CAUSES OF DYSFUNCTIONALISM IN LITERARY DRAMA IN NIGERIA: AN APPLICATION TO WOLE SOYINKA'S PLAYS

BY

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DEDICATION

For

Olubukola - Masoyi (wife)

with

Samson (son)

and

Albert (son)

who made me to know that "Research isn't a sprint. It's a marathon. The race isn't to the swift, but to the most persistent."

DECLARATION

I, Alexander Kure declare that this thesis is the result of my work, investigation and field survey conducted principally at Zaria. Works of other authors are fully acknowledged wherever relevant.

AKure 27/7/2001

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled "CAUSES OF DYSFUNCTIONALISM IN LITERARY DRAMA IN NIGERIA: An Application to Wole Soyinka's Plays" by Alexander Kure meets the regulations governing the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contributions to knowledge and literary presentation.

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The convention of scholarly writing prescribes that any piece of writing should be ascribed to a person(s) as author(s). But from my experience in this work, no person ever writes anything alone. A writer must draw upon the immense stock of knowledge and research from other literary forebears as well as tap the more active brains of contemporaries dwelling in various parts of our small world community with or without their knowledge and approval. There are also the illuminations, inspiration and encouragement derivable from those with whom one associates, people who believe in him and convince him that he has the capacity to perform if he would but awaken from the stupor and mental rigor - mortis which he has imposed on himself. I therefore owe a debt to all my predecessors, teachers, colleagues and students; I gratefully acknowledge my deep indebtedness to all of you.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines not necessarily dysfunctionalism in its totality but rather the problems that lead to dysfunctionalism of literary drama in Nigeria.

For the purpose of this work, dysfunctionalism is defined as an impairment or abnormality of the functioning of an organ. By this definition, the effectiveness of literary drama in communicating its desired message(s) in Nigeria is impaired and this research explores the scope and nature of this impairment by drawing examples from the plays of Wole Soyinka.

This thesis therefore examines the relationship and the level of mutual intelligibility between the playwright, (the conceiver of the idea) and the consumer of the product of conception, that is, the target readership. This inability is traced to the problem of content and form of the plays.

In this study, we explore the ways to overcome the problems that may hinder the achievement of adequate communication and feedback in literay drama in Nigeria. This is obviously so as this ought to be the paramount force behind each dramatic work.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research discusses the problems that have hindered or hinder literary drama from achieving its objectives in Nigeria. The contention is that these problems are not to be found in just one place but are present right from the period of conception of an idea to be communicated by the playwright to the point of "consumption" by readers. This means that these problems are principally of content and form. This effort culminates by attempting to find out the effect of this communication of ideas on the said consumers.

The choice of drama is deliberate. It is principally because, of the three genres of literature in Nigeria, that is, prose, poetry, and drama, drama "deals at a highly concentrated, more intense level with the contradictions of social existence" (Jeyifo 1985:7). In this breadth Etherton M.J. also considers drama as it relates to other subjects and says:

> It is not a "subject", like History, or Biology, or English. In so far as drama has any subject matter it is subsumed by other established subjects, namely the History of the Theatre, play-texts as Literature, and the study of culture in Sociology. In fact what makes drama as something distinct, and even unique, is that its "subject matter" is each individual pupil, him or herself.

He also goes further to say that:

> --- unlike the academic subjects, which tend increasingly to isolate the learner from the common man, particularly in their more esoteric explorations of knowledge, drama returns knowledge to people. The more skilled the practitioners become the more easily will the people understand what they are trying to say"
>
> (Etherton, 1982:110).

Anthony Graham-White notes the importance of drama as used during the colonial era thus:

> In emphasizing drama, the centres (Council) were focussing upon the form that is above all others a group product and in drama there is room for both the literate and illiterate, for the educated man who might try his hand out at play writing and the peasant who has talent as a dancer (Graham-White, 1974:59).

Also looking at theatre (drama) as a tool for a continuing form of conscientization, Kabwe Kasoma (1978) quoted in Etherton M.J. (1982:179) says that:

> --- I have always regarded it as a most powerful communication tool in national development plans. I have always seen it as a vehicle for critical appraisal of government plans that are faulty (with all the dangers that this entails for the social health of the dramatists).

The relative importance of drama as a literary genre is well expressed by Gerald Moore (1971:11) when he says:

> --- the theatre is still the most primitive in its immediacy of all our means of organized communication. It is man speaking to men, without the interpretation of canvas, microphone, camera or the printed page ---. Furthermore, drama has unique capacities for social unification, in that it works through the eye and the spoken word. Hence, if rightly shaped and performed, it can be equally accessible to literate and illiterate, --- to the stage box and the groundlings.

The above can be summed up thus: above all the existing literary genres, drama is used effectively as a medium for education, entertainment, information, protest, celebration, discovery, watch-dog etc. This is moreso when its consumption is easy to both literate and non-literate. These functions are often realized through the medium of either print, radio, television, film or theatre.

In spite of the above, it would be observed that literary drama in Nigeria has consistently remained dysfunctional. Biodun Jeyifo, in attempting to assess the problems causing this dysfunctionalism observes that:

> If the reason for the ambivalent reception of the best of our literary dramas and their distance from a popular projection are really not to be found in the linguistic medium or appropriate producing outfits, the explanation has to be sought elsewhere. And the only other possible source is that most basic to the reality of drama as the most social of the literary arts: the (reader) Playwright (Jeyifo 1985:83).

Biodun Jeyifo's assessment above is largely true. It notes, and rightly too, that the problems causing dysfunctionalism exist in the chosen "linguistic medium" or "appropriate producing outfits" or finally in the relationship between the (reader) and playwright. While this statement is largely true, one must not fail to recognise some other dimensions of the problem of dysfunctionalism, including, the message to be communicated, the channel to be adopted and how that message to be transmitted has to be packaged for the reader.

This study, therefore, aims at showing that the problem could start right from who the playwright (communicator) is, the idea to be communicated and the various influences that are exerted on such a literary product up to its consumption and its feedback. The documentation of these problems this way adopts the Lasswell (1948) method of communication. While this method is considered in greater detail later, suffice to say that the model recognises the act of communication as starting from an initiator (sender) who transmits certain messages, through certain channels to a receiver.

The receiver in turn sends an appropriate feedback as to whether or not a message has been understood. "

1.1 ROLE OF THE WRITER

The society in which a writer lives demands that such a writer must play a certain social role. In Nigeria (and Africa) in general, the writer has been ascribed many special roles to play including that of a "teacher". The writer is also seen as not:

> --- remote from his people, producing obstruse material for an elite intellectual audience, but rather he continues the tradition of the Senegambian griot as the chronicler of a people's conscience, the simulator of ideas and activity (Banham and Wake 1976:2-3).

This often challenges the writer to realize that whatever he says at each point in time must be seen to be functional and relevant. This charge also means taking an ideological position which is noted below by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo that:

> In this we believe that Kenyan Literature, indeed all African literature and its writers is on trial. We cannot stand on the fence. We are either on the side of the people or on the side of imperialism. African literature and African Writers are either fighting with the people or aiding imperialism and the class enemies of the people. We believe that good theatre is that which is on the side of the people, that which, without masking mistakes and weaknesses, gives people courage and urges them to higher resolves in their struggle for total liberation. (Ngugi & Mugo 1976: Preface).

Wole Soyinka, the example used in our study in his essay "The Writer in a Modern African State" (1967) has stressed the redeeming function of the artist. "It seems to me that the time has now come when the African writer must have the

courage to determine what alone can be salvaged from the recurrent cycle of human stupidity." No wonder then that in A Dance of the Forests, Forest Head, the supreme deity, had recognized the present splendour of Demoke's carving calling it "the kind of action that redeems mankind", because it links the artist and his roots. Forest Head also notes in the play: "It was the work of generations. I think your hands are very old. You have the fingers of the dead." Soyinka believes that the artist can perform his redeeming function only if he asserts his direct and vitalizing connection with the tradition to which he is an inheritor. In his article therefore he states that"the artist has always functioned in African Society as the recorder of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time. It is time for him to respond to this essence of himself."

