importance in the new urban society, one which Salubi and Samson have been mimicking: "Haba, make man talk true, man wey get money get power."<sup>95</sup> The millionaire uses his money, of course, to acquire power over the police force.

Another of Soyinka's targets is the politician, Chief-in-Town. He is the type of statesman who has lost confidence in the security provided by the official police. He begins to recruit his own private body-guard among thugs. He does so by supplying the thugs with drugs and weed.

(Enter Say Tokyo Kid with a leap over the fence.)

Say T: Chief-in-Town!

Chief: The Captain!

Say T: Chief-in-Town!

Chief: Say Tokyo Kid!

Say T: No dirty timber, thas me Chief.

Chief: How is the timber world?

Say T: Life is full of borers Chief. I feel them in my tummy. Chief-in-Town! I was already on ma way to the moror park when your car passed me. I snoured but you didn't hear nuthin'.

Chief: I need ten men.

Say T: Today?

Chief: This moment. Didn't you get my message?

Say T: No.

Chief: I sent my driver. He said he gave it to an old man in a black tuxedo.

Say T: That would be Professor. He don't like us doing this kinra job. Well what's cooking Chief? Campaign.

Chief: No. Just a party meeting.

Say T: Oh. Are we for the general party or...

Chief: You know me, Personal Bodyguard.

Say T: Chief-in-Town.<sup>196</sup>

The remark made by Say Tokyo Kid that "Professor...don't like us doing this kinra job" illuminates the moral nature of Chief-in-Town. In another scene where Professor parodies a mass, he assembles the thugs, his rejects of the road and these "communicants" are then served with wine by Murano, the mute. Samson, somewhat inebriated, speaks in a way characteristic of his use of language in most parts of the play, he begins to demonstrate:

Samson: I'm all right. Ti o l'eru ese! Begins to demonstrate his tactics. Sisi! A-ah Sisi o Sisi wey fine reach so na only bus wey fine like we own fit carry am. Sweetheart, when a girl as pretty as you, only transports like ours will match her. Wetin now Sisi? Oh your portmanteau, I done put am inside bus. Yes, certainly. We na quick service, we na senior service. A-ah mama, na you dey carry all dis load for your head? A-ah. Gentleman no dey for dis world again...Aya mama, we done ready for go now; na you be de las' for enter...Hey, Kotonu, fire am, make am vum...Oga abi Mister you no hear? We done ready for go--no delay us at all at all. Come o, come now, Service na first class, everything provided. If you wan' pee we go stop, No delay! Wetin you dey talk? I say no delay? Which kin' policeman go delay us for road This bus get six corner and we done put bribe for each corner. No nonsense no palaver. Ah, olopa, my good friend corporal, make you come join we bus now. look in neck, 'e done fat pon-pon e done chop bribe so tey in neck dey swell like pig belle...Look at his neck plump and greasy, he has taken

so many bribes that his neck is swollen like a pig's belly. / ...oE corporal come on sir, come on for we bus sir...a-ah long time no see. Welcome o, how family sah, ah-ah, na you dey look so-so thin like sugar-cane so? Abi den dey give you too much work. Ah, o ma se o /how sad/, na so policeman life be...hn, onijibiti /bloody crook/, 'e done chop bribe in face dey shine like tomato. Ah, misisi, misisi, na you bus dey wait you here... 97

In the above passage Samson recreates a day in his life as a passenger tout and driver's mate to Kotonu. They begin from the park to a check point on the road where they had to give a bribe to the "corporal," Samson's flashback also reveals that the sign "No Danger No Delay" which they had printed on their passenger bus is a way to prove their own adaptability to the caprices of policemen. The asides, "look in neck, 'e done fat pön-pon-pon 'e done chop bribe so tey in neck swell like pig belle," and "hn, onijibiti" (bloody crook) comments on the practice by the traffic police of taking bribes from bus drivers and letting them to go unchecked. Ironically, the traffic policemen are responsible for the high rate of accidents that occur in The Road. By making Samson vary his tone and form of language, Soyinka obtains multiple dramatic effects in a single scene. In lines like "Ah, Olopa, my good friend corporal" the rhythm is heightened by internal rhyme and alliteration. Sometimes, Samson reverts to repetition and monotonous sing-song in order to obtain rhythmic effects and balances: "We na quick service, we na senior service," "...come o, come now," "...service na first class, everything provided." But occasionally the rhythmic line is interrupted by a swift turn of thought reflecting the shifting mind of Samson: "Wetin you de talk? I say no delay? Which kin' policeman?" Here comedy, satire, humour are obtained through the rhetorical power of Samson and his friends.

But victims like Samson and Salubi are not passive sufferers, they derive a meaning for themselves from the chaos. Samson and the thugs are still able to sing, act, and even disagree between themselves. By having them evolve a higher degree of imaginative awareness of the

whole social reality, Soyinka gives them the dignity which accompanies their tragedy. For instance, Salubi knows that millionaires (car owners) and the police have made the situation of employment worse for unemployed people like himself; yet he tries to succeed in spite of the system. He purchases the uniform of a dead driver and puts it on with the blood stains still grotesquely visible on it, because he knows that in a society where what counts is "Impression," and money, not worth, he must "take uniform impress all future employer." Equipped in the manner the society expects of everybody, Salubi visits important spots in the city showing himself to the public: "A uniformed private driver -- temporary unemploy."<sup>98</sup> Actually Salubi, like the Prophet Jero, is a creature of his age and he embraces it heroically. Similarly, Salubi cannot afford to wait until he has obtained an original driver's license of his own; such a decision will be meaningless since having an original driver's licence makes no difference; instead he awaits a forged copy of Kotonu's driver's license from Professor. Equipped with his uniform, a forged driver's license and some money Salubi can eventually become a private driver--a chauffeur. The scene between Chief-in-Town and Say Tokyo Kid confirms Salubi's practice; therefore, seen in the context of the social reality revealed in the play, Samson's "cinema shows" are dramatically effective.

At the beginning of this chapter I noted that in general Soyinka does not engage in anti-colonial satire unless he is using it as a way of creating a contrast between the alien and Yoruba attitudes to the world. The colonial accent is adopted as a weapon with which he debunks the colonists's view of the African. In order to illustrate the point I shall quote an example of this kind of satire from Lady Gregory's Spreading the News in which the English accent reminds the colonized of the presence of the colonial master. Lady Gregory's Spreading the News is laid at a fair; the scene is Mrs. Tarpey's Apple Stall. The first two persons to enter are a Magistrate and a Policeman:

Magistrate: So that is the Fair Green. Cattle and sheep and mud. No system. What a repulsive sight!

Policeman: That is so, indeed.

Magistrate: I suppose there is a good deal of disorder in this place?

Policeman: There is.

Magistrate: Common assault?

Policeman: It's common enough.

Magistrate: Agrarian crime, no doubt?

Policeman: That is so.

Magistrate: Boycotting? ~~Maintaining of cattle? Firing the houses?~~

Policeman: There was one time, and there might be again.

Magistrate: That is bad. Does it go any farther than that?

Policeman: Far enough, indeed.

Magistrate: Homicide, then! This district has been shamefully neglected! I will change all that. When I was in the Andaman Islands, my system never failed. Yes, yes, I will change all that. What has that woman on her stall?<sup>99</sup>

A colony, whether in the Andaman or in Ireland, is always a colony to the colonialists who tends to respond to the local people with stock responses. This is the sort of play with language that Soyinka handles very deftly in his Death and the King's Horseman. Perhaps the most striking thing about Lady Gregory and Soyinka is that the colonial accent becomes a form of exaggeration and an eccentricity; on the other hand, dialect becomes the living language. Both Soyinka and Lady Gregory exploit the incongruity of importing the English accent into the colony.

Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman (1975) is based on the same story as Duro Lapidó's Oba Waja (The King is Dead); the action covers a real historical event that happened in Oyo in the late 1940's. A colonial district officer intervenes and prevents a local chief from committing ritual suicide as demanded by the tradition of the Oyo people, which states that when a King of Oyo dies, his horseman, a sub-chief,

should offer himself of his own will to die and accompany the King.

Even in this play of ritual suicide Soyinka is able to use his talent of mimicry to enable him to satirize the colonial attitude of mind. Elesin the King's horseman, at one point in the play, is being prepared by the market women in anticipation of the actual sacrifice; Amusa the local native authority policeman arrives with his men with orders to arrest Elesin so as to prevent him from killing himself. The market women take a determined stand and block the way preventing Amusa and his men from having access to Elesin. Sergeant Amusa threatens to have the women arrested for "criminal intent." He then warns them that if he hears "dat kin insult once more" he will order the women arrested at once. Some school girls who have been watching the scene understand that Amusa has insulted their mothers in English, a language the women do not understand. They attack Amusa and his men:

Girl: No no Iyaloja, leave us to deal with him.  
He no longer knows his mother, we'll teach him.  
(With a sudden movement they snatch the batons of the two constables. They begin to hem them in.)

Girl: What ~~next~~? We have your batons? What next?  
What are you going to do? (With equally swift movements they knock off their hats.)

Girl: Move if you dare. We have your hats, what will you do about it? Didn't the white man teach you to take off your hats before women?

Iyaloja: It's a wedding night. It's a night of joy for us. Peace...

Girl: Not for him. Who asked him here?

Girl: Does he dare go to the Residency without an invitation?

Girl: Not even where the servants eat the left-overs. 100 .

Presently the Girls take over the whole scene and begin mimicking the colonial attitude of mind toward the colonies.

Girls (in turn. In an 'English' accent.) Well well it's Mister Amusa. Were you invited? (Play-acting

to one another. The older women encourage them with their titters.)

- Your invitation-card please?
- Who are you? Have we been introduced?
- And who did you say you were?
- Sorry, I didn't quite catch your name.
- May I take your hat?
- If you insist. May I take yours? (Exchanging the policemen's hats.)
- How very kind of you.
- Not at all. Won't you sit down?
- After you.
- Oh no.
- I insist.
- You're most gracious.<sup>101</sup>

There is a marked difference in the way the colonists talk between themselves and with Africans.

- And how do you find the place?
- The natives are alright.
- Friendly?
- Tractable.
- Not a teeny-weeny bit restless?
- Well, a teeny-weeny bit restless.
- One might even say, difficult?
- Indeed one might be tempted to say, difficult.
- But you do manage to cope?
- Yes indeed I do.<sup>102</sup>

Then of course there is the climate to be discussed:

- Does it get rather close around here?
- It's mild for this time of the year.
- But the rains may still come.
- They are late this year aren't they?
- They are keeping African time.
- Ha ha ha ha
- Ha ha ha ha
- The humidity is what gets me.
- It used to be whisky.
- Ha ha ha ha
- \* Hahaha ha ha<sup>103</sup>

And finally,

Girls (With a sudden bellow.): Sergeant!

Amusa (snaps to attention): Yessir!

(The women collapse with laughter.)<sup>104</sup>

The preceding parody reveals that the school girls can relate to European culture in a creative way, while Amusa's understanding of it is very superficial, a few words which have been communicated to him by his European superiors. The fascinating aspect of the plays of Synge, Lady Gregory, and Soyinka is just this "play-acting" which gives their drama its "liveliness and freedom."<sup>105</sup>

In Soyinka's early plays like The Swamp Dwellers and A Dance of the Forests main characters like Igwezu and the Warrior saw in every single failure in society, a "sign post" to some eventual revelation. But in plays like The Jero Plays and Kongi's Harvest irrational forces have overrun every measure of goodness in society. In these latter plays Soyinka evolves a sustained, deflationary, and ironic method of debunking demagogy and chauvinism. Even so, in plays like The Strong Breed and Death and the King's Horseman moral character re-emerges and enacts a vision which coincides somewhat with the aspirations of the whole community. Hence technique in Death and the King's Horseman is used as a way of asserting an African world view, reiterating an African attitude to the world.

In The Strong Breed, the hero, Eman, sets out from the start to prepare himself for duties which he will inherit from his father. First he tries to be an initiate but finding the ritual inadequate, he then leaves home and goes abroad. As he says, "those who have much to give fulfill themselves only in total loneliness." In Eman's case, as distinct from the retreat in Kongi's Harvest, and The Trials of Brother Jero, the retreat is not used as a mask; instead Eman uses the period of his retirement from his home town to prepare himself for the eventual confrontation with fate: "A man must go on his own, go where no man can help him, and test his strength,"<sup>106</sup> he says.

A similar form of moral conviction governs the actions of his father. Eman's father (the Old Man) is "short and vigorous" and in his life time he has "taken down each year's evil for over twenty years" to the river. Endowed with this vigor he hands over his duties as

carrier to his son, Eman. Quite unlike the Kadiye in The Swamp Dwellers or Brother Jero in The Trials of Brother Jero, the Old Man's aspirations, his readiness to suffer for others, coincide with the moral vision of his village. He tells the young Eman, "grief may drive you now from home. But you must return."<sup>107</sup>

A similar moral conviction is revealed in the language and actions of Elesin in Death and the King's Horseman. Elesin "is a man of enormous vitality, speaks, dances and sings with that infectious enjoyment of life which accompanies all his actions." Elesin believes that "a man is either born to his art or he isn't!" Like the traditional Praise-Singer who sings the King's praises, Elesin has inherited a role which he must perform—offer himself to die with his king and master; "My fame, my honour are legacies to the living."<sup>108</sup> Therefore, in order to enact his role, that is fulfil himself in the context of models created by preceding generations of horsemen of the Kings, he must fight a battle to overcome temptation. Detrations which may transform him into one of the demagogic visionaries we have examined—a ~~Mata Kharibu~~, a Kadiye, a Brother Jero or a Kongi. The action of the latest play reveals that an individual cannot offer himself to be sacrificed for a course of moral action which he does not believe in; hence the issues enacted in the play also advance beyond the merely moral ones. The argument of the play insists that the individual recognize the total culture of his own people and that the individual's sense of moral justice be shaped and guided by the moral vision of society. The conflict is based on a juxtaposition of the colonial and the African attitudes or meaning of suicide. To the colonial District Officer, sacrifice of a human being is an archaic custom, a survival of feudal practices which ought to be abolished. On the other hand, the Oyo people see it as an act of belonging; its enactment entails the evocation of concepts like honour, loyalty, excellence and so on, concepts whose significance derive from the immediate concerns of the entire community. Therefore, while the colonial District Officer thinks that sacrifice is a pagan

survival, the Oyo people doggedly ignore the humanitarian aspect of the District Officer's argument and instead emphasize the metaphysical questions which sacrifice raises. In Death and the King's Horseman the situation is similar to that enacted in The Strong Breed. The individual is offered not a choice between right and wrong action; he is asked to reiterate convictions:

Praise Singer: There is only one home to the life  
of a river-mussel; there is only one  
home to the life of a tortoise; there  
is only one shell to the soul of man:  
there is only one world to the spirit  
of our race. If that world leaves its  
course and smashes on the boulders of  
the great void, whose world will give  
us shelter?<sup>109</sup>

The moral choice opened to characters like Eman in The Strong Breed, Elesin in Death and the King's Horseman is one of engagement, one which is analogous to the instinctive acceptance of sacrifice.