The writer must not only be involved in everyday affairs of his society, he must also be capable of looking beyond because:

> The writer is the visionary of his people; he recognizes past and present not for the purpose of enshrinement but for the logical-creative impulse and statement of ideal future. He anticipates, he warns. It is not always enough for the writer to be involved in the direct physical struggle of today, he often cannot help but envisage and seek to protect the future which is the declared aim of contemporary struggles. ("The choice and use of Language" in Cultural Events in Africa, Lxxv, London, 1966, p.3).

To understand the writer in Nigeria today, one must take into consideration the very social situation that animate his

creative activity. In addition, this must be done against the background of the ideology of his social class in order to delineate his alignment in the politics of his society. In Marxian terms, every class society contain two groups of people namely: the oppressed and the oppressors. The existence of these two groups, also presupposes two world views (or ideologies) - the ruling class ideology and the working class ideology.

Ruling class ideology is the world view of those who are in control of the economic and therefore politiçal life of society. From these, sets of ideas, society's laws, politics, morality, science, religion and art (imaginative literature inclusive) draw their formative principle to be regarded as "suitable" and good by those who wield power. Working class (also referred to as competing or rebellious) ideology on the other hand represents the world view of the oppressed class. It is "rebellious" because it is not in harmony with the dominant ideology. Naturally it is suppressed because it is not part of social propriety. But being a dialectical outgrowth of the oppressive tendencies of the ruling class the working class regard rebel ideology as the proper way society should be organized. It finds extreme expressions in immorality, prostitution, student riots, strike actions and all other forms of behaviour those in power consider as "illegal", "subversive", and a "threat to social order."

The meaning of all this is that every social class has vested interests in the way society is organized. But not every social class has the means of making its world view dominant in order to achieve these interests.

Dominance means a better opportunity in the sharing of the common wealth, this is why there is class struggle.

The polarization of society along lines of ideology and class interests has great implication for the writer of literature. The fact that he either belongs to or sympathises with either of the existing social classes means that his work must issue from or be aligned to one of the warring classes in society. Thus, literature as a finctionalization and stylization of reality is an instrument in this struggle in which one class tends to dominate the other. Politics becomes art. Art becomes politics. Neither is neutral, objective or innocent in the struggle.

The fundamental question of where to belong in the struggle to better man and his society is closely tied to the role the writer and the critic ought to play in the society. At the very local level, this concerns the idea(s) to be communicated and the result to be derived from such a communication. This does not preclude that a writer that decides to belong to the other side of the great divide, anti-podal to the aspirations of the generality of the people hitherto identified as the oppressed class totally stands condemned. Such a writer could have taken an ideological position too and must then be considered first based on his position before any other considerations and condemnations can follow.

1.2 AIMS OF STUDY

This research is carried out to show why literary drama in Nigeria is dysfunctional. The intention behind this is to show that if these aspects that cause obsfuscation are carefully handled, literary drama can be made to achieve greater relevance and meaning than it has so far. It is the contention of the researcher that literary drama should not be read for entertainment alone. Rather, it should help people to change their dormancy to social change and become responsive to events around them. This simply means using literary drama in Nigeria as an effective pedagogical weapon for change in the social, cultural, economic, political and religious aspects of life.

1.3 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Any attempt at a very detailed and thorough survey of what are to be considered as causes of dysfunctionalism in literary drama in Nigeria (as manifested in both published and unpublished play materials) is definitely seeking to do too much. Two interrelated problems stand out: Nigeria is a sprawling land mass having too many people and too many literary works of different temperaments. Indeed, the later also borders on the fact that Nigeria happens to be a leading nation especially in Africa in the production of literary drama. A discussion on this aspect cannot then overlook the diversity and the heterogenousness of its social formation and socio-political realities. A reseacher would however have to be careful lest he falls into the folly of over-generalization and sometimes becoming vague in an attempt to achieve critical

assessment which adopts a national expanse as its field of investigation and analysis.

To achieve what is being embarked upon in this thesis, that is, identifying the problems that cause dysfunctionalism in Nigeria's literary drama, it is not all the dramatic works that have been churned out in Nigeria that will be used. It would have been the most appropriate thing considering the broadness of the topic. However, the need to reduce the research to a manageable level entails restricting oneself to only one writer: Wole Soyinka.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The present research is significant in a number of ways. It departs from the usual discussion on content and form to bring out meaning. Rather, it seeks to avoid the weaknesses of these previous studies by attempting to take the research to the consumers of these products of ideation with a view to finding out their level of understanding of these literary plays. The content and form analysis done in this study therefore delineates whether literary drama communicates or not. If it does not, then why is it so. This is taking into cognisance the aim(s) of such works by playwrights.

1.5 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE STUDY

In this study, the following points are assumed:

(a) Literary drama in Nigeria is dysfunctional, that is, it has not been able to achieve the pedagogic aim for which it is geared towards.

(b) That the reason for such dysfunctionalism is

partly due to the playwrights' failure in successfully imparting their message(s) to their readers.

(c) This failure is not only due, as often ochestrated in critical reviews, to some difficult (or obscure) use of language. Rather, dysfunctionalism can be traced to various factors inherent in the communication chain starting with the playwright (conceiver), through to his message and how this message is packaged for readers.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both orthodox and unorthodox research methods were adopted in this work. The process started with the identification that some individuals and groups of individuals were already disqualified by virtue of illiteracy. A good number of the pupils in the primary schools and Junior Secondary Schools the researcher visited in the place the research was conducted also fall into this category. In fact, some of the so-called literates were no exception. In terms of performance, the rural areas were disadvantaged, due to reasons posited as can be seen elsewhere in chapter three.

The whole examination was conducted principally in Zaria and its environs in Kaduna State. The choice of this area was in recognition of the diversity of the people that live in it. The samples were drawn from the Ahmadu Bello University, Advanced Teachers' College, and the defunct College of Advanced Studies (now Kaduna State Polytechnic) Zaria .

The type of research methods adopted were the exploratory method which is conducted to classify the nature of problems and how alternative solutions can be found; descriptive method which is based on some previous understanding of the research problem; casual method which is the result of the two methods mentioned earlier. Emphasis was however placed on the use of the exploratory research method as it helps in classfifying problems and finding their solutions.

The types of data collected are also unorthodox. Instead of talking of numbers of respondents and their percentages, the author, recognising the scope of the topic and the samples to be used decided to carefully collect as many responses as possible. Answers that were given by respondents were then put together in chapter three. This means that the conventional written questionnaire method was not used. In addition, 'data' were also collected both from both primary sources, as play texts, personal interviews and direct observations, and from secondary sources as government publications, journals, libraries, magazines, newspapers, advertisement bills, etc. The data obtained from these sources are discussed in the various sections of chapter three to show how similar or otherwise the different data collected went on to confirm or refute the basic assumptions in the thesis.

For data collection purposes therefore, either direct personal contacts between the interviewer and the respondents, or non-personal and indirect contacts (like the use of postal questions) were made. Personal interviews which were carried out in the designated areas used fully

structured questions, semi-structured questions and unstructured questions as the place of interview demanded. This means collecting answers that were subjective (i.e. respondents' personal views) which the writer eventually used to test the basic assumptions of the study. The questions were designed at each point in time to fit the context of the aspect being studied. Follow—up questions were also asked in case respondents touched on new vistas in the discussion. Atimes the researcher used the observation method. This was done to find out what people do rather than why they do it. This some times entailed personal participation in the aspect being observed on the part of the analyser.

This last method was executed by administering the texts to cluster groups to be read and discussed as in conventional classes. Questions v/ere administered to those that had read any of the? plays of Soyinka. These questions were administered in the course of reading or thereafter. Indeed, all questions asked at such times were modelled to suit and reflect the demand of the time. Sometimes also, on-the-spot assessment based on intuition or deductions were made of the respondents[1] behaviour when a play was either being read or discussed. This aided the researcher to deduce meanings from non-verbal, reflexive or unconscious reactions of the unsuspecting respondents). Care was however taken not to over-generalize the conclusions drawn from this kind of observation or allow over-subjective interpretations to also pose a problem. These inferences were noted and questions framed in such a way that the respondent(s) were made to reflect and try to

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recapture the mood or action taken at the point in time and explain it. The mood could have been that of the exhibition of anger, sober reflection, or the action could have been the shaking of the leg(s), tear drops, shouting unconsciously or any form of expression that registers inner feelings etc.