Elesin: My réin is loosened.  
I am master of my fate. When the hour comes  
Watch me dance along the narrowing path  
Glazed by the soles of my great precursors.  
My soul is eager. I shall not turn aside.<sup>110</sup>

Here sacrifice is an act of belonging, an action which enables the victim to tread the path "Glazed by the soles" of great precursors; hence, ~~Elesin~~ does not wish to become the cause of disjuncture in his own cultural set-up. Since to refuse to die may mean causing the "world" to leave "its course" and smash "on the boulders of the great void," individuals like Elesin cannot afford to take the risk by not offering themselves. Similarly sacrifice is also seen as an action that elevates the individual, first, to become one with the world of the dead, to enshrine one's name in the legend of the race in order that his fame and honour may henceforth be sung by unborn praise-singers. In this latter sense sacrifice is the end of the anguish of incompleteness to which acting man is prone, and as an act of belonging it is a means of overcoming individuation and of becoming one with

racial consciousness. Elesin says: "If I lose my way. The trailing cord will bring me to the roots."<sup>111</sup> Death by sacrifice is a return to the matrilineal essence, envisioned by Elesin's death to symbolize the return to the womb.

The community also suffers the anguish of the tragic hero; theirs is the fear that the hero might not overcome fear, or that owing to some distraction he might fail to commit himself to death. The question presented by the play is, can the community simply turn around and procure any person who happens to be present? What happens when the leading actor or victim, owing to "weakened understanding" or owing to his "lagging will," or even owing to the presence of colonial authority, does not die? This is the cause of the anxiety of the community. The community requires not only one who knows the role he has to perform but also someone who possesses the "deepest protection the mind can conceive."<sup>112</sup> Therefore, when it happens that the victim has finally overcome fear and offers himself, the community is also relieved of its anxiety; and this then is the basis of the religious significance of sacrifice; the aspirations of the individual coincide with the moral vision of society. This coincidence occurs in The Strong Breed and Death and the King's Horseman.

In Death and the King's Horseman words like "honour" and "friendship" have not lost their value. Elesin's loyalty to the late king partly accounts for his accepting to die. He argues that the moral vision which he has been called upon to re-enact was erected by the King and him. This side of Elesin's obligation is dramatized as the theme of loyalty. Loyalty to the late King is the side of Elesin's life which concerns his personal friendship with the King. It is not therefore as though Elesin, the sacrificial victim, were a passive and reluctant victim. He was a one-time confident builder and subscriber to the moral vision of the world which he and the King governed.

The World was mine. Our joint hands  
Raised house posts of trust that withstood

The siege of envy and the termites of time  
 But the twilight hour brings bats and rodents -  
 Shall I yield them cause to foul the rafters?<sup>113</sup>

In another passage he tells how he and the King ate together:

This world is not a constant honey-pot.  
 Where I found little I made do with little.  
 Where there was plenty I gorged myself.  
 My master's hands and mine have always  
 Dipped together and, home or sacred feast,  
 The bowl was beaten bronze, the meats  
 So succulent our teeth accused us of neglect.  
 We shared the choicest of the season's  
 Harvest of yams. How my friend would read  
 Desire in my eyes before I knew the cause --  
 However rare, however precious, it was mine.<sup>114</sup>

Elesin refuses to recognize discontinuity because it will mean betraying his trust to his friend and King; more so because the world which both built, loved, and cherished is no longer complete with only one member still alive. Elesin cannot now undertake to make fresh adjustments, or even to rebuild new foundations of trust.

Life has an end. A life that will outlive  
 Fame and friendship begs another name.<sup>115</sup>

Here, the enemy is time; Elesin begins to see himself only in the context of cosmic totality and discovers that forces like time opposing his individual being are too strong for him to confront. The scavengers of time like "termites," "bats," and "rodents" present a threat to his individual existence, because the joint hands of the King and horseman are no longer laying foundations of moral trust. The metaphysical question which confronts Elesin is caused by the fact that upon visualizing the model of the world which he and the King had built, he realizes that the world is being attacked by time and decay. This irony forms the basis and meaning of tragedy for Elesin, and for him to deny dying will mean submission to the caprices of time or of actually having to face the indignity of living in a world the moral order of which has been created by the hands of others. Elesin's determination to die is represented by the statement, "Life is honour/It ends when honour ends."<sup>116</sup>

enacting the strong belief in continuity, in creating no vacuum -- so that in this play, words have not lost their significance as they did in A Dance of the Forests.

One other way of reinforcing the idea of sacrifice is through the evocation of the image of the child-mother relation; in a manner which represents Elesin's response to the call of his duty as the child's response to the pull of the umbilical cord, and Elesin says, "If I lose my way/The trailing cord will bring me to the roots."<sup>117</sup> At the beginning of the play he is represented as a traveller, journeying to the market place to meet the market woman. The market place is represented again as the "hive."

This is where I have chosen to do my  
leave-taking, in this heart of life,  
this hive which contains the swarm  
of the world in its small compass. This  
is where I have known love and laughter  
away from the palace. Even the richest  
food cloy when eaten days on end;  
in the market, nothing ever cloy.<sup>118</sup>

The market is the centre of the world and the return to the market is a symbolic acceptance of continuity, a positive affirmative response to life. Elesin says, "There are always throngs of humanity behind the leave-taker." In the market place the women become "mothers" and the market place serves again as a "roost"; Elesin sees himself in this context as a "chicken" with a hundred mothers." This image extends further as he becomes the "cockerel" rushing in haste to the market to keep a "tryst"; finally the actual transformation occurs at the point where Elesin is elevated to the position of "a monarch whose palace is built with tenderness and beauty." Henceforth, he begins to see himself only in the sense of the child-man in search of mother-tenderness and mother-beauty. The image of the trailing cord pulling him back to the womb reinforces the idea of the child in search of the safety of the womb. In the end the child-man "with a hundred mothers" is transformed into a "husband to multitudes";<sup>119</sup> at this point the issue of his death as

quest is made evident:

Praise-Singer: He who must, must voyage forth  
 The world will not roll backwards  
 It is he who must, with one  
 Great gesture overtake the world.<sup>120</sup>

We should soon come to know that the retreat into the womb is not a negative quest, it represents taking back life to its source; hence Elesin's death will be accomplished "with one/Great gesture"; paradoxically, because he does not believe solely in honour he also desires a "bed of honour to lie upon."<sup>121</sup>

This idea then introduces the theme of the voyager having to travel light.

Let  
 Seed that will not serve the stomach  
 On the way remain behind. Let it take root  
 In the earth of my choice, in this earth.  
 I leave behind.<sup>122</sup>

And when the market women fail to get the point he asks:

Elesin: What do my mothers say? Shall I step  
 Burdened into the unknown?<sup>123</sup>

The older woman, Iyaloja, takes over the argument:

Iyaloja: Not we, but the very earth says No. The sap  
 in the plantain does not dry. Let grain  
 that will not feed the voyager at his passage  
 drop here and take root as he steps beyond  
 this earth and us...it is good that your  
 loins be drained into the earth we know,  
 that your last strength be ploughed back into  
 the womb that gave you being.<sup>124</sup>

At this point in the action Soyinka is working in archaic modes, evoking archetypal nature imagery like seed, grain, root, earth, sap, and plough. The evocation of this myth of earth's growth and decay reinforces and enlarges the image of the mother as archetypal earth. Elesin's repetition of "this earth of my choice...this earth" re-enacts the instinctive belief that eternity is found in the cyclic flow of nature's laws. In this way Elesin becomes the god of vegetation; not, however, in the tyrannical way of the Kadiye and his serpent in The Swamp Dwellers, but

in the sense that like the seed his death is a symbolic act of ploughing back the seed into the womb of the earth. In this way Elesin regards his death as an act of self-immolation. At this point the child-man becomes husband and seeks a bride. The women give him one:

Iyaloja: You wish to travel light. Well, the earth is yours. But be sure the seed you leave in it attracts no curse.

Elesin: You really mistake my person Iyaloja.

Iyaloja: I said nothing. Now we must go prepare your bridal chamber. Then these same hands will lay your shrouds.

Elesin (exasperated): Must you be so blunt? (Recovers.)  
Well, weave your shrouds but let the fingers of my bride seal my eyelids with earth and wash my body.<sup>125</sup>

Elesin believes that "Pleasure palls/Our acts should have meaning"; hence the marriage is not an act performed to fulfil "a moment's pleasure."<sup>126</sup> The taking of a bride on the day of his death underlines the paradox symbolized by the two rituals performed at the same time--death and a wedding. Elesin reveals in the passage quoted above that the bride will seal his eyes and wash his body; yet he also believes that he will deposit the remaining seed of life in him into her, the figure of mother-earth.

Soyinka introduces the paradox of death-in-life as two rituals taking place concurrently. At one point in the play the District Officer, Pilkings, and his wife know that the Oyo townspeople are celebrating the death of their King. This information comes to them through drumming which they recognize as connoting a funeral. After awhile they begin to hear other sounds which they can no longer identify with a specific ritual. They then decide to consult their Yoruba-speaking servant to translate the messages for them. The following dialogue takes place between Joseph, the boy, and Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings:

Pilkings: Let's ask our native guide. Joseph!  
Just a minute Joseph. (Joseph re-enters.) What's the drumming about?

Joseph: I don't know master.

Pilkings: What do you mean you don't know? It's only two years since your conversion. Don't tell me all that holy water nonsense also wiped out your tribal memory.

Joseph (visibly shocked): Master!

Jane: Now you've done it.

Pilkings: What have I done now?

Jane: Never mind. Listen Joseph, just tell me this. Is that drumming connected with dying or anything of that nature?

Joseph: Madam, this is what I am trying to say: I am not sure. It sounds like the death of a great chief and then, it sounds like the wedding of a great chief. It really mix me up.<sup>127</sup>

At this point in Soyinka's version of the play, he introduces two opposing rituals being re-enacted at the same time by the same group of people--a wedding and the preparation for Elesin's death. Joseph who understands the language of Yoruba drums says, "It really mix me up" because the rituals are performed out of context. Only an Esu-infused mind can make sense of the confusion. By the simple use of the two ritual drums, Soyinka recreates an attitude of mind central to the theme of the play--the paradox of death and life. The district officer and his wife have been trying to understand the meaning of sacrifice for the Yoruba in contemporary terms, but they see it in the context of the humanist tradition and as a result they dismiss the practice, terming it a barbaric and feudalistic survival. Earlier in the play Elesin tells his Praise-singer the following riddle: "That Esu-harrassed day slipped into the stewpot while we feasted. We ate it up with the rest of the meat."<sup>128</sup> Thus Soyinka offers an intellectual explanation for sacrifice and this is done by eliciting from Yoruba rituals, linguistic, and literary resources, the basis and meaning of ritual sacrifice. In Soyinka's play the synthesis of the

traditional rituals with a modern theme has been so thoroughly effected that the reader is not encumbered with a series of paradoxes enumerated in the manner of Duwo Ladipo describing a similar attitude to the world in Oba Waja:

Whiteman, bringer of new laws.  
 Whiteman, bringer of new times..  
 Your work was confounded by Esu,....  
 Nobody can succeed against the will of Esu  
 The god of fate.  
 Having thrown a stone today--he kills a bird yesterday.  
 Lying down, his head hits the roof--  
 Standing up, he cannot look into the cooking pot.  
 With Esu  
 Wisdom counts for more than good intentions,  
 And understanding is greater than justice.<sup>129</sup>

In Soyinka's version of the play the working out of the paradox has been carefully transmitted; those who may for the first time agree with Joseph that "It really mix me up." do not require a prior knowledge of Esu's role in Yoruba mythology to be able to appreciate Soyinka's play. On the other hand, Ladipo's play is harder to follow because of the extra demands it puts on the reader; it is expected that one has acquired a fore-knowledge of Yoruba mythology and the traditions of its praise poetry to appreciate fully the meaning of the play.

Basically the final situation in Soyinka's play is represented by Elesin to his young bride; he argues that his was not only a dance of death but one also of life, of self-immolation during which moment the ~~unity~~ of experience would have been obtained.

Elesin: My young bride....Oh little mother,  
 I have taken countless women in  
 my life but you were more than a  
 desire of the flesh. I needed you  
 as the abyss across which my body  
 must be drawn, I filled it with  
 earth and dropped my seed in it at  
 the moment of preparedness for my  
 crossing. You were the final gift of the  
 living to their emissary to the land of  
 the ancestors, and perhaps your warmth  
 and youth brought new insights of this

world to me and turned my feet  
 leaden on this side of the abyss. <sup>130</sup>

The psychology which underlines Elesin's final speech to his young bride presupposes that life, in the way we know it, exists in the world of the living, therefore those who try to carry life along with them into the world of the dead violate an important aspect of the wisdom of the ancestors. Here, a difference is being made between sacrifice and suicide; the argument reminds us that the moral position taken by Elesin re-enacts the Dead woman's anguish in A Dance of the Forests.

Her suffering is caused by her desire to return the child to the world because she died in pregnancy. She says, "It is a hard thing to lie with the living in your grave."<sup>131</sup> Later in A Dance of the Forests the Questioner, appointed by Forest Father, accuses her of having violated a rule when she chose to die with the child in her womb.

Questioner: A mother, and in haste?  
 Were there no merr? No barren women,  
 Aged and toothless women?  
 What called you forth beyond the backyard fence?  
 Beyond the cooking pots? What made you deaf  
 To the life that begged within you?  
 Had he no claim?

Dead Woman: For him. It was for him.

Questioner: You should have lived for him. Did you dare  
 Snatch death [sic] from those that gasped for breath?

Dead Woman: My weakness, Forest Head. I was a woman  
 I was weak. <sup>132</sup>

Similarly, in The Strong Breed, the Old Man cautions his son, Eman, "We cannot give the two of us," but at the end of Death and the King's Horseman Elesin's "weakened understanding" and his "laggard will" reverse this rule by letting his son, Olunde, die. Even though Elesin eventually strangles himself, the way the action ends suggests that Olunde's death marred the ritual, and it is further suggested that Elesin failed to act on time because he alienated himself from the spiritual forces of his people, from the memory of the race.

Iyaloja (with sudden anger.): I warned you, if you must leave a seed behind, be sure it is not tainted with the curses of the world. Who are you to open a new life when you dared not open the door to a new existence? I say who are you to make so bold? (The Bride sobs and Iyaloja notices her. Her contempt noticeably increases as she turns back to Elesin.) Oh you self-vaunted stem of the plantain, how hollow it all proves. The pith is gone in the parent stem, so how will it prove with the new shoot? How will it go with that earth that bears it? Who are you to bring this abomination on us!

Elesin: My powers deserted me. My charms, my spells, even my voice lacked strength when I made to summon the powers that would lead me over the last measure of earth into the land of the fleshless. You saw it, Iyaloja. You saw me struggle to retrieve my will from the power of the stranger whose shadow fell across the doorway and left me floundering and blundering in a maze I had never before encountered. My senses were numbed when the touch of cold iron came upon my wrists. I could do nothing to save myself. 133

Olunde, the young man who offers himself as the new attendant of the King, is the last cultural hero to offer himself by his own will. Had his father performed his duty, Olunde might have succeeded him, but since the ending of the play shows a son whose actions precede those of his father, it is unlikely that the Oyo people will have a future Horseman of the king; hence the whole ritual terminates there. The death of Olunde marks the new phase of a tragic culture which coincides with the historical presence of European man and his ideas. I have sought to show that Kongi's Harvest, for instance, represents the so-called European man as essentially irrational; on the other hand, the hero or heroine in Soyinka's theatre is the Ogun-infused person; these are persons like Eman and Olunde, characters whose victory over chaos arises from their ability to unify multiple areas of experience. A person, Soyinka says, "is a profound artist only to the degree to which he

comprehends and expresses this principle of destruction and re-creation."<sup>134</sup>  
The true hero in Soyinka must accept sacrifice as a basic criterion for determining leadership.

In Soyinka's world, we have shown, the majority of persons who claim that they represent the accepted types of heroes often fall short of Soyinka's ideal. The priest of the Serpent in The Swamp Dwellers, for instance, is "sleek and fat" because he deceives the peasants and lives on their meagre resources. Brother Jero in The Jero Plays is not the man of God because Chume discovers his tricks. In spite of Kongi's self-proclaimed populism, the only commodity he manages to manufacture, for Ismaland, is agony. The real Soyinka hero abhors the power elite; he reveres his internal powers, because it is only when one obtains internal unity that he can be able to bring that strength to the rescue of society. Soyinka's hero is, therefore, the intellectual man and Soyinka anticipates that unity of culture may be achieved by the work of writers who evoke spiritual images like Ogun. By rallying around the spiritual wisdom of Ogun, the unity of culture, but not the consolidation of political power, may be achieved. All this means is that Soyinka recognizes the totality of Yoruka folk culture as the basis on which his art can be defined and named.

## Conclusion

My objective in starting this thesis was to examine the theory and practice in the writings of John Pepper Clark and Wole Soyinka in relation to their literary indebtedness to the leading playwrights of the Irish Dramatic Movement. I believe that this objective has been accomplished. I have shown that a relationship exists, one which began with the literary enthusiasm and spirit of a "poetic renaissance" which characterized Ibadan in the late 1950's. The influence on Clark and Soyinka of the "Yeatsian" attitude to cultural history, folklore, and the drama extended and developed beyond undergraduate experiments. Our knowledge of the ideals and the plays of the Irish dramatists can broaden our understanding of the thoughts and the plays of Clark and Soyinka, especially because the latter evolved in the context of recent African cultural history.

In the process of examining the theories and plays of the Irish and African dramatists in relation to the cultural histories of their individual backgrounds, I have sought to reveal that fundamental affinities exist between these two groups of dramatists, affinities which, again, can be traced from the individual dramatist's or group of dramatists' attitude to folklore. Here my own conclusions are that our consideration of what Yeats calls a living tradition found only in folklore and in a living speech can offer fresh contexts for the study of Clark and Soyinka. There exists beneath the argument of the thesis an approach, one which I have employed to sustain and reinforce the view that recent studies of modern African drama as it relates to recent cultural history have shown a condescending attitude to the idea of a return to sources.

It is essential that these distinctions be made, because, as one critic has noted, they compel us "to attribute cultural phenomena in the first place to cultural causes."<sup>1</sup> The example of the Irish writers and the Nigerian playwrights reveals that a literary style of the kind

adumbrated by Yeats and his contemporaries evolves when there occurs a coincidence of social vision with an artistic temperament and it requires only "the right temperament to act as reagent and cause" the new material to crystallize. For example, Professor O'Driscoll thinks that

Great moments of theatrical achievement have often coincided with moments of national excitement and tension. In times of acute national consciousness the theatre is the form of literature which makes the most direct impact on the people, becoming at times a means for propaganda, but ultimately the means by which the deeper life of the people is expressed.<sup>2</sup>

Central to the revival movement, however, is the desire to unify cultural experience, and by implication to question the myth of progress. O'Driscoll says:

At the point of renaissance, a meeting-point of the mythic and the scientific, the tribal and the commercial, a point when the past is re-evaluated and rediscovered in the light of changing values and iconoclastic discoveries, something vital and new is created.<sup>3</sup>

Archaism, I have shown, is a manner of ascertaining cultural continuity. "Myth and legend," says Professor O'Driscoll,

...assume sudden significance; the antiquary and historian attempt to trace the cultural and historical beginnings of the nation, and the artist, by consciously choosing for subject the life and legends of the people, by restoring to topographical sites their former heroic associations and by giving them new levels of poetic association, is inspired by an ideal similar to that which inspires the politician.<sup>4</sup>

I have also demonstrated that in Nigeria in the 1950's historical events also coincided with an existing artistic temperament. For example, in an introductory note to Euripides's The Bacchae which he adapted for the National Theatre at the Old Vic London, Wole Soyinka says:

The Bacchae belongs to that sparse body of plays which evoke awareness of a particular moment in

a people's history, yet imbue that moment with a hovering, eternal essence.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that the conclusions are already implicit in Soyinka's thoughts is rewarding, because as we have seen a "moment in a people's history" becomes "eternal" when acting as "the spectator of the ages,"<sup>6</sup> the artist places that "concentrated image of the world" in the context of a racial consciousness. This "contemplation of things vaster than the individual"<sup>7</sup> offers ample justification for my adoption of two major themes for the argument of the thesis--the tragedy of human history (the burden of the past), and the rebellion of the individual against the pressures of social tyranny--hereditary obligations, religious, doctrinaire, and so on. Furthermore, the two-fold distinction also corresponds, in the theories of the Irish and African dramatists, to the revival of the tragic myth and the comic and satiric spirit.

I have sought to reveal that the idea of a return to sources, the archaistic motif, has been unscrupulously abused by the "neo-Tarzanists," and I maintain that the relation between traditional content and modern form in the plays of Clark and Soyinka must be found in the Nigerian playwrights' adherence to the Yeatsian attitude to folklore. Central to the idea of a return to sources advocated by the Irish and African dramatists is the revival of the tragic myth. In fact, the revival of the tragic spirit is important for the study of modern drama in relation to recent contemporary cultural history and I have argued further that it enhances and deepens our understanding of the thoughts and works of Clark and Soyinka with respect to their preoccupations with concepts of cultural continuity--the idea of a literary renaissance.

The tragic art, as we have seen, was the first and by implication the comic and satiric art is a late comer. This pattern is implicit in the development of the drama of Clark and Soyinka. The methods of comedy and satire also reveal how the artist awakens to the reality of his own situation in a human society, how he deals with social conflict. On the one hand, tragic myth deals with human origins, with primal severance and terror in the face of "immense chaotic growth."<sup>8</sup>

Its heroes are, in the word of Lady Gregory, "Gods and Fightingmen."<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, comedy is social criticism, rebellion, and revolt in a human situation.

I have suggested in chapters five and six that while comedy and satire fulfil the needs of cultural continuity, they are also employed as an effective tool of rebellion and revolt against social tyranny. But unlike the tragic art which deals with events that "lie deep in the past of the race,"<sup>10</sup> with confrontation between "hero-gods," comic and satiric art treats events in recent human-society. Working in the archaic modes of the Ijaw Masquerades and by exploiting attitudes and beliefs in the rural communities of the Niger delta, Clark revives a unique sense of humour, wit, and satire. It is illuminating to find that a similar attitude to the cultural continuity of the comic tradition is also implicit in the thoughts of Soyinka. He argues that the quest for sources and "racial self-retrieval is not only a logical dimension of decolonization but a realistic reaction to the actuality of internal betrayal experiences everywhere by the new African polity."<sup>11</sup>

The Irish and African writers tend to emphasize the use of rhetorical categories of satire and comedy by deliberately choosing to relate to the oral sources of their cultural backgrounds: they exploit rhetorical idioms such as parody, satire, wit, word play, dialect, mimicry, and humour; satire also employs irony, wit, word play, humour, and the ungrammatical use of language. In the plays of Synge, Lady Gregory, Clark and Soyinka, humour can be fantastic, macabre, and grotesque, or all of them combined. In fact, Vivian Mercier observes that "humour springs from folklore, magic, and myth; wit and word play permeate folk speech; satire is inseparable from the traditional prestige of the poet; while parody grows naturally out of the...poet's obsession with technique."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Vivian Mercier then concludes that satire is one of the main connections attaching writers to a living tradition of speech and oral poetry. He writes:

In some literatures the comic tradition may not be so long or so continuous as it is in the Irish

literature, but we can be sure that a folk tradition of humour, wit, and satire stretches back far beyond the commencement of any given literary tradition. Likewise, any archaizing movement is apt to beget a comic revival; if it fails to do so, the genuineness of its search for the archaic should fall under suspicion. The prevalence of grotesque and macabre humour in modern art and literature is an index of the sincerity of twentieth-century primitivism.<sup>13</sup>

I have suggested that the studies of J.P. Clark, "Aspects of Nigerian Drama," and Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," reveal that before the development of stage comedy, all the other basic elements of comedy and satire are already contained in African folk speech. In this thesis I have shown that stage comedy does not feature in the drama and that the African and Irish playwrights emphasize the conscious exploitation of language. This conclusion reinforces my contention that like the tragic myth, the comic revival is an important aspect of the literary movement.

There is one other inconsistency to be found in the criticism of African literary drama which I had wanted indirectly to expose: the question of dance, music, drum, ritual, and the other theatrical aspects of African folk theatre which have hitherto been recognized and whose Africanness has been very much at the expense of the literary and linguistic types of folklore. In plays like Ozidi and Death and the King's Horseman it is often tempting and easier to recognize the crowds and the rituals while at the same time to ignore the myths. But Clark points out that the effectiveness of these myth and ritual plays derives from their literary content as well as from their theatricality. In the myth plays,

...the story derives directly from an ancestor or founder myth well known to the audience, and the development is not so much by logic and discussion as by a poetic evocation of some religious experience

shared alike by performer and spectators as in ancient Greece. For them the act is therefore one of worship and sacrifice.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, the originality of the African and Irish playwrights must be defended on the grounds of the totality of their achievements.

"No critic or historian," says Mercier, can discuss the Irish Revival "without mentioning the tragic power, the mysticism, the sense of elemental forces, the simplicity, the beauty, the dignity conferred on Anglo-Irish literature by this movement toward primitivism and the archaic."<sup>15</sup> In Nigeria, the playwrights believe that the roots of the tragic and comic traditions which they are reviving go back deep in the past of the race, beyond the literary conventions of colonial culture. In this way the Irish and African writers hope to renew "old faiths, myths, dreams--the accumulated beauty of the ages."<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, the retreat into the obscurity of folklore was an asset and "constitutes a source of strength."<sup>17</sup> It made it possible, to paraphrase Yeats, for them to create a new kind of drama, it gave them time to prepare and to experiment.<sup>18</sup>

## Appendix A

Programme of the National Theatre Company from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, at The Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, Monday, 25 June 1906.