1.7 LIMITATION OF STUDY

The choice of method, place and size of the research samples in the thesis was done not only out of consideration of optimum ease in the collection, coding and analyses of answers, but also because of time, finance and availability of materials at the researcher's disposal. The researcher consciously limited the study to only one playwright, Wole Soyinka, and predominantly to one place, Zaria, so that room can be given for further research on this aspect of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A great deal has been written about Wole Soyinka's works by Nigerians (inclusive of Soyinka himself) and non-Nigerians. The published and unpublished materials in Nigeria alone is so large that one cannot record all of them here. However, two publications stand out as they offer readers a comprehensive record of almost the best that has been published on his works. These are James Gibbs (ed.) (1980) Critical Perspective on Wole Soyinka and "Wole Soyinka: Bio-bibliography" in Africana Library Journal, Vol.3 No.1. Many of these critical studies have emerged in recent times examining the form and content of Soyinka's plays. As stated earlier, the present study seeks to continue with a similar examination except that it departs from these previous studies because it considers those aspects of the plays that cause dysfunctionalism on readers.

2.1 POLEMICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS

Wole Soyinka is the embodiment of so many varied talents. Apart from being an extremely professional man of the theatre, a playwright, actor, producer, and founder of two defunct professional acting companies, he is also a poet, novelist, essayist, former lecturer, social critic and a former Chairman, Federal Road Safety Commission. Certainly he has remained Nigeria's most versatile and enduring playwright one that serves as reference point, standing not only in his prolificity but also in the depth

of his perception; hence his winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986.

His dramatic works as chronicled by Yemi Ogunbiyi (1981:34) include the dramatic monologues: Salutation to The Gut (1962); the television plays: My Fathers Burden (1961); You in Your Small Corner (1964); the radio plays: The House of Banidegi (1959); Camwood on The Leaves (1964); Before The Blackout (1965); Before The Blowout (1979); the Comic Satires:- The Lion and The Jewel (1957); The Invention (1959); The Trials of Brother Jero (1960); the Tragic Comedies:- Kongi's Harvest (1967); The Road (1965); A Dance of the Forests (1960); The Strong Breed (1969); The Swamp Dwellers (1959); the more Sombre works of the post-civil war years:- Madmen And Specialists (1970); The Bacchae of Euripides (1973); The Jero's Metamorphosis (1973); Death And The Kings Horseman (1975); Opera Wonyosi (1977); e.t.c. The above and many more still unmentioned gives Wole Soyinka a title to being the most versatile playwright today in Nigeria. Because he is such a prolific writer, the present researcher has decided to focus on his works in a bid to find out causes of dysfunctionalism as it relates to literary drama in Nigeria.

Michael Etherton (1982:243) has observed that Wole Soyinka's works contain certain paradoxes that are internal to the playwright himself and others that operate within the Nigerian society. Although Soyinka is widely regarded as Africa's leading playwright as well as one of the world's best, yet the people who are the audience for his major

philosophical plays are very small. He reflects an African drama, but his plays have non-Africans amongst their most ardent admirers. His left-wing African critics accuse him of a reactionary sensibility and intellect, yet his political activities (for which he has suffered imprisonment and exile) seem to indicate a deep concern for the welfare of the common man who is mercilessly exploited by tyrants, bureaucrats and opportunists. He has a fairly consistent Pan-Africanist image in international circles; yet he is sometimes regarded elsewhere in some parts of Africa, especially in Nigeria, as being narrowly tribalistic in his intellectual affinities.

Because of the ambivalent attitude of many of his readers towards him and his works, he has continued to receive criticisms of all sorts. A great deal of Wole Soyinka's literary drama has tended to be uncritical of the society or of the body politic. It is surprising because though Wole Soyinka has been critical of the imbalance in the social structure and of the direction in which the country is going, and even though Nigeria has been a relatively open society, allowing many forms of cultural development including some highly critical presentations and publications, it falls short of the criticalness expected in the real sense of the word. Michael Etherton seems to summarise it thus:

> Where the drama has been critical, in the theatre, on television, and on the radio, the criticism has been of people. Types are satirized - they may even be class types - but invariably they are the architects of their own misfortunes and the cause of their down fall (1982:242).

By extension therefore, one can also deduce that Wole Soyinka is a bourgeois dramatist, that is, his works defend the ideology of his social class. There are two ways this is done: First, he eulogises his social class ideology with a view to making it acceptable to the public by representing it as natural and ideal for society. The second way it is done is subtle. This is sometimes through very scathing criticisms. The idea is to make the operators of the political system to know the lapses in it and check them before they are swept away by revolutionary violence. The criticism is not aimed at the economic system. Individuals and organizations are selected and severely lampooned. When he does this as a bourgeois writer, he is only beckoning on his erring colleagues in power to return to bourgeois sanity. This happens only when the politicians or military are beginning to steal too much that they run the risk of being caught by the owners of wealth: the people. In principles, he argues in his writing that nothing is fundamentally wrong with capitalism. The individual operators of the system are responsible for the innate corruption of the system. This role has therefore been that of pre-empting revolutionary change.

The tragedy of this is that since the independence of Nigeria, nothing meaningful has been achieved politically and morally, the various changes in leadership not withstanding. Soyinka's plays continue to give us this perception. The world of his plays is a society of man that belongs to no class. Reality is shrouded in bogus philosophical constructs that emasculate perception. Man, he

says, ought to have a better life but he refuses to explain in fundamental terms why the situation is contrary. By evading the basic issues of class struggle, of capitalist exploitation and subjugation, he shields the weakness of the social order from being seen and destroyed. As a reward for the fine work, colleagues in government, Chinweizu has argued elsewhere, shower him with awards of various kinds. No doubt, he concludes the supposition, Wole Soyinka's Nobel Prize for Literature was won not only by the worth of the excellence of his works, but a recognition of his efforts to sustain capitalist social order in this part of the world through art.

The above exposition introduces us to two dominant trends and temperaments in the development of Nigerian literature in general. These trends constitute the two broad schools of literature in Nigeria. They are the formalist and Marxist-Socialist. The first is that to which our subject of study, that is, Wole Soyinka, and the many early crop of writers belong. The second group is made up of Femi Osofisan and many other younger generation writers and critics like Biodun Jeyifo. These two temperaments are dramatically opposed to each other both in their use of form, content and general world outlook on societal issues. A brief discussion of the two would illustrate the present position especially when the discussion is applied to the works of writers that belong to the first group.

2.1.1 Formalism and Nigerian Literature

Boris Eichenbaum's essay, "Theory of the formal method" in L.T. Leman and Reis' (editors) Russian Formalist Criticism perhaps offers what one can consider as an adequate idea of what constitutes formalism in broad terms. Formalism in Literature, according to Boris, essentially refers to that mode of literary presentation which is concerned with how effective the writer uses language in such conventional forms as those of plot, theme, subject matter, diction, metaphor, synedoche, onomatopoeia, litotes, symbolism, parallelism etc. In short, it is that literary school of thought that views literature in purely essentialist terms. To formalists, while content is not de-emphasised in literature, form is however more important as they believe that content is derived from form.

Wole Soyinka, our subject of study can conveniently be placed within this prism. Even though he has continuously argued against and rejected the 'god-father' theory of writing on African Literature, a careful study of his works will show how he has imbibed the ideals of these writers. Though the idea of comparison as insinuated in the last sentence cannot be pursued in this study, the next chapter will prove the belief of this researcher in Wole Soyinka's insistence on a work of art emanating and communicating its meaning from the form used.

In Wole Soyinka's plays, characters are being used as mouth pieces. They are totally distanced from the role they play in any given text. One is made to see events through them without necessarily being part of the whole

process. There is a conscious denigration of Nigerian history, customs and traditions especially in plays like A Dance of the Forests, and Kongi's Harvest. African reality, (Nigerian reality, in our case), is being criticised and ridiculed. They seem to contain a satirical view of the equality of social classes. Nigerian Literature is largely treated within a metaphysical orientation. Wole Soyinka, writers and critics in the formalist School therefore, hold the dogmatic a-historical view that form determines content and that is why deriving meaning of anything starts from understanding the form before the content This is why these writings often succeed (in Chinua Achebe's statement) in "telling us where the rain began beating us", where we are now, but cannot provide a future for its consumers. Even where such a future is provided, it is often one that is pessimistic, bleak and doomed.

What is considered as content in the literatures of the formalists is similar to the operations of conservative or bourgeois socialists. (This idea is discussed elsewhere in this study.) This part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. The socialistic bourgeois want all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles and dangers necessarily resulting therefrom. They desire the existing state of society minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements. They wish for a bourgeoisie without a proletariat. In requiring the proletariat to carry out such a system, it but requires in

reality, that the proletariat should remain within the bounds of existing society, but should cast away all its hateful ideas concerning the bourgeoisie.

A second and more practical, but less systematic, form of this socialism seeks to depreciate every revolutionary movement in the eyes of the working class, by showing that no mere political reform, but only in the change in the material conditions of existence, in economic relations, could be of advantage to them. By changes in the material conditions of existence, this form of socialism, however, by no means understands abolition of the bourgeois relations of production, an abolition that can be effected not by a revolution, but administrative reforms, based on the continued existence of these relations; reforms, therefore, that in no respect affect the relations between capital and labour, but, at the best, lessen the cost, and simplify the administrative work of bourgeois governments.

As opposed to the formalistic trends noted above is another literary movement, typified by Marxist-Socialist writers. In essence, they view literature within the framework of its social and economic function in the society and ultimately demand social change. To them, man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life.

2.1.2 Marxism and Nigerian Literature

The emergence of a different set of writers and critics witnessed the commitment to the dominance of content in its rendition, that is, content becomes more of the concern and is fully pursued in the literatures. Content here deals with forces that motivate as well as processes that influence the distribution of given literary works. Most importantly, it sums up all hedonistic tendencies of literature, relating it to its practical relevance and application within a given mode of production of a society. It sums up that content is the sole determinant of form. This is because as a writer, as an individual in a process of interrelating with other members of his society, he enters into definite relationships with others. And these relationships determine the factors of economic production in his society. And it is from the economic system of a society that other superstructures are built. Such superstructural elements include politics, law, religion and literature. Since literature is determined by the base, a writer's consciousness is similarly determined by his material existence. Thus it is his mode of existence (content) that will determine how he reflects reality (form).

This type of literature in every great modern revolution has always given voice to the demands of the proletariat. Writers adopting this ideology see the class antagonisms, as well as the action of the decomposing elements in the prevailing form of society. Since the

development of class antagonism keeps even pace with the development of industry, the economic situation, as they find it, does not as yet offer to them the material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. They therefore search after a new social science, after new social laws, that are to create these conditions.

Historical action is to yield to their personal inventive action, historically created conditions of emancipation to fantastic ones, and the gradual spontaneous class-organization of the proletariat to an organization of society especially contrived by these inventors. Future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans.

In the formation of their plans they are conscious of caring chiefly for the interests of the working class, being the most suffering class. Only from the point of view of being the most suffering class does the proletariat exist for them.

The undeveloped state of the class struggle, as well as their own surroundings, causes (Marxist) of this kind to consider themselves far superior to all class antagonisms. They want to improve the condition of every member of society, even that of the most favoured. Hence, they habitually appeal to society at large, without distinction of class; except by preference, to the ruling class. Hence, they reject all political, and especially all revolutionary, action; they wish to attain their ends by peaceful means,

and endeavour, by small experiments, and by the force of example, to pave the way for the social gospel. But they also contain a very critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. Therefore, they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class and the potential force to champion for revolutionary change by force of arms when it becomes too necessary.

This forms one of the cornerstones of socialist inclined literature. The marxian perspective can be applied to Nigerian literature without much difficulty. In this respect, truly Nigerian aesthetics, should ideally project the Nigerian society as functional and in the process of change, through a struggle by the people to better their own existence. A committed people-based literature, needs to address itself to the world view of the proletariat. It must speak the language that the common man understands. It has to speak a language of immediacy and it does not matter in what form so long as reality can be seen and understood. Bertolt Bretcht expresses this idea thus:

> --- we shall use every means, old and new, tried and untried, derived from art and derived elsewhere to render reality to men in a form they can master. (Bertolt Bretcht quoted in Marxism and Literary Criticism. by Terry Eagleton, 1976).

2.2 CAUSES OF LITERARY DYSFUNCTIONALISM

Many critics have lend their opinions as to the causes of literary dysfunctionalism in the plays of Wole Soyinka. Obi Maduakor (1991:178) has discussed extensively the problem a reader will certainly have in interpreting

A Dance of the Forests. He notes that the word "dance" as used by the playwright connotes many meanings. It could be agitated body movement, drama, ritual, movement of transition, entire rites of the dead as in Part II of the play or mime as in the dance of the Half Child. This multi-levels interpretations could be disastrous to the uncareful reader.

The same critic also notes that Madmen and Specialists is Soyinka's most puzzling and most challenging play. It is also the most elusive of Soyinka's expressionist dramas. The technique used in Madmen is also applied in The Road and Kongi's Harvest, but the playwright is at his most demanding and even burdensome in Madmen. Nothing is named or explained directly in this metaphysical play, rather it is only hinted at through allusion or insinuation. Theme replaces plot as the dynamic of the play, and characters are sketched rather than fully developed. The play dispenses with Soyinka's favourite technique, the flashback. Pessimism and cynicism have been nurtured to a point in both Soyinka himself and the characters that discussion and meaningful exchange are thought to be unnecessary. Dialogue is esoteric and cryptic, and comprehensible only to the initiated. Words reach down to an unspoken reality which is more potent than the surface meaning. This tendency which Soyinka calls "Hermeticism", is stretched too far to its limits. A reader would wonder who the Old Man is. What he was before the war and what he did at the front. Or what place is constantly being referred to as "out there"

and "the other place". Who are 'they' and what are the "faces"? What is meant by "As"? And where are all these things happening? Another reader may be able to find the answers to the questions above but to others, it would be a very serious problem hence dysfunctionalism.

Eldred D. Jones' (1975) attention is on A Dance. He states that there is a profussion of themes which arise naturally from Soyinka's treatment of the overall theme of the contracdictions of man's nature and the consequences of such contradictions (both as it involves the single man's nature and as it varies from man to man) for the whole race of man and his environment. The environment involves not only other men, rivers, trees, minerals and so on, but also gods and spirits of the dead who act as prodders and simulators to the human conscience. With this vast frame-work there is room for a great variety of sub-themes - the nature and functions of art, political corruption, the destruction of the natural environment, war, changes in values brought about by modernization, the consequences of free-will etc. No wonder Margeret Lawrence (1968) comments thus:

> There are some parts of A Dance which seem overloaded. There are moments when the multiplicity of themes creates the feeling that there are a few too many plates spinning in the air - some of them speed by without being properly seen, and some crash down. (P.45).

Indeed, the problems arise mainly over the precise interpretation of the significance of the drama of the Half-Child at the end of the play. Each reading of that section

produces new insights which suggest a complete vision on the part of the author.

Apart from the multiplicity of themes, there is a multiplicity of symbols. One of the difficulties of interpretation may arise not merely from the multiplicity of symbols but from the use of different symbols to reinforce the same idea. Man is the central figure in the play, and man is represented by living men and women. (Demoke, Adenebi, Rola, Agboreko, The Old Man etc.). Some of these have a dual existence in that they also appear as historical characters in the court of Mata Kharibu. This device establishes the continuity of human nature. The Dead Man and Woman also represent man - man as a victim of other men - and history as an indictment of man's past actions. The ants also represent man or rather men - the mass of men who are the victims of those in power - the manipulated masses. Man is also represented by the Half-Child, that ambiguous symbol of man's future. One has to be prepared for these changing symbols for different aspects of the same thing and respond to them.