It is probable the Playgoer whose interest has been stimulated by the announcement of a Repertoire of Irish Plays will be very surprised, when he comes to the Theatre, to find the men and women whose acquaintance he will make, entirely unlike the Irish he has previously met with on the stage; for, with the National Theatre Company there is no "Danny Mann" or "Harvey Duff," nor "Conn the Shaugraun"-- indeed no one at all resembling their fabulous race. It must not be argued from this that Boucicault was wrong; though years have elapsed since he wrote those famous Irish melodramas, there still flourishes, where tourists most do congregate, a race of exaggerated "Irish," chiefly car-drivers, who find a steady income while perpetuating the Irishisms of Charles Lever and his school.

The four authors who contribute this Repertoire have gone direct to the land for their study, and their labours have resulted in a series of Folk Plays which show the Irish peasants and fisher folk exactly in their natural habitat as they live.

For instance, Mr. W.B. Yeats spent most of his childhood in the little town of Sligo, where the people of the surrounding country still see the fairies, but only speak of them to their friends.

Mr. Synge produced his powerful little drama, "Riders to the Sea," after six months on the island of Aran, off the west coast of Ireland, and all the incidents that go to build up the story became known to him during his stay.

Lady Gregory lives in Co. Galway, and the merry comedies from her pen are also the result of personal knowledge and experience, while it is Mr. Boyle's proud boast that he was born and bred in an Irish cabin.

The Folk Play needs a special kind of acting, and the Company selected to interpret the programme are all familiar with the ways of the Irish peasantry, and in their acting take care to keep close to the actual movements and gestures of the people. Their costumes and their properties are not the haphazard collection from the theatre store, but thoroughly appropriate and accurate, while the scenes in which they play are actual replicas of some carefully chosen original; for as much as these plays are portions of Irish life, so are they put upon the stage with a care and accuracy of detail that has hardly been attempted before.

Finally, the music is particularly Irish; rendered by the famous Irish violinist, Mr. Arthur Darley, who has tramped through the remotest parts of Ireland, collecting from wayside fiddlers the precious legendary airs handed down to them through generations of fiddler ancestors. In rendering these traditional airs he uses harmonics and double-stopping, in fact playing with all the technical skill of a highly trained artist.

With the Compliments  
of  
The Director  
National Library  
of Ireland  
Kildare St.  
Dublin 2.

7

A

Appendix B

The University of Leeds  
Leeds  
28th November, 1974

Dear Mr. Asanga,

Thank you for your letter. Let me take your points as you present them.

1. Mbari. Mbari, the writers and artists club, was founded first in Ibadan by a group of young intellectuals and writers including Soyinka, Clark, Okigbo, Nwoko and Ulli Beier. Later developments were at Oshogbo (mainly under the influence of Beier) and Lagos and Enugu -- again as meeting and performing places for the young artists and their audiences. From my experience I would say that it was only the Ibadan and Oshogbo Mbari's that were really successful, though I should add that I know little about the Enugu one. The Mbari in Ibadan, for the first few years of its operation, was situated in the centre of the city in a compound that included an indoor area and an extensive and attractive outdoor courtyard. Exhibitions, meetings and readings were held indoors, performances of theatrical pieces and dances in the courtyard. A small bookshop was attached, and a bar, and food was available from the excellent Lebanese restaurant next door. I find it difficult to put an exact date on the founding of the Ibadan Mbari, but would estimate about 1959. Ulli Beier (now back in Papua & New Guinea) could help you there. Inevitably (with artists!) disagreements grew, and the development of the Oshogbo Mbari (which served as a home for Duro Ladipo's work and the work of the Oshogbo artists) grew, I believe, out of a certain parting of the ways between Beier and the Nigerian artists. But much of my recollection of these events is hazy and incomplete, and may therefore be inaccurate in detail. Mbari (Ibadan) was, as you will be aware, a most important publishing house too-- perhaps its greatest legacy.

2. For the short stories, may I suggest that you use inter-library loan.

3. Concerning the influence of Synge on Soyinka, I would have considerable reservations. I'm sure that Soyinka would have been well aware of Synge's work, but he was equally versed in the works of many other writers. For myself I don't discern any particular influences, though clearly there are some similarities of 'feeling' between the early plays and some of the plays of the Irish theatre. (In a sense I would go for Lady Gregory before Synge, if I had to!) It is a dangerous exercise, I think, to go searching for influences. Soyinka,

subjected to this, yields as many as you like! I would rather suggest that his very wide and sensitive knowledge of the drama gave him access to a range of ideas and stimuli that enriched his own theatrical vocabulary -- but I would advise against pursuing the Synge connection.

I hope these comments are of some assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] Martin Banham

Z. Siga Asanga Esq.,  
330 Chapel Street,  
Ottawa,  
Canada.

Appendix C

Fourah Bay College,  
University of Sierra Leone  
Freetown, Sierra Leone  
5th December, 1974

Dear Mr. Asanga,

Here is a brief reply to some of the queries in your letter of November 15 on Soyinka.

- (a) The Invention [sic] was never published and Soyinka does not even like the play mentioned. I don't think it is possible to get a script.
- (b) Three Plays (Mbari edition).  
The latest address I have for Mbari is Mbari Club, P.O. Box 1463, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- (c) Before the Blackout.  
Orisun Publications was a firm formed by Wole Soyinka himself. Now that he has left Nigeria I do not know what has happened to it. Mr. Soyinka now edits Transition in Ghana and you might wish to write to him there for further information. The address is Transition, Airport P.O. Box 9063, Accra, Ghana.
- (d) The Republican. As you say it was unpublished. I do not know where a copy can be had.
- (e) & (f) Samwood on the Leaves & The Detainee.

Perhaps the B.B.C. African Service, Bush House, London, might be able to provide you with copies of these radio plays since they first broadcast them. . . .

On the history of Mbari, you might write to Mr. Aig Higo, Heinemann Educational Books, P.M.B. 5005, Ibadan, Nigeria.

I don't know if Soyinka was influenced by Synge. In my chapter on Soyinka in Critical Evaluation of African Literature (ed. Edgar Wright, Heinemann Educational Books) I do think I referred to similarities of background between Irish playwrights and Soyinka. You will have to pursue the matter of influence for yourself. I hope I will be able to read your findings.

Good luck with your work!

Yours sincerely,

(signed) Eldred Jones.

Appendix D

Ezekiel Mphahlele  
441 S. Valley Forge Rd.  
Wayne, Pennsylvania 19087  
17 March 1975

Dear Mr. Asanga,

Your letter was redirected to me here. Last June I moved to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia where I began teaching (Dept. of English) in Sept. '74.

Yes, I was one of the Mbari founders--Mbari Writers & Artists Club in Ibadan and subsequently in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria (then). Our objectives were really to provide a meeting place for writers and artists, not a form of literary movement. We had a place with a small open-air theatre for intimate audiences, an art gallery for exhibitions. Some visiting artists came to work here. We had writers' workshop every year. E.g. we published Kofi Awoonor's: (then George Awoonor Williams) poems REDISCOVERY, Chris Okigbo's HEAVENS GATE & LIMITS, Rabearivelo's poems, U Tamsi's BRUSHFIRE (translations of his Feu de Brouse), Alex La Guma's A WALK IN THE NIGHT (nouvelle), and several others.

I subsequently, in 1963, started and directed a Mbari centre in Nairobi, Kenya, called Chemchemi--doing the same things as the Nigerian centres did. The Ibadan Mbari dissolved, but it had its purpose while it lasted. The theatre we were putting on, incidentally, was all experimental indigenous theatre, in which most of the work had been written by people outside of the university circles--I mean outside of authors like Soyinka, J.P. Clark. You could write to Ulli Beier, a co-founder, now at University of Papua & Guinea, Boroko, Port Moresby, Papua & Guinea, Oceania. Also to Wole Soyinka, Churchill College, Cambridge, England. But I'm told he'll be at MIT in Cambridge, Mass., USA, sometime this year. Best wishes with your research,

Yrs,

Isignedl Zeke

## NOTES

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Chinweizu, The West and the Rest of Us (New York: Random House, 1975), pp. 292-301. Ovinba, "The Traditional Content of the plays of Wole Soyinka," African Literature Today, 4 (1970), 2-18.

<sup>2</sup> Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Charles R. Larson, "African Literature and the Comparative Literature," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, 18 (1969), 70-72.

<sup>4</sup> Eldred Jones, The Writing of Wole Soyinka (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Edgar Wright, ed., The Critical Evaluation of African Literature (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement (1939; rpt. London: Methuen, 1971), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, English Drama 1900-1930: The Beginnings of the Modern Period (Cambridge: At the University Press), pp. 249-250.

<sup>8</sup> W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies (1955; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 343.

<sup>9</sup> W.B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats, I. Collected and edited by John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 273-275.

<sup>10</sup> Donatus Nwoga, "Plagiarism and Authentic Creativity in West Africa," in Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1976), p. 165. Cf. Wole Soyinka's cautious response to the controversy over the originality of Yambo Oulougum's novel in Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup>Wole Soyinka, ed., Poems of Black Africa (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>W.B. Yeats, "At the Hawk's Well," in The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, ed., Russell K. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 145. Yeats was referring to the inspiration which he got for his own dance plays from the Japanese Nō plays.

#### Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>J.P. Clark, The Example of Shakespeare (London: Longman, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>John F. Povey, "Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian Drama," Tri-Quarterly, 5 (1966), 130.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Dapo Adelugba, "Nationalism and the Awakening National Theatre in Nigeria," M.A. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1964, pp. 1-24.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 45. Citing Martin Banham.

<sup>6</sup>Geoffrey Axworthy, "The Arts Theatre and the School of Drama," Ibadan, No. 18 (February 1964), 62-63.

<sup>7</sup>ibid.

<sup>8</sup>ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Martin Banham, "The Beginnings of Nigerian Literature in English," A Review of English Literature, 2 (April 1962), 95-96.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.

<sup>11</sup>ibid., 96-98. Banham also notes that those "interested in Nigerian Writing could not do better than watch with care the output of the Writers at Ibadan."

- <sup>12</sup> Anthony Graham-White, "Clark, John Pepper," in Contemporary Dramatists, ed. James Vinson (London: St. James Press, 1973), pp. 156-158.
- <sup>13</sup> Owomoyela Oyekan, "Folklore and the Rise of Theatre Among the Yoruba," Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1970, pp. 1-21.
- <sup>14</sup> S.A. Babalola, The Form and Content of Yoruba Ijala (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
- <sup>15</sup> Owomoyela Oyekan, "Folklore and the Rise of Theatre Among the Yoruba," p. 2.
- <sup>16</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Aesthetic Illusions," in Reading Black: Essays in the Criticism of African, Caribbean and Black American Literature, ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr. (Cornell University Africana and Research Centre, Monograph Series No. 4 (1976), p. 10.
- <sup>17</sup> John F. Povey, "Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian Drama," 131.
- <sup>18</sup> Brian Lapping, "The Road to Somewhere," The Guardian, 13 September 1965, p. 7.
- <sup>19</sup> Kenneth Tynan, A View of the English Stage 1944-1963 (London: Davis-Poynter, Ltd., 1975), pp. 225-253.
- <sup>20</sup> John F. Povey, "Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian Drama," 131.
- <sup>21</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Towards A True Theatre," Transition, 3 No. 8 (1963), 22.
- <sup>22</sup> Brian Lapping, "The Road to Somewhere," The Guardian, 13 September 1965, p. 7.
- <sup>23</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Toward a True Theatre," 22.
- <sup>24</sup> Joseph Bruchac, "Wole Soyinka," in Contemporary Dramatists, ed. James Vinson (London: St. James Press, 1973), p. 715.
- <sup>25</sup> Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre. (Introduction by Daniel J. Murphy (1913; rpt. New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), pp. 8-9.

- 26 Lennox Robinson, ed., The Irish Theatre: Lectures delivered during the Abbey Theatre Festival held in Dublin in August 1938 (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1971), pp. 36-37.
- 27 Allardyce Nicoll, English Drama 1900-1930: The Beginnings of the Modern Period (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1973), p. 252.
- 28 M.M. Mahood, "Drama in New-Born States," Présence Africaine, Eng. Ed., No. 32 (1966), 30; Anthony Graham-White, The Drama of Black Africa (New York: Samuel French, 1974), p. 95.
- 29 Paul M. Levitt, J.M. Synge: A Bibliography of Published Criticism (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974), p. 3.
- 30 For example, Maurice Bourgeois, John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre (1913), Ernest Boyd, The Contemporary Drama of Ireland (1917), Ireland's Literary Renaissance (1922), and Una Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement (1939).
- 31 W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems (1934; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 369. Cf. Allardyce Nicoll, English Drama 1900-1930: "there is nothing else to be found within the entirety of this period [1899-1930] which in any real respect may be regarded as akin to what was accomplished by Yeats and his companions...and presumably from one point of view Dublin was looked upon by members of the theatrical profession as provincial...what is of paramount significance is not this development in itself but the influence it exerted upon the development of the English state." pp. 249-250.
- 32 Bernth Lindfors, ed., Dem-say: Interviews with Eight Nigerian Writers (Austin, Texas: University of Texas, Occasional Publications, African and Afro-American Studies and Research Centre, 1974), p. 7.
- 33 D.E.S. Maxwell and S.B. Bushrui, eds., W.B. Yeats 1865-1965: Centenary Essays on the Art of W.B. Yeats (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1965), p. XV.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Frank O'Connor thinks that "one of the distinguishing marks of the borderline literature, ... the work of the Shaws, the Moores, the Joyces, the Sheehans, the Corkerys, the Somervilles, and Rosses -- is the author's refusal to fight.... Why did Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge choose to do their work in Ireland where every obstacle would be put in their way?.... I suggest that the reason was a philosophy common to all three, though it originated with Yeats. That philosophy holds that nothing is settled, that everything must be created anew, that there is no such thing as progress, and that all utopianism is a curse. Ideas that run counter to the whole middle-class conception of life." The Irish Theatre, ed. Lennox Robinson, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Hone, W.B. Yeats 1865-1939 (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1942), p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> J.P. Clark, Casualties: Poems 1966-1968 (London: Longmans, 1970), p. 1. Clark was quoting from Yeats's "On Being Asked for a War Poem," in Collected Poems, p. 175:

I think it better that in times like these  
A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth  
We have no gift to set a statesman right.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. "Only one who has himself undergone the experience of disintegration, whose spirit has been tested and his psychic resources laid under stress by the forces most inimical to individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of fusion between the two contradictions. The resulting sensibility is also the sensibility of the artist..." Myth, Literature and the African World (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 150.

<sup>38</sup> Vivian Mercier, The Irish Comic Tradition (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. VII.

<sup>39</sup> ibid., p. 241.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Melone, "Architecture du Monde: Chinua Achebe et W.B. Yeats," Conch, 1-2 (1969-1970), 45-53.

<sup>41</sup> The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 244.

<sup>42</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, pp. 140-142. Ogun: "God of creativity, guardian of the road, god of metallic lore and artistry. Explorer, hunter, god of war, custodian of the sacred oath."

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>45</sup> David Greene and Edward Stephens, J.M. Synge 1871-1909 (New York: Collier, 1961), pp. 162-163. Synge says, "We had The Shadowy Waters on the stage last week, and it ~~was the most distressing failure~~ the mind can imagine...no drama can grow out of anything other than the fundamental realities of life which are never fantastic, are neither modern nor unmodern..."

<sup>46</sup> Dapo Adelugba, "The Professional and the Academic Theatre: A Relationship at Ibadan," paper presented at the Second Annual African Literature Association Conference, Northwestern University, Evanston, 8-13 March 1976.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> M.M. Mahood; "Drama in New-Born States," 28.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>50</sup> Anthony Graham-White, The Drama of Black Africa, p. 95.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> J.P. Clark, The Example of Shakespeare (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1970), p. 83.

<sup>53</sup> Dem-say, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Eldred Jones, Letter to me dated 5 December 1974.

<sup>55</sup> Eldred Jones, "Wole Soyinka: Critical Approaches" in The Critical Evaluation of African Literature, ed., Edgar Wright (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> John F. Povey, "Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian Drama," 132-133.

<sup>57</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, p. ix.

<sup>58</sup> W.B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose, II, p. 131.

<sup>59</sup> ibid., p. 158.

<sup>60</sup> Catherine L. Innes asserts that the "phenomenon of cultural nationalism, whether Celtic or African is always a reaction to the psychology of colonialism," in "Through the Looking Glass? Achebe, Synge, and Cultural Nationalism." Diss. Cornell University, 1973.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas MacAnna, "Nationalism from the Abbey Stage," in Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, ed. Robert O'Driscoll (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 92.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew E. Malone, "The Early History of the Abbey Theatre," in Irish Theatre, ed., Lennox Robinson, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Clifford Bax, ed., Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw, W.B. Yeats. Letters (New York: Dudd, Mead & Co., 1924), pp. 23-27.

<sup>64</sup> Our Irish Theatre, pp. 8-9.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, The Irish Literary Theatre 1899-1901 (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1975), p. 85. - In 1900, even the Daughters of Erin were engaged in the experiments in patriotic drama.

<sup>66</sup> Andrew E. Malone, "The Early History of the Abbey Theatre," p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> The Irish Literary Theatre 1899-1901, pp. 25-27.

<sup>68</sup> ibid., pp. 27-83.

<sup>69</sup> The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 232.

<sup>70</sup> ibid., p. 231.

<sup>71</sup> Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, p. 114.

<sup>72</sup> The Irish Literary Theatre 1899-1901, pp. 80-84.

- 73 J.M. Synge, Collected Works, II, Prose, ed. Alan Price (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 350.
- 74 Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1899-1910, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt, 1972), p. 453.
- 75 W.B. Yeats, Explorations (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 96-106.
- 76 Our Irish Theatre, p. 120.
- 77 Explorations, p. 249.
- 78 ibid.
- 79 W.B. Yeats, "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," in Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, p. 74. This is actually Professor O'Driscoll's title of two lectures which Yeats delivered in America.
- 80 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 254.
- 81 Our Irish Theatre, pp. 124-126.
- 82 T.R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy (1956; rpt. London: Methuen, 1966), p. 198.
- 83 Explorations, p. 80.
- 84 ibid., p. 191.
- 85 Our Irish Theatre, p. 115.
- 86 Explorations, p. 115.
- 87 ibid., p. 183.
- 88 ibid., p. 184.
- 89 The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 239.
- 90 Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, The Irish Literary Theatre 1899-1901, p. 80.
- 91 Malcolm Brown, The Politics of Irish Literature: From Thomas Davis to W.B. Yeats (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 9.

- <sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p. 317.
- <sup>93</sup> W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 393.
- <sup>94</sup> W.B. Yeats, "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre," p. 71.
- <sup>95</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," in Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction, 1920-1951, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York: Roland Press, 1952), pp. 442-446.
- <sup>96</sup> W.B. Yeats, Letters to the New Island, ed. Horace Reynolds (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 158-159.
- <sup>97</sup> Gerald Moore, Wole Soyinka (London: Evans Bros. Ltd., 1971), p. 9.
- <sup>98</sup> Dapo Adelugba, "Nationalism and the Awakening National Theatre in Nigeria," pp. 34-45.
- <sup>99</sup> Sangadore Akanji, "Two Plays by Wole Soyinka," rev. of The Lion and the Jewel and The Swamp Dwellers, Black Orpheus, 6 (November 1959), 50.
- <sup>100</sup> Gerald Moore, Wole Soyinka, pp. 16-19.
- <sup>101</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>102</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>103</sup> M.M. Mahood, "Drama in New-Born States," 35.
- <sup>104</sup> Martin Banham, Letter to me dated 28 November 1974.
- <sup>105</sup> M.M. Mahood, "Drama in New-Born States," 35.
- <sup>106</sup> Robert G. Armstrong, "Song of a Goat," review of Mbari production, Ibadan, 15 (March 1963), 29.
- <sup>107</sup> M.M. Mahood, "Three Views of The Swamp Dwellers," review of Ibadan production. Ibadan, 6 (June 1959), 28.
- <sup>108</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>109</sup> J.P. Clark, The Example of Shakespeare, p. 86.

- 110 *ibid.*, p. 83.
- 111 Joseph Hone, W.B. Yeats 1865-1939, p. 35.
- 112 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 83.
- 113 Geoffrey Axworthy, "The Arts Theatre and the School of Drama," Ibadan, 18 (February 1964), 62.
- 114 "Towards A True Theatre," 21.
- 115 Geoffrey Axworthy, "The Arts Theatre and the School of Drama," 62.
- 116 John F. Povey, "Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian Drama," 132-133.
- 117 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 76.
- 118 Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World, 140.
- 119 Morell L. Karen, ed., In Person: Achebe, Awoonor and Soyinka (Seattle: African Studies Program, University of Washington, 1975), p. 68.
- 120 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 14.
- 121 *ibid.*, p. 24.
- 122 Cosmo Pieterse and Dennis Duerden, eds., African Writers Talking: A Collection of Radio Interviews (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1972), p. 72.
- 123 Wole Soyinka, Death and the King's Horseman (London: Methuen, 1975), pp. 18-20.
- 124 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 92.
- 125 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. VIII.
- 126 Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier, eds., Modern Poetry from Africa (Penguin, 1963), pp. ~~24~~<sup>14</sup>-25.
- 127 J.A. Ramsaran, New Approaches to African Literature. A Guide to Negro-African Writing and Related Studies (Ibadan: Ibadan University

Press, 1965), p.2. Professor Ramsaran quotes the 1963/64 University Calendar: "there will be some comparative study of French West African Writing, in translation where necessary, and of West Indian Writing."

<sup>128</sup> Léopold Sédar Senghor, Prose and Poetry, selected and translated by John Reed and Clive Wake. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 97.

<sup>129</sup> W.H. Stevenson, "The Horn: What it was and What it Did," in Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, p. 227.

<sup>130</sup> Langston Hughes, "The Twenties: Harlem and its Renaissance," African Forum, 4 (Spring 1966), 17.

<sup>131</sup> Léopold Sédar Senghor, Prose and Poetry, p. 40.

<sup>132</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 40.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>134</sup> Myth, Literature, and the African World, pp. 63-126.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Martin Banham "The Beginnings of Nigerian Literature in English," 90.

<sup>138</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 1. Cf. Chinweizu, pp. 319-320.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>141</sup> Wole Soyinka, Poems and Black Africa (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 15.

<sup>142</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> David Greene and Edward M. Stephens, J.M. Synge 1871-1909, p. 162.

<sup>144</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Aesthetic Illusions," pp. 8-9.

- 145 The Example of Shakespeare, p. ix.
- 146 *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 147 *ibid.*, p. 6.
- 148 Wole Soyinka, "The Choice and Use of Language," Current Events in Africa, No. 75 (1971), 5.
- 149 Wole Soyinka, "The Failure of the writer in Africa," in The African Reader: Independent Africa, ed. Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson (New York: A Vintage Book, 1970), p. 140.
- 150 Eldred Jones, "Wolé Soyinka: Critical Approaches," p. 72.
- 151 Ezekiel Mphahlele, "The African Critic Today," in Reading Black, p. 13.
- 152 Mukarovsky, Jan, "Standard Language and Poetic Language," in A Prague School Reader in Aesthetics, Literary Structure, and Style, ed. and trans. by Garvin L. Paul (Washington D.C., 1964), pp.17-30.
- 153 W.B. Yeats, Letters to the New Island, p. 174.

## Chapter 2

- <sup>1</sup> Raph Steel Boggs, "Material, Science, and Art of Folklore," in Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, ed. Maria Leach (1949; rpt. New York, 1972), p. 690.
- <sup>2</sup> Alain Ricard, Théâtre et Nationalisme: Wole Soyinka et LeRoi Jones. (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972); Robert O'Driscoll, ed., Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland (1971).
- <sup>3</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, pp.XI-XII.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 42.
- <sup>6</sup> The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 242.

- <sup>7</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 22.
- <sup>8</sup> W.B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose, II, p. 240.
- <sup>9</sup> James Joyce, The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), p. 207.
- <sup>10</sup> Uncollected Prose, II, p. 307.
- <sup>11</sup> J.M. Synge, Prose, p. 350.
- <sup>12</sup> African Writers Talking, p. 72.
- <sup>13</sup> Lennox Robinson, ed., The Irish Theatre, p. 35.
- <sup>14</sup> Maire Nic Shúbhlaigh, The Splendid Years. Recollections of Maire Nic Shúbhlaigh as told by Edward Kenny, foreword by Padriac Colum (Dublin: James Duffy and Co. Ltd., 1955), p. 175.
- <sup>15</sup> Malcolm Brown, The Politics of Irish Literature, pp. 321-322.
- <sup>16</sup> Lennox Robinson, ed., The Irish Theatre, p. 38.
- <sup>17</sup> Letters to the New Island, p. 74.
- <sup>18</sup> Uncollected Prose, II, p. 141.
- <sup>19</sup> Letters to the New Island, p. 174.
- <sup>20</sup> Explorations, p. 156.
- <sup>21</sup> Uncollected Prose, II, p. 141.
- <sup>22</sup> Explorations, p. 115.
- <sup>23</sup> W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies, p. 230.
- <sup>24</sup> Letters to the New Island, p. 155.
- <sup>25</sup> Uncollected Prose, II, p. 238.
- <sup>26</sup> Andrew Malone, "The Rise of the Realistic Movement," in The Irish Theatre, ed. Lennox Robinson, pp. 91-115.
- <sup>27</sup> Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, p. 9.

28. George Mills Harper, "'Intellectual hatred' and 'intellectual nationalism': the paradox of passionate politics," in Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, pp. 40-66.

29. ibid., p. 10.

30. ibid., p. 11.

31. Letters to the New Island, p. 157.

32. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, pp. 77-210.

33. Autobiographies, p. 230.

34. ibid., p. 231.

35. Collected Poems, pp. 101-392.

36. The Irish Comic Tradition, p. VI.

37. Autobiographies, p. 234.

38. Uncollected Prose, I, p. 285.

39. Uncollected Prose, II, p. 140.

40. Explorations, p. 198.

41. Uncollected Prose, II, p. 241.

42. W.B. Yeats, A Vision (New York: Collier Books, 1970), p. 35.

43. "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," p. 82.

44. ibid., p. 83.

45. W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 288.

46. ibid., p. 204.

47. ibid., p. 210.

48. Explorations, pp. 229-230.

49. Collected Poems, p. 400.

50. W.B. Yeats, Selected Criticism, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London:

Macmillan, 1964), p. 41.

51 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 237.

52 Uncollected Prose, I, p. 288.

53 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 141.

54 Uncollected Prose, I, p. 273.

55 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 240.

56 *ibid.*, p. 155.

57 Explorations, p. 185.

58 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 188.

59 Uncollected Prose, I, p. 284.

60 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 287.

61 Uncollected Prose, I, p. 273.

62 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 1063.

63 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 84.

64 *ibid.*, p. 76.

65 *ibid.*, pp. 77.

66 *ibid.*

67 *ibid.*, p. 86.

68 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. IX.

69 *ibid.*, p. 141.