Bernth Lindfors (1978) also shares the apprehension of Annemarie Heywood (1978) as noted below. He holds that although Wole Soyinka's latter plays would make theatre, he however attacks the "histrionic-razzle-dazzle" quality of the latter plays. He observes also that "Soyinka can apply a very slick surface to the roughest or least substantial of narrative foundations; and his plotless plots .... could be enjoyed as a series of well-placed

theatrical happenings "without making much sense." He observes further that the movement from A Dance ("arty-structure", plot-less plot", "incoherence") through The Road ("a defiantly difficult play which makes no compromise with instant intelligibility") to Madmen (a multi-faceted cryptograph") all create a growing tendency towards meaningless frivolity which robs Soyinka's work of any serious implication. He therefore wonders for whom these plays are written - "just for westernized Yoruba egg-heads, ... for a cosmopolitan international elite, or .... simply for himself?" (Jones (ed.) 1978:44). Both Lindfors and Heywood conclude by sharing the opinion that Soyinka's early plays comprising of The Lion, The Trials, The Swamp, and The Strong Breed, adequately show how his playwrighting can avoid "enigmatic obfuscations".

While Annemarie Heywood (1978) praises Soyinka's ingenuity as a dramatist, she decries the awkward endings of his plays. In her view, many of his plays are not structured adequately to help in determining their final resolutions. Thus, the readers are often left

> discomfitted and unbalanced, uneasy, graping in the dark for resolutions. She cites examples from Kongi's Harvest which, she says, end with a "cocophonic" re-statement of the conflict: "A mixture of the royal music and the anthem rises loudly, plays for a short time, comes to an abrupt halt as the iron grating descends and hits the ground with a loud, final clang". Madmen and Specialists is also characterized as ending with a revolver shot followed by a brief passage in mime : the beggars' chant "stops in mid-word and the lights snap out simultaneously". Also in The Road, the dying Professor's perovation adds no insight, merely re-states the problem, while the spinning masks sink lower, and lower "until it appears to be

> nothing beyond a heap of cloths and raffia" (Jones (ed.) 1978:43).

In the opinion of Heywood, such open ended dialectical expositions tend to create problems for the readers.

2.3 THE PROBLEM OF CLASS AND IDEOLOGY

Looking at literary drama closely, Etherton further observes that creators of drama texts exist not within the people they claim to be writing for and about but in the ivory towers of the Universities and other posh places where they are protected. Writing for the people irrevocably means writing to protect the people's interests which invariably means condemning all such forms of oppressions that will curtail their cardinal freedoms. In short, going after the jugular veins of government or those monopolizing economic and political powers. The desired effect would be for those written against to retaliate but they hardly do so because they know that consumers of such products would have to consider too many variables before the product is finally consumed.

Moreover, the consumers are often too few in number and can therefore be handled effectively in the event of any breakdown in "law" and "order". Finally, those written against know that the writers themselves are frequently not prepared to jeopardize their own vested social status and so are not actually championing the cause of the people written about. In Etherton's opinion therefore, for dramatists to claim to work for the people (generally) they must be able to go out into the communities they claim they represent and "work directly with and

among peasants and workers, using their language and dramatizing matters from their point of view" (Etherton; 1982:25). The problem above, the researcher observes, is an important factor that may bring about dysfunctionalism as it is inherent in the form itself.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

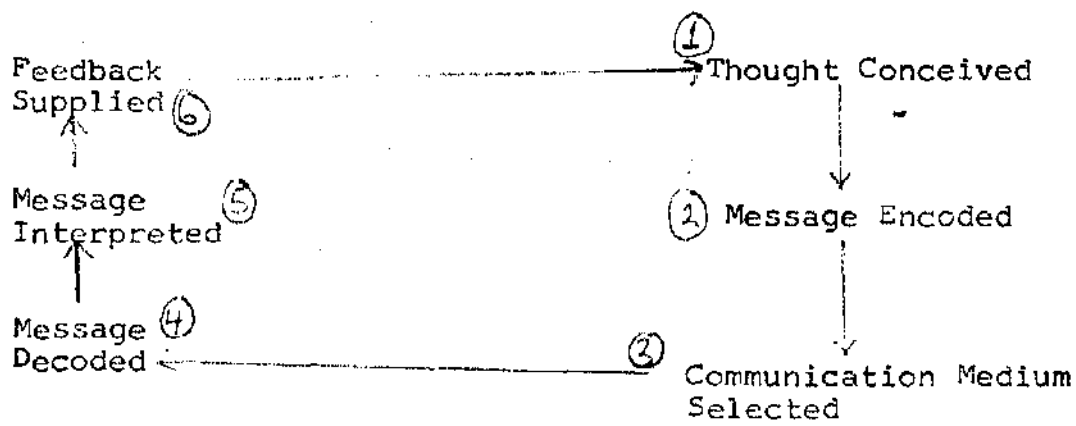
From the foregoing, it would be noticed that the problem besetting literary drama in Nigeria thereby creating dysfunctionalism is simply the broad problem of ineffective communication. For effective communication to be achieved, a number of factors must be considered; and until these many issues are interpreted and applied correctly, the attempt at communicating effectively would remain but a mirage. This is how we arrive at the theoretical framework for this study. This framework is deeply rooted in one of the theories of communication. It is working from that conceptual perspective that we arrive at how poor communication canceptualizations have led Nigerian literary drama to become dysfunctional.

There is a general agreement about the necessity for effective communication, yet there is no agreement on an exact definition. D. Katz and R.L. Kahn in the Social Psychology of Organization, 1978, suggest that "... Communication - the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning - is the very essence of a social system". Koontz, O'Donnel, and Weinrich define it as "the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receiver" (Koontz et al, 1978:688).

2.4.1 Theory and Process of Communication

Communication specialists have developed a methodical process of communication. The approach is best expressed as a cycle. Essentially, "messages" are "sent" and "received" and confirmation of their receipt and interpretation is returned by a "receiver" to a "sender". Effective communication then becomes a two-way activity (Assuzu, 1987: 63-64).

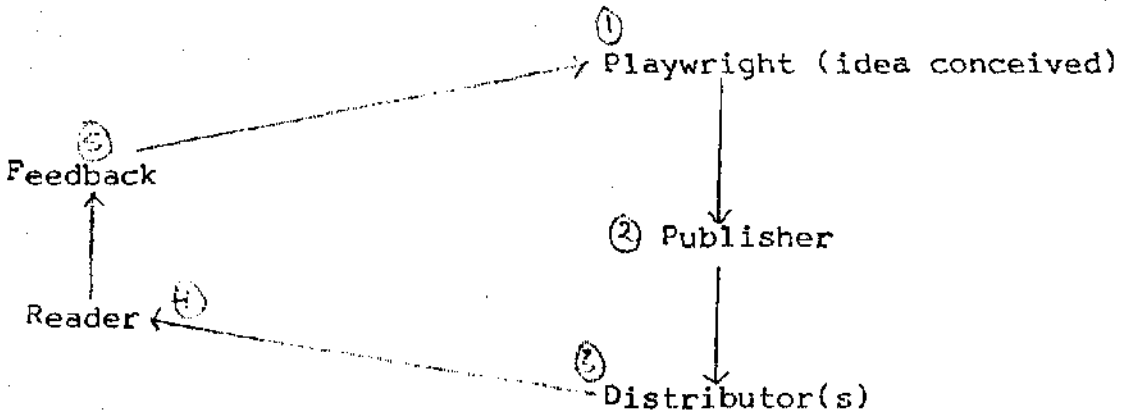
Simply expressed, the cycle of communication (either in oral, written or non-verbal forms) proceeds through a number of stages during which a message is conceived by a sender, encoded and relayed via a particular route to a receiver who then decodes and interpretes it and finally confirms to the sender that the message has been understood. This simplified process is the premix to which many communication theorists subscribe. The summary of this process which was set out in 1948 in detail by Laswell (Asuzu, 1987) is modified and shown below in greater detail by Koontz, H. O'Donnel and Weinrich, H. (1980).



The diagram above explaining the processes of the communication flow of information is interpreted below.

1. Message conceived: The decision to send a message as a result of an impulse, thought, process or external stimulus.
2. Message Encoded: The choice of an appropriate language(s) oral, written, word, picture or non-verbal communication.
3. Communication Medium Selected: This has to do with the selection of an appropriate medium to communicate 1 above.
4. Message Decoded: Here, the language used is decoded or re-interpreted to get the message supplied.
5. Message Interpreted: The interpretation of the conotative as well as denotative meaning is done here.
6. Feedback Supplied: Having interpreted the message(s) the receiver now sends signals (using an appropriate media) back to the sender to make him know the message has been understood.