70 Dapo Adelugba, "Nationalism and the Awakening National Theatre," p. 2.

71 Kwame Nkrumah, The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1957), p. X.

72 Cf. Senghor's "New York."

- 73 Wole Soyinka, Collected Plays, I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 11.
- 74 *ibid.*, p. 38.
- 75 *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 76 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. VIII.
- 77 *ibid.*, p. XII.
- 78 Wole Soyinka, "The Terrible Understanding," Atlas, No. 15 (January 1968), 38.
- 79 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 5.
- 80 Wole Soyinka, The Man Died (London: Rex Collings, 1974), p. 175.
- 81 *ibid.*
- 82 *ibid.*
- 83 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 42.
- 84 Wole Soyinka, "The Terrible Understanding," 37.
- 85 Dem-say, p. 10.
- 86 Dapo Adelugba, "The Professional and the Academic Theatre: A Relationship at Ibadan." Paper presented at the Second Annual African Literature Association Conference, Evanston, Northwestern University, 8-13 March 1976.
- 87 Soyinka, Plays, I, p. 51.
- 88 Marianne Fearne, "Modern Drama of Africa: Form and Content. A Study of Four Playwrights," Diss. Northwestern University, 1974, p. 147.
- 89 *ibid.*
- 90 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. XII.
- 91 "The Terrible Understanding," 36-37.
- 92 *ibid.*, 39.

- 93 *ibid.*, 37-38.
- 94 *ibid.*
- 95 *ibid.*
- 96 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. XII.
- 97 African Writers Talking, p. 66.
- 98 Robert G. Armstrong, "Song of a Goat," Ibadan (March 1963), 30.
- 99 Una Maclean, "Song of a Goat," Ibadan (October 1962), 29.
- 100 African Writers Talking, p. 170.
- 101 *ibid.*
- 102 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 86.
- 103 *ibid.*, p. 73.
- 104 *ibid.*
- 105 *ibid.*
- 106 *ibid.*, p. 70.
- 107 *ibid.*, p. 73.
- 108 Wole Soyinka, "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 135.
- 109 *ibid.*
- 110 *ibid.*, p. 138.
- 111 *ibid.*, p. 140.
- 112 *ibid.*
- 113 African Writers Talking, p. 173.
- 114 "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 138.
- 115 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 241.
- 116 John Goldblatt, "Man Alive," The Guardian, 27 November 1972, p. 8.

- 117 Wole Soyinka, "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 4.
- 118 *ibid.*
- 119 *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 120 *ibid.*
- 121 Wole Soyinka, "From A Common Backcloth: A Reassessment of the African Literary Image," The American Scholar, 3 (Summer, 1963), 389.
- 122 Myth, Literature and African World, p. XII.
- 123 Explorations, p. 156.
- 124 The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 248.
- 125 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. XII.
- 126 Robert Pageard, Littérature Negro-Africaine (Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1966), p. 112.
- The passage was originally translated by Anthony Graham-White The Drama of Black Africa, p.43. I take Pageard's "sorrowful consciousness of human destiny" to mean the expression of a historical consciousness.
- 127 Léopold Sédar Senghor, Prose and Poetry, p. 38.
- 128 Uncollected Prose, II, p. 131.
- 129 *ibid.*
- 130 Léopold Sédar Senghor, Prose and Poetry, p. 29.
- 131 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 132 Robert Pageard, p. 112.
- 133 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 42.
- 134 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 142.
- 135 Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy (1872) and The Genealogy of Morals (1887) tr. by Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday and Anchor, 1956), pp. 111-146, cf. Paul Tillich, "The Meaning of Meaninglessness," in The Modern Tradition, edited by Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 944-948.

- 136 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 141.
- 137 The Birth of Tragedy, p. 136.
- 138 "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 4.
- 139 W.B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose, II, p. 241.
- 140 "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 4.
- 141 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 155.
- 142 *ibid.*
- 143 *ibid.*
- 144 *ibid.*, p. 154.
- 145 *ibid.*, p. 150.
- 146 *ibid.*, p. 145.
- 147 *ibid.*, p. 146.
- 148 *ibid.*, pp. 145-146. Cf. W.B. Yeats, A Vision, p. 53: "Belief comes from shock and is not desired... Belief is renewed continually in the ordeal of death."
- 149 *ibid.*, p. 150.
- 150 ~~*ibid.*~~, pp. 145-156.
- 151 *ibid.*, p. XII.
- 152 *ibid.*, p. 149.
- 153 *ibid.*
- 154 "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," pp. 78-79.
- 155 Explorations, pp. 170; p. 375.
- 156 T.R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy, p. 198.

## Chapter 3

- <sup>1</sup>W.B. Yeats, "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," pp. 76-84.
- <sup>2</sup>ibid.
- <sup>3</sup>J.P. Clark, A Reed in the Tide (London: Longman, 1965), p. vii.
- <sup>4</sup>W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 210.
- <sup>5</sup>A Reed in the Tide, p. vii.
- <sup>6</sup>J.M. Synge, Prose, p. 199.
- <sup>7</sup>J.P. Clark, "Song of a Goat" in Three Plays (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 16.
- <sup>8</sup>ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>9</sup>ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>10</sup>ibid., p. 4.
- <sup>11</sup>ibid., p. 6.
- <sup>12</sup>ibid., p. 5.
- <sup>13</sup>ibid., pp. 27-28.
- <sup>14</sup>Robert G. Armstrong, "Song of a Goat," Ibadan, 15 (March 1963), 29.
- <sup>15</sup>ibid.
- <sup>16</sup>The Example of Shakespeare, p. 24.
- <sup>17</sup>"Song of a Goat," p. 41.
- <sup>18</sup>Una Maclean, "Song of a Goat," Ibadan, (October 1962), 28.
- <sup>19</sup>Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 152.
- <sup>20</sup>ibid., p. 156.
- <sup>21</sup>Three Plays, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> J.P. Clark, America, Their America (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> Three Plays, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> ibid., p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> J.M. Synge, Collected Works. Plays I, ed., Ann Saddlemyer (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 23-27. Cf. Soyinka who thinks that there is an arbitrary element in the working out of the tragic events in Riders to the Sea; implying that Clark did a finer job in his exploitation of the anxieties and beliefs of his environment: "The poetic containment of violence is very much the environmental reality of Song of a Goat. Storms do not occur everyday nor are fishermen washed off their canoes on every fishing-trip." Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Three Plays, pp. 25-26.

<sup>28</sup> ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> The Variorum Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 772.

<sup>30</sup> African Writers Talking, p. 67.

<sup>31</sup> A Reed in the Tide, pp. lvii-viii.

<sup>32</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> African Writers Talking, pp. 69-69.

<sup>34</sup> "The Masquerade," in Three Plays, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> ibid., p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> ibid., pp. 56-57.

<sup>37</sup> ibid., p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>39</sup> ibid., p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> ibid., p. 86.

- 41 America, Their America, pp. 93-94.
- 42 "The Raft," in Three Plays, p. 96.
- 43 *ibid.*, p. 121.
- 44 *ibid.*, p. 133.
- 45 "Three Views of the Swamp Dwellers," 28.
- 46 The Example of Shakespeare, pp. 79-84.
- 47 *ibid.*, p. 44.
- 48 *ibid.*, p. 84.
- 49 *ibid.*, p. 42.
- 50 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. XII.
- 51 "The Lion and the Jewel," p. 9.
- 52 *ibid.*
- 53 *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- 54 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 55 *ibid.*, p. 49.
- 56 "The Swamp Dwellers," in Collected Plays I, p. 81.
- 57 *ibid.*
- 58 *ibid.*, p. 104.
- 59 *ibid.*, p. 107.
- 60 Myth, Literature, and the African World, p. 143.
- 61 "The Swamp Dwellers," pp. 93-94.
- 62 *ibid.*, p. 88.
- 63 *ibid.*, pp. 88-91.
- 64 "Three Views of the Swamp Dwellers," 28.

- <sup>65</sup> Bernth Lindfors, "The Early Writings of Wole Soyinka" in Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literature, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1976), p. 188.
- <sup>66</sup> Wole Soyinka, Death and the King's Horseman (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 15.
- <sup>67</sup> "The Swamp Dwellers," p. 98.
- <sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 111.
- <sup>70</sup> Morell L. Karen, ed., In Person: Achebe, Awoonor and Soyinka (Seattle: African Studies Program, University of Washington, 1975), p. 68.
- <sup>71</sup> Wole Soyinka, "And After The Narcissist?", African Forum, 4 (Spring 1966), 58-64.
- <sup>72</sup> "The Countess Cathleen," in The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, pp. 170-177.
- <sup>73</sup> John Rees Moore, Mask of Love and Death (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 59-64.
- <sup>74</sup> The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 19.
- <sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77.
- <sup>76</sup> Explorations, p. 116.
- <sup>77</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," pp. 424-426.
- <sup>78</sup> Gwyneth Henderson, ed., African Theatre (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 132.
- <sup>79</sup> "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 140.
- <sup>80</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, pp. 2-10.
- <sup>81</sup> Collected Poems, p. 337.
- <sup>82</sup> Letters to the New Island, p. 175.

- 83 "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," pp. 70-71.
- 84 *ibid.*
- 85 Letters to the New Island, p. 174.
- 86 *ibid.*, p. 158.
- 87 L.S. Senghor, Prose and Poetry, p. 40.
- 88 "A Dance of the Forests," p. 11.
- 89 *ibid.*, p. 62.
- 90 *ibid.*, p. 5.
- 91 *ibid.*
- 92 *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 93 *ibid.*, p. 25.
- 94 "Madmen and Specialists," in Collected Plays II, p. 271.
- 95 "A Dance of the Forests," p. 68.
- 96 "Madmen and Specialists," pp. 240-244.
- 97 Lemuel A. Johnson, "History and Dystopia in Alejo Carpentier and Wole Soyinka" (For Publication) in proceedings of the Second Afro-Hispanic Symposium Centre for Inter-American Relations, New York (July 1977), 2: "There is little evidence in Carpentier or Soyinka of the Edenic."
- 98 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, pp. 932-934.
- 99 "The Terrible Understanding," 38.
- 100 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 267.
- 101 "A Dance of the Forest," p. 10.
- 102 "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre," p. 70.
- 103 "A Dance of the Forests," p. 24.
- 104 *ibid.*, p. 23.

- 105 *ibid.*, p. 24.
- 106 W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 210.
- 107 "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 142.
- 108 "A Dance of the Forests," p. 42.
- 109 *ibid.*, p. 45..
- 110 *ibid.*, p. 46-59.
- 111 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 145.
- 112 "A Dance of the Forests," p. 71.
- 113 "The Road," in Collected Plays, I, pp. 158-198.
- 114 *ibid.*, p. 159.
- 115 *ibid.*, p. 220.
- 116 "Madmen and Specialists," p. 247.
- 117 *ibid.*
- 118 In Madmen and Specialists, the Mendicants Chant, "AS IS WAS NOW AS EVER SHALL BE." p. 271.
- 119 Cf. Death and the King's Horseman, pp. 21-70: "You know so well the cycle of the plantain: is it the parent shoot which withers to give sap to the younger, or, does your wisdom see it running the other way?" And, "the sap in the plantain does not dry. Let grain that will not feed the voyager at his passage drop here and take root as he steps beyond this earth and us."
- 120 A Vision, p. 53.
- 121 The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 242.

## Chapter 4

- <sup>1</sup> Uncollected Prose, II, 131.
- <sup>2</sup> Uncollected Prose, I, 255.
- <sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 256.
- <sup>4</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 147.
- <sup>5</sup> Uncollected Prose, I, 255.
- <sup>6</sup> Uncollected Prose, II, 240.
- <sup>7</sup> Our Irish Theatre, pp. 124-125.
- <sup>8</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 37.
- <sup>9</sup> J.M. Synge, Collected Plays, II, 53-54.
- <sup>10</sup> J.M. Synge, Prose, pp. 348-349.
- <sup>11</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 92.
- <sup>12</sup> ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 26.
- <sup>14</sup> ibid., pp. 923-92.
- <sup>15</sup> ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> ibid., pp. 18-35.
- <sup>18</sup> Three Plays, p. 3.
- <sup>19</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 93.
- <sup>20</sup> ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Three Plays, p. 10.
- <sup>22</sup> ibid., p. 30.
- <sup>23</sup> ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>24</sup> ibid., p. 30.

- 25 ~~ibid.~~ p. 19.
- 26 ~~ibid.~~, p. 3.
- 27 ~~ibid.~~, p. 41.
- 28 ~~ibid.~~, p. 4.
- 29 ~~ibid.~~, p. 19.
- 30 ~~ibid.~~, p. 9.
- 31 ~~ibid.~~, p. 26.
- 32 ~~ibid.~~, pp. 23-24.
- 33 ~~ibid.~~
- 34 ~~ibid.~~, p. 27.
- 35 ~~ibid.~~, p. 24.
- 36 ~~ibid.~~, p. 26.
- 37 Frances Ademola, "J.P. Clark and His Audience," African Forum, 2 (1965), 84-86.
- 38 "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," p. 69. Cf. America. Their America pp. 100-113; for Clark's negative reactions to what he calls the "utterly commercial sway and character of Broadway."
- 39 ~~ibid.~~, p. 83.
- 40 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 76.
- 41 "The Masquerade," in Three Plays, pp. 53-55.
- 42 ~~ibid.~~, pp. 56-57.
- 43 ~~ibid.~~, p. 78.
- 44 ~~ibid.~~, p. 86.
- 45 J.M. Synge, Plays, II, XXIV.
- 46 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 76.

47 "The Masquerade," p. 75.

48 *ibid.*, p. 72.

49 *ibid.*, p. 82.

50 *ibid.*, p. 81.

51 *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

52 Letters to the New Island, p. 174.

53 J.M. Synge, Plays, II, XXII.

54 S.B. Bushrui, Yeats's Verse - Plays: The Revisions 1900-1910 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 150: Yeats's practice was to write, "Conchubar" and "Naoise," while Synge wrote, "Conchubor" and "Naisi"; both playwrights frequently adopted "Conor" instead of "Conchubar/Conchubor."

55 J.M. Synge, Plays, I, 49.

56 J.M. Synge, Plays, II, 185. Cf. Conchubor to "Deirdre: "if young men are great hunters yet it's with the like of myself you'll find a knowledge of what is priceless in your own like....And you may take the word of a man has no lies you'll find with any other the like of what I'm bringing you in wildness and confusion in my own mind," pp. 193-195.

57 "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," p. 68.

58 J.M. Synge, Plays, II, 25.

59 *ibid.*, pp. 21-29.

60 *ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

61 *ibid.*

62 Alan Price, Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961), pp. 127-137.

63 Frances Adema, "J.P. Clark and His Audience," 86.

64 Una Maclean, "Song of a Goat," 29.

- <sup>65</sup> Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre, p. 321.
- <sup>66</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, p. IX.
- <sup>67</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>68</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. XII.
- <sup>70</sup> Wole Soyinka, "From A Common Backcloth," 389.
- <sup>71</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>72</sup> "The Swamp Dwellers," in Collected Plays, I, p. 83.
- <sup>73</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.
- <sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99.
- <sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.
- <sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.
- <sup>79</sup> Edgar Wright, ed., The Critical Evaluation of African Literature,  
p. 46.
- <sup>80</sup> "The Swamp Dwellers," pp. 111-112.
- <sup>81</sup> "The Lion and the Jewel," in Collected Plays, II, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.
- <sup>83</sup> Collected Plays, I, p. 158.
- <sup>84</sup> Collected Plays, II, p. 31.
- <sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.
- <sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.
- <sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, p. 51.
- E

- 88 "Three Views of the Swamp Dwellers," 28.
- 89 "Drama in New-Born States," 36.
- 90 Collected Plays, I, pp. 44-45.
- 91 ibid., p. 51.
- 92 Wole Soyinka, "From A Common Backcloth," 392.
- 93 Collected Plays, I, p. 36.
- 94 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 10.
- 95 Collected Plays, I, p. 60.
- 96 ibid., p. 70.
- 97 Collected Plays, II, p. 61.
- 98 ibid., p. 61.
- 99 ibid., pp. 131-132.
- 100 ibid., pp. 61-62.
- 101 ibid., p. 66.
- 102 ibid., pp. 115-116.
- 103 ibid.
- 104 ibid., p. 68.
- 105 Collected Plays, I, p. 110.
- 106 ibid., p. 144.
- 107 ibid., p. 129.
- 108 ibid., p. 146.
- 109 ibid., p. 134.
- 110 ibid., p. 133.
- 111 ibid., pp. 138-139.

- 112 *ibid.*, pp. 143-144.
- 113 *ibid.*, p. 125.
- 114 *ibid.*, p. 134.
- 115 Collected Plays, II, p. 191.
- 116 *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.
- 117 Death and the King's Horseman, p. 71.
- 118 Collected Plays, I, p. 162.
- 119 *ibid.*, p. 163.
- 120 *ibid.*, p. 156.
- 121 *ibid.*, pp. 202-203.
- 122 Collected Plays, II, p. 70.
- 123 Wole Soyinka, "From A Common Backcloth," 392.
- 124 Collected Plays, I, p. 172.
- 125 *ibid.*, p. 159.
- 126 *ibid.*, p. 226.
- 127 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 148.
- 128 Collected Plays, II, p. 153.
- 129 *ibid.*, p. 169.
- 130 *ibid.*, pp. 155-156.
- 131 *ibid.*, p. 157.
- 132 *ibid.*, pp. 169-170.
- 133 *ibid.*, pp. 190-191.
- 134 The Example of Shakespeare, pp. 94-96.
- 135 Collected Plays, II, p. 101.

<sup>136</sup> Death and the King's Horseman, p. 23.

<sup>137</sup> ibid., p. 24.

<sup>138</sup> ibid., p. 26.

<sup>139</sup> The Drama of Black Africa, p. 95.

#### Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre, pp. 315-320.

<sup>2</sup> The Example of Shakespeare, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>5</sup> Adrian Roscoe, Mother is Gold: A Study of West African Literature (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1971), pp. 201-208.

<sup>6</sup> The Drama of Black Africa, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre, p. 318.

<sup>8</sup> J.P. Clark, Three Plays, pp. 57-58.

<sup>9</sup> Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (1944; rpt. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 132-133.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre, p. 320.

<sup>11</sup> Homo Ludens, p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre (New York: Doubleday, 1953), pp. 251-254.

<sup>14</sup> James W. Flannery, W.B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 286.

<sup>15</sup> "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> The Irish Comic Tradition, pp. 79-80

- 17 African Writers Talking, p. 65.
- 18 ibid., p. 72.
- 19 ibid.
- 20 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 1304.
- 21 ibid.; pp. 1300-1305.
- 22 James W. Flannery, pp. 314-315.
- 23 W.B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions (1961; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1971),  
p. ix.
- 24 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 1300-1305.
- 25 James W. Flannery, p. 295.
- 26 America, Their America, p. 93.
- 27 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 86.
- 28 ibid.
- 29 Ozidi, p. 10.
- 30 ibid., pp. 13-17.
- 31 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 79.
- 32 Ozidi, pp. 1-5.
- 33 ibid., p. 2.
- 34 Letters to the New Island, p. 159.
- 35 Ozidi, p. 6.
- 36 ibid., pp. 8-9.
- 37 ibid., p. 13.
- 38 ibid.
- 39 ibid., p. 14.
- 40 ibid., pp. 15-16.

- 41 *ibid.*
- 42 *ibid.*
- 43 *ibid.*, p. 27.
- 44 J.M. Synge, Plays, I, p. 25.
- 45 *ibid.*, pp. 39-43.
- 46 Lady Gregory, Seven Short Plays, pp. 9-27.
- 47 Ozidi, p. 31.
- 48 *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 49 *ibid.*, p. 75.
- 50 *ibid.*, p. 76.
- 51 *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
- 52 *ibid.*, p. 49.
- 53 *ibid.*, p. 58.
- 54 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 1296.
- 55 *ibid.*, p. 1297.
- 56 *ibid.*, pp. 1298-1302.
- 57 Explorations, pp. 170-375.
- 58 Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 142.
- 59 J.M. Synge, Four Plays and the Aran Islands, edited with an introduction by Robin Skelton (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 192.
- 60 J.M. Synge, Plays, I, p. 27.
- 61 David Krause, "Sean O'Casey and the higher nationalism: the desecration of Ireland's household gods," in Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, p. 125.

- 62 J.M. Synge, Plays, II, p. 269.
- 63 Lady Gregory, Seven Short Plays, pp. 180-181.
- 64 Ozidi, p. 29.
- 65 ibid.
- 66 ibid., pp. 119-120.
- 67 The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats, p. 1295.
- 68 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 92.
- 69 Wole Soyinka, "Modern Negro-African Theatre: The Nigerian Stage," in Colloquium on Negro Art: First World Festival of Negro Arts (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1968), p. 496.
- 70 Ozidi, p. 11.
- 71 ibid., pp. 11-12.
- 72 ibid.
- 73 ibid., p. 66.
- 74 ibid., pp. 36-37.
- 75 ibid., pp. 50-51.
- 76 ibid.
- 77 ibid., p. 68.
- 78 ibid., p. 70.
- 79 ibid., p. 71.
- 80 ibid., p. 114.
- 81 "The Raft" in Three Plays, p. 104.
- 82 ibid., p. 119.
- 83 ibid., p. 120.
- 84 ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 116-121.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>89</sup> Dem-say, p. 10.

<sup>90</sup> Clifford Bax, ed., Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw, W.B. Yeats, Letters, pp. 23-27.

<sup>91</sup> "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," p. 82.

#### Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> David Krause, pp. 114-115.

<sup>2</sup> "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> David Krause, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Hone, W.B. Yeats 1865-1939, p. 193.

<sup>6</sup> Homo Ludens, pp. 63-75.

<sup>7</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, pp. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> David Krause, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> Wole Soyinka, "Modern Negro-African Theatre: The Nigerian Stage," p. 495.

<sup>12</sup> "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>14</sup> John Goldblatt, "Man Alive," The Guardian, Monday 27 November, 1972, p. 8.

- 15 African Writers Talking, p. 174.
- 16 John Goldblatt, p. 8.
- 17 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 73.
- 18 "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 139.
- 19 "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 1.
- 20 "The Failure of the Writer in Africa," p. 139.
- 21 Gerald Moore, Wole Soyinka, p. 5.
- 22 Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre, p. 320.
- 23 *ibid.*, p. 319.
- 24 The Man Died, p. 290.
- 25 African Writers Talking, p. 173.
- 26 *ibid.*, pp. 172-173.
- 27 *ibid.*, p. 177.
- 28 *ibid.*
- 29 *ibid.*, p. 173.
- 30 "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 1.
- 31 Wole Soyinka, Collected Plays, I, p. 46.
- 32 *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 33 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 49.
- 34 Frances Ademola, ed., Reflections (Lagos: African University Press, 1962), p. 12.
- 35 Collected Plays, I, p. 48.
- 36 *ibid.*, pp. 50-50.
- 37 *ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

- 38 *ibid.*, pp. 53-54.
- 39 David Krause, p. 124.
- 40 Collected Plays, II, pp. 157-
- 41 W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 210; David Krause, p. 115.
- 42 The Man Died, p. 11.
- 43 Death and the King's Horseman, p. 53. l.
- 44 Collected Plays, II, pp. 83-86.
- 45 *ibid.*, p. 78.
- 46 *ibid.*, p. 116.
- 47 Collected Plays, I, p. 68.
- 48 Collected Plays, II, p. 89.
- 49 *ibid.*, p. 80.
- 50 *ibid.*, p. 70.
- 51 *ibid.*, p. 94.
- 52 *ibid.*, p. 93.
- 53 *ibid.*, p. 100.
- 54 *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 55 *ibid.*
- 56 *ibid.*, p. 93.
- 57 Death and the King's Horseman, p. 42.
- 58 Collected Plays, II, p. 112.
- 59 *ibid.*, p. 119.
- 60 *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 61 *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>62</sup> Charles R. Larson, "Wole Soyinka: Nigeria's Leading Social Critic," New York Times Book Review, 24 December, 1972, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> Martin Banham, "Darkness and Threat," rev. of Madmen and Specialists by Wole Soyinka, Journal of Commonwealth Literature, No. 2 (June 1973), 125.

<sup>64</sup> Wole Soyinka, Collected Plays, II, p. 237.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Wole Soyinka, Collected Plays, I, p. 96.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>77</sup> Collected Plays, II, p. 271.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.

- 83 *ibid.*, p. 153.
- 84 *ibid.*, p. 155.
- 85 *ibid.*, p. 153.
- 86 *ibid.*, p. 146.
- 87 *ibid.*, p. 170.
- 88 *ibid.*, p. 153.
- 89 *ibid.*, p. 169.
- 90 *ibid.*, p. 147-169.
- 91 *ibid.*, p. 170.
- 92 *ibid.*, p. 99-129.
- 93 Collected Plays, I, p. 155.
- 94 *ibid.*
- 95 *ibid.*, p. 168.
- 96 *ibid.*, p. 168.
- 97 *ibid.*, p. 225-226.
- 98 *ibid.*, p. 152.
- 99 Seven Short Plays, pp. 3-4.
- 100 Death and the King's Horseman, pp. 36-37.
- 101 *ibid.*, p. 38.
- 102 *ibid.*
- 103 *ibid.*
- 104 *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 105 Wole Soyinka, African Writers Talking, p. 173.
- 106 Collected Plays, I, pp. 125-138.

- 107 *ibid.*, p. 133.
- 108 Death and the King's Horseman, pp. 9-10.
- 109 *ibid.*, p. 11.
- 110 *ibid.*, p. 14.
- 111 *ibid.*, p. 18.
- 112 *ibid.*, p. 53.
- 113 *ibid.*, p. 15.
- 114 *ibid.*, p. 14.
- 115 *ibid.*, p. 15.
- 116 *ibid.*
- 117 *ibid.*, p. 18.
- 118 *ibid.*, p. 40.
- 119 *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
- 120 *ibid.*, p. 17.
- 121 *ibid.*, p. 20.
- 122 *ibid.*, p. 21.
- 123 *ibid.*
- 124 *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
- 125 *ibid.*
- 126 *ibid.*, p. 20.
- 127 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 128 *ibid.*, p. 9.
- 129 Duro Ladipo, Three Plays, English adaptation by Ulli Beier  
(Ibadan: Mbari Publications, 1964), p. 72.
- 130 Death and the King's Horseman, p. 65.

<sup>131</sup> Collected Plays, I, p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> ibid., p. 60.

<sup>133</sup> ibid., pp. 67-68. The evocation of the image of the symbol "cold iron" by Elesin re-enacts the sale of the Warrior at the end of A Dance.

<sup>134</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 150.

#### Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> The Irish Comic Tradition, p. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> ibid.

<sup>4</sup> ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Wole Soyinka, The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), p. VII.

<sup>6</sup> "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats," pp. 70-71.

<sup>7</sup> The Birth of Tragedy, p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> Myth, Literature and the African World, p. 144.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Soyinka in Myth, Literature and the African World, pp. 1-2.

... "hero-gods, a projection of man's conflict with forces which challenge his efforts to harmonise with his environment, physical, social and psychic. The drama of the hero-gods is a convenient expression; gods they are unquestionably, but their symbolic roles are identified by man as the role of an intermediary quester, an explorer into territories of 'essence-ideal' around whose edges man fearfully skirts. Finally, as a prefiguration of conscious being which is nevertheless a product of the conscious creativity of man, they enhance man's existence within the cyclic consciousness of time. These emerge as the principal features of the drama of the gods; it is within their framework that traditional society poses its social questions or formulates its moralities."