This mode can be related to the study this way:-



The researcher's proposed model above can be interpreted thus: The playwright puts an idea conceived into writing and sends it to the publisher who edits and publishes the material which in turn is pushed to the readers via distributors. The readers buy to read. At this point, the readers will send their feedback to the playwright. The process of sending the feedback to the initial conceiver is a near reversal of the former model. Now, the receiver becomes a sender, encodes his feedback, selects his medium and transmits same back to the playwright (the initial sender). The above, if considered logically, takes place between steps six and one in the first diagram (but a repetition of steps one and three) which then jumps to one again. The feedback sent could be in the form of letters, phone calls, published critical reviews, interviews, interpersonal, and or face-to-face reactions (which may be either organized or spontaneous).

The theory and process of communication in the first diagram above have their possible problematic areas. First, between 1 and 2 the problem might be the

ill-conception of the message. The message could be vague, ambiguous, affected by many things like relationship of sender to receiver: religion, tribe, educational background, status, etc. Secondly, between 2 and 3, the problem could be that the message could be encoded using a wrong "language" and may be, the tone may not be appropriate and suitable. Thirdly, between 3 and 4, a wrong medium could have been selected, time could have been wasted, and expenses also incurred. Fourthly, between 4 and 5, the receiver could fail to comprehend the sender's language becuase the vocabulary is too difficult, or devices of speech are too complex and confusing or specialist terms puzzle layman etc. Fifthly, between 5 and 6, the message could have been interpreted wrongly due to the effect of the relationship of receiver with sender, ambiguity etc. Additionally, between 6 and 1, the feedback might not have been given or even when given, could have been interpreted wrongly by the sender.

The first step in becoming a more efficient communicator is to be more aware of what you are trying to achieve and of the abilities, outlooks and interests of other people with whom you communicate. It is also pertinent to remember the circumstances in which the receiver is likely to receive one's message. In all, the following guidelines and approaches are intended to help one think more consciously about developing good techniques and avoid pitfalls during the communication process. As a sender:-

1. When composing the message decide carefully what sort of action or response you desire from the receiver.
2. Choose a language or combination of languages - spoken or written word, picture or symbol, non-verbal expression -most suitable for your needs and the situation.
3. When encoding the message take time to structure your ideas logically. Give thought not only to the choice of language but also to the way you use it.
4. Ensure that the chosen language is fully comprehensible to the receiver. Put yourself in the receiver's position. Try to ascertain your receiver's abilities and limitations.
5. Take care that your message is not capable of being misunderstood through misinterpretation. Avoid vagueness, ambiguity, obscurity or the tendency to be extra-difficult just to prove a point.
6. Check that you are receiving the desired feedback - answers, confirmations, indications of change in attitudes etc.

As a receiver:-

1. Give an in-coming message all your attention. Avoid being side-tracked or distracted. Read attentively and with concentration.
2. Ensure that you comprehend the message fully. Take the trouble if part of the message's language is unfamiliar to check a reference, word or concept. Seek confirming feedback from the sender if the message is unintelligible by asking for explanation or repeats.

3. Take care to interprete the message correctly. Check whether there is any underlying or implied meaning in the message. Think carefully about what its implications might be before you act upon or divulge its contents. Learn to attend to how something is said as well as what is said.
4. Avoid the temptation of deliberately misinterpreting a message as a means of retaliating against its sender. If you are not on good terms, endeavour to thrash the matter out with goodwill. One should try to realise when one is becoming hostile to a message and why.
5. Provide the sender with sufficient feedback, so as to reassure him that you have received the message, understood and interpreted it in the way the sender wanted it or intends (Evans, 1978, Assuzu, 1978, Koontz et al 1978, and Lasswell, 1948).

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 THE ANALYSIS OF DYSFUNCTIONALISM IN RELATION TO SOYINKA'S PLAYS

The chapter focuses on problems of dysfunctionalism as they apply to the plays of Wole Soyinka. The analysis concerns content, form, and problems relating to the socio-political and cultural factors controlling the playwright and his society.

3.1 LANGUAGE AND MEANING

The researcher noted from the onset that the question of language and meaning encapsulates all forms of expression employed by the playwright to engender communication. Particularly important in this respect are the various literary devices that are employed to aid the effective dissemination of meaning. However, these same devices, including stage directions, use of mime, flash-back technique, and symbolism in playwrighting often turn out major impediments to effective and simple communication.

An important feature of many of Soyinka's plays is that of the "festival". For example, A Dance was written to celebrate the festival of the Nigerian independence in 1960. The action of the play centres on the Gathering of the Tribes, which is some kind of independence celebration. The action of The Strong Breed also centres on the festival of the new year; The Road, on the event of the last Driver's annual Festival, while Kongi's Harvest, centres on the festival of the New Yam. The use of this festival element

by Soyinka shows a certain fascination with the past, - a fascination which tends to affect his perception of the dialectical relationship between the time past, time present and time future. This interdependence between the past and present is expressed thus by Adenebi in A Dance, "... we must bring home the descendants of our great forebears ... Let us assemble them around the totem of the nation and we will drink from their resurrected glory (A Dance, 1981: 32)".

The 'festival' is used by Soyinka as an organising metaphor in order to draw more attention to the Nigerian past - not in nostalgic terms, but so that this past can be used to interprete the present and help to shape the future. Soyinka, therefore, seems to be saying that the festival should not be an occasion for celebrating utopia but rather one for studying our past achievements and failures and to chart a better course for the future. For example, in A Dance of the Forests, instead of illustrious ancestors" being alluded to, reference is made to the spirits of the "restless dead". These are the dead man, a captain in the army of Mata Kharibu, and the dead woman (who was his wife). These two were linked in violence and blood in the past with some of the living generation. This reminds us therefore that "the pattern is unchanged" as the past is intricably linked to the present and future. The major concern of A Dance of the Forests therefore is how a society can get to a fresh start which is only through breaking away from the horrible pattern of their past by gaining awareness from confronting their past in all its ugliness.

In Soyinka's other plays, the researcher also observed, the meaning of his message is also derived through a myriad of metaphors. The Swamp Dwellers (1963) discusses the success of a predatory tradition in the action of the twins, and the Kadiye (priest of the Serpent of the Swamps). In The Trials (1963), the false prophet succeeds again as Brother Jero gains victory over his people by cashing in on their credulity and succeeds in confining his successful assistant, Chume, in an asylum to protect his devilish trade. His new alliance with political power completes the picture of a gloomy generation. This gloomy atmosphere is even more evident in The Strong Breed (1964), where a graphic picture of an evil community which is hostile towards itself and to strangers alike is painted. The Road (1965) is also built upon a similar metaphor using the Nigerian road as a pervasive symbol. Here, Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron, and also the patron saint of drivers, predates on his devotees like in the death of Zorro, Akanni, the Lizard, Saidu - Say, Sigidi Ope, Sapele Joe, Indian Charlie, Cimmarron Kid, and Sergeant Burma. Soyinka's treatment in The Road seems to question why Ogun should insist on "heavier sacrifices of meat" than those offered by his devotees. Another message that comes out clearly is that all these characters (whether engaged in war or on the road) have become involved in incessant and useless killings, just to gratify the beast in man. Killing here takes many forms and is manifested through the activities of politicians, touts, thugs, policemen, etc.

Wole Soyinka's Kongi's Harvest (1967) and Madmen Specialists (1971) also discuss this metaphor in various ways. Generally, his attempt to show the past and the present to enable one to anticipate and safeguard the future is hinged on the belief by Wole Soyinka that the gloomy message he presents constitutes his own personal conviction or observations that human beings are simply cannibals all over the world so that their main preoccupation seems to be eating up one another, an idea that is not that novel in the literary arts (Dennis Duerden and Cosmos Picterse (ed.) 1972:173).

The explanation above of Soyinka's plays were made by the researcher to the respondents because of the inability of respondents to interprete those plays at discussions. This was done when the researcher had sought to know whether respondents could understand the meaning/significance of his plays. Unfortunately, most of the respondents, including some teachers of literature expressed their inability to adequately do so except for the early plays.

In the English Department of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where the opinions of a number of respondents were sought, a good number agreed that Soyinka was hard but that did not imply they cannot study him. The problem with Soyinka, they observed, was the tendency to become incomprehensible and vague at many points in his works.

The last statement above leads us to often quoted examples of Wole Soyinka's general obscuratism which one respondent felt obsfuscates the meaning of his works, and

so deadens the effects of his plays. Ironically, the respondent observed, his play The Road is supposed to be a dramatization of the limits of language. Using the above, the researcher decided to do a stylistic analysis of the language used by such characters as the Professor and Murano which would help us to see how words are complemented by dramatic speech. What we hear is often challenged by that which we see. This is exemplified at the beginning of the play.

The first scene operates not at the level of speech but of setting and mime. The religious and social dimensions of the play are communicated through the usual day-to-day associations on the road, the corner of a church, and an old mammy waggon. The presence of these constantly on stage help to sustain the function of the road (which connects the spiritual and the ludicrous (satirical) aspects of the play as an agent of death as well as the medium through which the dead are also taken for church funerals and, finally, burial. Without using speech sound, the audience (and to a lesser extent the reader) is able to deduce and link the opening scene with death. This deduction can only be aided with the existence of motionless figures lying close to the 'Aksident Store'. The next aspects, which are all in mime and which are supposed to suggest the directions the play will be taking, (that is, Murano disappearing into the dawn, and Samson straining his eyes after him) are demonstrated. This act of miming, which is an important aspect

of the play aids in obfuscating the meaning of the play.

The visually received communication of the opening 'Scene' is sharply contrasted with the value of verbal communication. Let's take an example.

> SALUBI: Six O'clock I bet. I don't know how it is, but no matter when I go to sleep, I wake up when it strikes Six. Now that is a miracle. (He gets out his chewing stick, begins to chew at it).
>
> SAMSON: There is a miracle somewhere but not what you say. May be the sight of you using a chewing stick (The Road 1965:2).

The issue above raises the example of how it becomes difficult to understand an idea put forward by a speaker. To communicate to both readers and audience the direction they play will take, Soyinka uses mime. And to raise the idea of how inappropriate use of language can cause disagreement, he uses the verbal means of communication. This understanding raises the question of how effective these methods can be in simplifying meaning, especially as done by Soyinka at the beginning of his play The Road. The responses from research respondents could be grouped thus:

(a) Based on what has been read and imagined especially in our discussions, the experience is that the immediate perception of the intention of the playwright especially as in mime was poor.

(b) The contention was that if both mimetic and verbal communications were not properly handled within the perceptions of the readers, communication of meaning will be endangered.

(c) Tied to the above was the idea that if read, apparent obscurantism was iminent if the reader does not possess a sharp imagination. This is so as respondents said they found it hard from the onset to link the many lifeless bodies lying by the 'Aksident Store' to the theme of death as they could have been the wounded waiting to be treated.

(d) Research respondents also observed that obscurantism at another level concerns the inability of both readers and audience to simply understand Soyinka. Under this, the following examples were cited as what a person needs to take into consideration in order to really come to terms with his work.

(i) Hard, complex and intense wordiness of his use of English Language which inevitably block understanding as in the following speeches:-

CRIER: Only such may gain
Voice auditorial as are summoned when
their link
With the living has fully repeated its
nature, has
Reimpressed fully on the tapestry of
Igbehinadum
In approximate duplicate of actions, be
they
Of good, or evil, of violence or of carelessness.
In approximate duplicate of motives, be
they
Illusory, tangible, commendable or damnable.
(A Dance, 1981:50).

and

PROFESSOR: When a man has one leg in each world, his legs are never the same. The big toe of Murano's foot - the left one of course - rests on the slumbering chrysalis of the word. When the crust cracks my friends - you and I, that is, the moment we await. That is the *moment of our* rehabilitation (The Road, 1965:45).

Sometimes, exploiting poetic license, Soyinka exercises linguistic discretion. The result is the appearance of totally new but meaningless words/names. One example will suffice. In A Dance the Crier Summons:

> To all such as dwell in these forests; Rock devils
> Earth imps, Tree demons, ghommids, dewilds, genie
> Incubi, succubi, windhorts and halves and such
> Sons and subjects of Forests Father, and all
> That dwells in his domain .... (P.50).

The above is not only impenetrable but meaningless as names and words used do not exist in conventional English. The essence of this abuse of freedom to write is at the expense of the readers.

(ii) Need to understand Yoruba culture and mythology, as contained in the essay "The Fourth Stage" which appears in his book of essays Myth, Literature and The African World View (1976). Here, Soyinka elucidated his ideas as drawn from the Yoruba world view on the relationship between human and divine action. On the basis of his Yoruba cosmology, he believes that both gods and men are conscious of a "primeval Severance" lying between them and both constantly strive to bridge it through ritual. The gods to whom these sacrifices are made are not indifferent but are filled with the anguish of that severance and so are continually yearning towards re-unification with men. This is then the meaning of that period when the celebrant is possessed by his god. This moment can be realized only in music with its concomittants of dance, mime, and masquerade.

The gods are not only filled with the anguish of Severance but it was one of them, Ogun, who launched himself first into "the gulf of transition" in a supreme effort to achieve reunification with man. In "The Fourth Stage" Soyinka said:

> "The first actor was therefore Ogun, first suffering deity, first darer and conqueror of transition. And the first art was the tragic art .... In tragic Consciousness the votary's psyche reaches out beyond the realm of nothingness, potentially destructive of human awareness, into areas of terror and blind energies because it was the gods, the eternal presence, who first became aware of their own incompletion. Anguish is therefore primal transmission of the god's despair, vast, numinous, always incomprehensible. In vain he seek to re-capture it in words, there is only the certainty of the existence of this abyss the tragic victim plunges into it in spite of ritualistic earthing and is redeemed only by action. Without acting, and yet in spite of it, he is forever lost in the maul of tragic tyranny.
>
> And acting is therefore a contradiction of the tragic spirit, yet it is also its natural complement. To act, the promethean instinct of rebellion, channels anguish into creative purpose which releases man from a totally destructive despair releasing from within him the most energic, deeply combative inventions which, without usurping the territory of the infernal gulf, bridge them with visionary hopes .... At the charged climatic moments of the tragic rites we understand how music came to contain the sole art form which does contain, tragic reality."

Indeed, this researcher feels that a proper understanding of the above action by Ogun can lead to the interpretation and understanding of A Dance and his other mythopoeic plays. Demoke in A Dance therefore is seen to bear all the attributes of Ogun, his mentor, though at the human level. He encapsultes a demonic and destructive element in the nature of one that dares. He has to suffer both the experience of that violence within him and with the awareness that it is there.

His act of leaping to save the Half-child is attempting a tragic action in the void that separates one area of living from another. He shares as an artist the ambivalent creative energy of Ogun; his attempt to climb the araba tree with a sacrificial basket on his head, is daring the perils of disintegration which assail all those who venture into the gulf of transition. His fall from the burning tree and his snatching-up by Ogun both symbolize and mythologises enactment of death and rebirth or of disintegration and recreation.

This interpretation of the symbolism and mythology involved becomes problematic if it is stretched too far. Though one may see the Half-child as symbolizing the destiny of colonial Nigeria, to be saved now at Independence, one is however reminded that Soyinka does not believe in any form of collective salvation. Rather, he usually puts hope in a man, an artist most often, who has to find a particular god and strive continually towards uniting with him. Such historical interpretations where works of literary art are forced to yield meanings relating to some happenings sometimes end up being negative.

(iii) Need to also understand some christian teachings in the Bible. One of Professor's speeches was quoted from The Road to buttress this argument by respondents:

PROFESSOR:

> You are afraid? There are dangers in the Quest I know, but the Word may be found - companion not to life, but Death. Three Souls You Know, fled up that tree. You would think, to see it, that the motor-car

> had tried to clamber after them. Oh there was such an angry buzz but the matter was beyond repairs. They died, all three of them crucified on rigid branches (p.11).

Although the above can only be understood when one has a sound understanding of some verses in the Bible, it also smacks of a bastardization and counter - contradiction of one of the verses that speech is modelled after. In John 1:1, the Bible states "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God."