- 10 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 76.
- 11 "Aesthetic Illusions," p. 1.
- 12 The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 242.
- 13 ibid., p. 248.
- 14 The Example of Shakespeare, p. 79.
- 15 The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 247.
- 16 W.B. Yeats, Uncollected Prose, II, p. 131.
- 17 The Irish Comic Tradition, p. 244.
- 18 W.B. Yeats, "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats,"  
pp. 83-84.

## Bibliography

- Adelugba, Dapo. "Nationalism and the Awakening National Theatre in Nigeria." M.A. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Professional and Academic Theatre: A Relationship at Ibadan." Paper presented at the Second Annual African Literature Association Conference, Northwestern University, Evanston, 8-13 March, 1976.
- Ademola, Frances. "J.P. Clark and His Audience." African Forum, 2 (1965), 84-86.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Reflections: Nigerian Prose and Poetry. Lagos: African University Press, 1962.
- Akanji, Sangadore. "Review of The Lion and the Jewel and The Swamp Dwellers by Wole Soyinka." Black Orpheus, 6 (November 1959), 50-51.
- Anon. Programme of the National Theatre Company from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, Monday, June 25, 1906, Abbey Theatre and Irish Plays I. W.A. Henderson Collection, Ms 1730. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, P. 154.
- Armstrong, Robert G. "Song of a Goat." Review of Mbari Production. Ibadan, 15 (March 1963), 29-30.
- Axworthy, Geoffrey J. "The Arts Theatre and The School of Drama." Ibadan, 18 (February 1964), 62-64.
- Babalola, S. The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Banham, Martin. "African Literature II: Nigerian Dramatists in English and the Traditional Nigerian Theatre." Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 3 (July 1967), 97-102.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Beginnings of a Nigerian Literature in English." A Review of English Literature, 2 (April 1962), 89-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to me dated 28 November 1974.
- Bax, Clifford, ed. Florence Farr, Bernard Shaw, W.B. Yeats, Letters. New York: Dudd, Mead & Co., 1924.

- Bentley, Eric. In Search of Theatre. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.
- Boggs, Ralph Steele. "Materials, Science, and Art of Folklore." Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend. Ed. Maria Leach. 1949; rpt. New York, 1972.
- Bourgeois, Maurice. John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre. 1913; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965.
- Brown, Malcolm. The Politics of Irish Literature: From Thomas Davis to W.B. Yeats. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972.
- Clark, J.P. America, Their America. London: Heinemann, in Association with Andre Deutsch, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Casualties: Poems 1966-68. London: Longmans, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Example of Shakespeare. London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Ozidi, A Play. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ozidi Saga." Black Orpheus, 2 (1968), 18-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Reed in the Tide. London: Longman, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Three Plays. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Cook, David and Miles Lee, eds. Short East African Plays. London: Heinemann, 1970.
- Duerden, Dennis and Pieterse Cosmo, eds. African Writers Talking. A Collection of Interviews. London: Heinemann, 1972.
- Eliot, T.S. "Ulysses, Order and Myth." Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951. Ed. W. John Aldridge. New York: Roland Press, 1952. - Pp. 424-426.
- Ellis-Fermor, Una. The Irish Dramatic Movement. 1939; rpt. London: Methuen, 1971.
- Fearn, Marianne. "Modern Drama of Africa: Form and Content. A Study of Four Playwrights." Diss. Northwestern University, 1974.
- Fergusson, Francis. The Idea of a Theatre. New York: Double Day, 1953.
- Flannery, W. James. W.B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Gates, Louis S. (Skip). "An Interview with Wole Soyinka." Black World, 24 (August 1975), 30-38.

Goldblatt, John. "Man Alive." The Manchester Guardian, 27 November 1972, p. 8.

Graham-White, Anthony. The Drama of Black Africa. New York: Samuel French, 1974.

Greene, David H. and Edward H. Stephens. J.M. Synge 1871-1909. New York: Collier, 1961.

Gregory, Lady. Gods and Fightingmen: The story of the Men of the Red Branch of Ulster. Preface by W.B. Yeats. London: Murray, 1904.

\_\_\_\_\_. Our Irish Theatre. With introduction by J. Murphy Daniel. 1913; rpt. New York: Capricorn Books, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. Seven Short Plays. 1909; rpt. Dublin: Mansuel & Co., 1911.

Gussow, Mel. "Play from Jail Cell Tested at Drama Parley." Review of Soyinka's Madmen and Specialists. The New York Times, 20 July 1970, p. 22.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Theatre: Psychological Play from Nigeria: Soyinka's Madmen and Specialists Given by Ibadan Students at O'Neill Centre." The New York Times, 3 August 1970, p. 31, 1.

Harper, George Mills. "'Intellectual hatred' and 'intellectual nationalism': the paradox of passionate politics." Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland. Ed. Robert O'Driscoll. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. Pp. 40-66.

Henderson, Gwyneth, ed. African Theatre. Eight Prize-winning Plays Chosen by Wole Soyinka, Martin Esslin, and Lewis Nkosi. London: Heinemann, 1973.

Henn, T.R. The Harvest of Tragedy. 1961; rpt. London: Methuen, 1966.

Henshaw, James Ene. Children of the Goddess and Other Plays from West Africa. London: University of London Press, 1966.

\_\_\_\_\_. Dinner for Promotion. London: University of London Press, 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_. Medicine for Love: A Comedy in Three Acts from West Africa. London: University of London Press, 1966.

\_\_\_\_\_. This Is Our Chance: Plays from West Africa. London: University of London Press, 1965.

Hogan, Robert and James Kilroy. The Irish Literary Theatre 1899-1901. Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1975.

- Hone, Joseph. W.B. Yeats 1865-1939. London: Macmillan, 1942.
- Hughes, Langston, ed. An African Treasury. New York: Pyramid Books, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Twenties: Harlem and Its Negritude." African Forum, 4 (Spring 1966), 11-21.
- Huizinga, Johan. Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play - Element in Culture. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.
- Innes, Catherine Lynette. "Through the Looking Glass: Achebe, Synge and Cultural Nationalism." Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1973.
- Jones, Eldred Durosimi. Letter to me dated 5 December 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Wole Soyinka: Critical Approaches." The Critical Evaluation of African Literature. Ed. Edgar Wright. London: Heinemann, 1973. Pp. 51-72.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Wole Soyinka." Contemporary Poets. Ed. Rosalie Murphy. London: St. James Press, 1970. Pp. 1032-1034.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Writing of Wole Soyinka. London: Heinemann, 1973.
- Kolade, Christopher. "Looking at Drama in Nigeria." Cultural Notes, 3 (Winter 1966), 77-79.
- Krause, David. "Sean O'Casey and the higher nationalism: the desecration of Ireland's household gods." Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland. Ed. Robert O'Driscoll. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. Pp. 114-133.
- Ladipo, Duro. Three Yoruba Plays. English adaptation by Ulli Beier. Ibadan: Mbari Publications, 1964.
- Lapping, Brian. "The Road to Somewhere." The Manchester Guardian, 13 September 1965, p. 7.
- Larson, Charles R. "African Literature and Comparative Literature." Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, 18 (1969), 70-74.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Wole Soyinka: Nigeria's Leading Critic." New York Times Book Review, 24 December 1972, pp. 6-7, 10.
- Levitt, M. Paul. J.M. Synge: A Bibliography of Published Criticism. Dublin: Ireland. Irish University Press, 1974.

- Lindfors, Bernth. "The Early Writings of Wole Soyinka." Critical Perspectives on Nigerian Literature. Ed. Bernth Lindfors. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1976. Pp. 169-194.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Interview with Michael J.C. Echeruo." Dem-Say. Austin Texas: University of Texas, Occasional Publication, African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center, 1974. Pp. 7-12.
- MacAnna, Thomas. "Nationalism from the Abbey Stage." Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland. Ed. Robert O'Driscoll Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. Pp. 89-101.
- Mahood, M.M. "Drama in New-Born States." Présence Africaine. English ed., 32 (1962), 23-29.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Three Views of The Swamp Dwellers." Review of Ibadan Production. Ibadan, 6 (June 1959), 28-29.
- Maclean, Una. "Song of a Goat." Review of Mbari production. Ibadan 14 (October 1962), 28-29.
- Malone, Andrew E. "The Early History of the Abbey Theatre." The Irish Theatre. Ed. Lennox Robinson. New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1971. Pp. 3-28.
- Maxwell, D.E.S. and S.B. Bushrui, eds. W.B. Yeats: 1865-1965. Centenary Essays on the Art of W.B. Yeats. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1965.
- Melone, Thomas. "Architecture du Monde: Chinua Achebe et W.B. Yeats." Conch. 1-2, (1969-1970), 45-53.
- Mercier, Vivian. The Irish Comic Tradition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Moore, Gerald. Wole Soyinka. London: Evans Bros. Ltd., 1971.
- Morell, L. Karen, ed. In Person: Achebe, Awonor, and Soyinka. Seattle: University of Washington African Studies Program, 1975.
- Moritz, Charles, ed. Current Biography. New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1974/75.

- Mphahlele, Ezekiel. "The African Critic Today: Toward a Definition."  
Reading Black: Essays in African, Caribbean, and Black American Literature. Ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr. African Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, 1965. Pp. 37-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letter to me dated 17 March 1975.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. English Drama: 1900-1930. The Beginnings of the Modern Period. London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Nkrumah, Kwame. The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1957.
- Nwoga, Donatus I. "Plagiarism and Authentic Creation in West Africa."  
Research in African Literature 6 (1975), 32-39.
- O'Connor, Frank. "Synge." The Irish Theatre. Ed. Lennox Robinson. New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1971. Pp. 29-52.
- O'Neill, Maire. The Splendid Years: Recollections of Maire (O'Neill) Nic Shiubhlaigh as told by Edward Kenny; foreword by Padriac Colum. Dublin: James Duffy & Co. Ltd., 1955.
- Owomoyela, Oyekan. "Folklore and the Rise of Theatre Among the Yoruba."  
 Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970.
- Pageard, Robert. Littérature Nègro-Africaine. Paris: Le Livre Africain, 1966.
- Povey, John F. "Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian Drama." Tri-Quarterly, 5 (1966), 129-135.
- Price, Alan. Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama. New York: Russell & Russell, 1972.
- Ramsaran, J.A. New Approaches to African Literature. A Guide to Negro African Writing and Related Studies. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1965.
- Ricard, Alan. Théâtre et Nationalisme: Wole Soyinka et LeRoi Jones. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972.
- Roscoe, Adrian. Mother is Gold: A Study of West African Literature. Cambridge: At the University, 1971.
- Senghor, Léopold Sédar. Prose and Poetry. Selected and translated by John Reed and Clive Wake. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

- Shaw, Bernard. Collected Letters, 1898-1910. Ed. Dan.H. Laurence.  
London: Max Reinhardt, 1972.
- Skene, Reg. The Cuchulain Plays of W.B. Yeats: A Study. New York:  
Columbia University Press, 1974.
- Soyinka, Wole. "Aesthetic Illusions." Reading Black: Essays in the  
Criticism of African, Caribbean and Black American Literature. Ed. Houston  
A. Baker Jr., Cornell University, African Studies and Research Centre, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "And After the Narcissist?" African Forum, 4 (Spring 1966), 53-64.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Shuttle in the Crypt. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Camwood on the Leaves. London: Methuen, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Collected Plays I. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Collected Plays II. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Death and the King's Horseman. London: Eyre Methuen, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "From a Common Backcloth: A Reassessment of the African Literary  
Image." The American Scholar, 3 (Summer 1963), 387-396.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Modern Negro-African Theatre: The Nigerian Stage." Colloquium  
on Negro Art: First World Festival of Negro Arts. Paris: Présence  
Africaine, 1968. Pp. 495-504.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Myth, Literature, and the African World. New York and London:  
Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. Poems of Black Africa. London: Heinemann, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Choice and Use of Language." Cultural Events in Africa, 75  
(1971), 3-6.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Failure of the Writer in Africa." The African Reader:  
Independent Africa. Eds. Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson. New  
York: Vintage Books, 1970. Pp. 135-141.
- \_\_\_\_\_. trans. The Forest of a Thousand Daemons, by Fagunwa Daniel  
Olurunfemi-Nelson, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Man Died. London: Rex Collings, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Terrible Understanding." Atlas, 15 January 1968, pp. 36-39.
- Stevenson, W.H.. "The Horn: What it was and what it Did." Critical  
Perspectives on Nigerian Literature. Ed. Bernth Lindfors. Washington  
D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1976. Pp. 215-241.

- Stock, A.G. "Yeats and Achebe." Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 5 (July 1968), 105-111.
- Synge, J.M. Collected Works III, Plays Bk. I. Ed. Ann Saddlemyer. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Collected Works IV, Plays Bk. II. Ed. Ann Saddlemyer. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Collected Work I, Poems. Ed. Robin Skelton. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Collected Works II, Prose. Ed. Alan Price. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Four Plays and the Aran Islands. Edited with an introduction by Robin Skelton. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letters to Molly: John Millington Synge to Maire O'Neill, 1906-1909. Ed. Ann Saddlemyer. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Tutuola, Amos. The Palm-Wine Drinkard. London: Faber and Faber, 1971.
- Tynan, Kenneth. A View of the English Stage, 1944-1963. London: Davis-Poynter, 1975.
- Yeats, W.B. Autobiographies. 1955; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Collected Poems. 1933; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Essays and Introductions. 1961; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Explorations. Selected by Mrs. W.B. Yeats. London: Macmillan, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letters of W.B. Yeats. Ed. Allan Wade. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Letters to the New Island. Ed. Horace Reynolds. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1934.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Plays in Prose and Verse. London: Macmillan, 1922.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Two Lectures on the Irish Theatre by W.B. Yeats." Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-Century Ireland. Ed. Robert O'Driscoll, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. Pp. 66-88.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats. In 2 Vols. collected and edited by John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson. London: Macmillan, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W.B. Yeats. Ed. Russell K. Alspach. London: Macmillan, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Vision. New York: Collier, 1970.