Professor's speech, especially the very last sentence has a profound significance in another more orthodox context. However, it offends orthodoxy if considered in the light of the present interpretation. The Professor acknowledges the "dangers in the Quest" which comes from his rejection of the orthodox christian doctrine of the incarnation when he says "the word may be found companion not to life but death." This means that the Word (God) was not made flesh (Jesus) but all flesh becomes associated with the word during the process of decomposition, that is, union between man and God never was actualized through the birth of Christ as man achieves that only during or after death.

It is the acceptance of the Yoruba view of flesh dissolution in place of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation that brought about the question whether conflict can emanate between the ideology of Soyinka and that of the Christians that would invariably affect his literary drama. Indeed, some members of the Aladura faith reacted sharply against what they considered "cheapening religion" and also

cited some places that Soyinka had again taken undue advantage of the religious practices of the sect.

The example cited is that of the picture or image of the Aladura faith members at the bar beach in The Trial of Brother Jero (1978). The long quote is thus:

> CHUME: Father, forgive her.
>
> CONGREGATION: Amen.
>
> CHUME: I say make you forgive 'am.
>
> CONGREGATION: Amen.
>
> CHUME: Forgive 'am quick quick.
>
> CONGREGATION: Amen.
>
> CHUME: Yes, father, make you forgive us all. Make you save us from palaver. Save us from trouble at home ... Give us money to satisfy our daily necessities. Make you not forget those of us who dey struggle daily. Those who be clerk today, make them Chief Clerk tomorrow. Those who are Messenger today, make them Senior Service tomorrow ... (the Amens of the congregation grow more and more ecstatic). Those who are petty trader today, make them big contractor tomorrow. Those who dey sweep street today, give them their own office tomorrow. If we de waka today, give us our own bicycle tomorrow ... Those who have bicycle today, they will ride their own car tomorrow (The enthusiasm of the response becomes overpowering).
> I say those who push bicycle today, give them big car tomorrow. Give them big car tomorrow. Give them big car tomorrow (pp.63 - 64).

The dramatic ingenuity of Soyinka was applauded by the respondents but his very shallow understanding of the workings/liturgy of that church was decried. It was observed that to satisfy his dramatic intent, he uses English Language in such a way that it is not only Chume that is

ridiculed (it is done to show his shallow knowledge of the language), but the church at large. The point they said Soyinka missed was that in such churches, since the local language is paramount, Chume, who does not know much of English, would have used the local language. The other condemnation was of Soyinka's insinuation that these churches are not only stunted but also a-religious as he sees them as those geared towards corruption, supplying splendid fantasy or offering prayers for material wealth rather than for salvation of souls.

The import of the above is that most respondents of the Aladura faith had since parted ways with such "unholy" writings. In fact, some students of the Scripture Union confessed they only read those texts out of duty and not love.

The researcher noted that the peculiar problem of Wole Soyinka's sometime obscure language is often caused by his attempt to capture the speeches of his characters by means of either transliteration of Yoruba language directly into English language (hence the coinage of the term Yoruba-English by Nasiru Akanji of University of Ilorin) or using Yoruba sentence rhythms directly in English sentences. Some examples will prove these two postulations.

(i) One example to show the first postulation i.e. transliteration

Elesin: Death came calling.
Who does not know his rasp of reed?
A twilight whisper in the leaves before
The great araba falls? Did you hear it?
Not I! Swears the farmer. He snaps
His fingers round his head, abandons
A hard-worn harvest and begins
A rapid dialogue with his legs.
(Death and the King's Horseman, 1978: pp. 11 - 12).

The above translates as below in Yoruba:

Iku wa bami or Ikuwa si odo mi
Eni ti ko mo olun ton se.
Ariwo kekere bere pelu ewe lafemoju
Igi Araba nla wosubu. Nje ogbo?
Eni Ko! Agbe na bura. O koju.
Okawo wori. Otun kasile.
Wahala ise re oko bere
Ese re mejeji si nba ara won soro.

Respondents of the Yoruba tribe could, when asked to compare the two speeches above, pick the direct translations from Yoruba into English by Wole Soyinka though the translation was that of an ammateur translator.

(ii) Examples to show the use of words within English language sentences;

HEMLOCK: 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.
(Kongi's Harvest, 1972:2).

The above has the word agbayun, a Yoruba word, inserted within a statement without providing its English language meaning. But even then, respondents not conversant with the Yoruba language could deduce meaning fairly using the sum total of the other English words used. However, with others, it was like darkness. As used in the context above, the word means "quiet shout".

Other examples of this tendency can be found in pages 7, 8 and indeed in many other pages of the play just as it can be found in pages 9, 12, 13, 17, and also running through the entire playtext of Death and the King's Horseman (1975). The pertinent issue here is whether these innovations have in any way helped to lessen obscurity.

(a) Most of the research respondents noted that Wole Soyinka's attempt, to say the least, did not represent a conscious attempt to simplify speech and communication. Rather, it is an academic attempt to remain in line with developments and innovations in literary drama in Nigeria.

(b) Respondents also argued that a person not conversant with the Yoruba language stood the risk of failing to get any tangible meaning out of that which had been communicated in those forms.

The types of obscurity created in the passages above is akin to that attributed to the obscurity of Professor in The Road. The Professor's obsession with language sets him apart from the other characters, especially the drivers. This obsession turns him into something like a madman in the eyes of the other characters and even breeds confusion in the minds of readers.

This particular respondent continues by saying Professor exhibits a tendency to see beyond the merely literal and is contemptuous of statements which pretend to be acurate. This is made clear through the Police statement he gives on the accident at the bridge for Kotonou:

> "... have I spent all these years in dutiful search only to wind up my last moments in meaningless statements. What did you see friend, what did you see? Show me the smear of blood on your brain." (p.56)

His written record of Kotonou's report clearly shows his pedantry and arrogance. This essentially brings about the misunderstanding between him and the other characters, and readers ultimately get drawn into this confusion.

> KOTONOU: It (i.e. the lorry) was a full load and it took some moment overtaking us, heavy as it was.
>
> PROFESSOR: (writing furiously) It dragged alongside and after an eternity it pulled to the front swaying from side to side, pregnant with still borns. Underline - with still borns.

Students of Soyinka who were also part of the research respondents state in clear terms what Professor's statements amounted to. They feel that Professor's use of language shows not only his love for the sound of words, but also his view of people and activities. To Samson, the accident victims on tree branches would have been just three dead people. To Professor, they become three figures each hanging from a tree, just as the back of the doomed lorry is filled, not with people, but with still borns. Language for him, they say, does not only describe the immediate particular event, but it also reveals the archetypal figures and primary ideas behind it. Seen at this level therefore, respondents felt that since all deeper and literal meanings put together communicate the playwrights intention, a failure to grasp any of the two levels of meaning

and interpretation would undermine the understanding of the play. Two quotations from The Road would suffice this thesis.

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

The above quotation combines the liberal subject, the road, with the speakers interpretation of his experience of this road, in the single image of the snake. It uses the symbolic language of myth as a means of encompassing all its experience, for it is the character of myth to express in a single image a complex or coherent experience.

The road is also seen as a woman because it is that aspect of the Earth Mother which endures the treacherous destruction of human life discribed by Professor as a menstrual waste:

> Below that bridge, a black rise of buttocks,
> Two unyielding thighs and that trickle like
> a thin river. So many lives rush in and out
> between her legs, and most of it a waste
> (p.58).

Taken along with the image through which we are to see a loaded lorry as "pregnant with still-born in the speech

> Be even like the road itself. Flatten your
> bellies with a hunger of an unpropitious day,
> power your hands with the knowledge of death
> ... (p.96)

this image of the frigid woman suggests the need to earth Ogun so that his vital energies may prove creative rather than wasteful.

The use of complex symbols, metaphors and multi-levels of meanings being the case, one can conclude that effective communication is not realized in the face of a lack of sound knowledge of these literary devices.

3.2 THE POOR STRUCTURES OF PLAYS

Critics of Wole Soyinka (like Gerald Moore, and Michael Etherton) have often criticised some of the structural aspects of his plays. For example, The Trials of Brother Jero has one structural weakness at the beginning of scene 5. Jero is about to win the allegiance and subserviance of an M.P. by behaving as a Messenger of God bringing news of a Ministrial appointment, but the speech the M.P. is rehearsing when he is disturbed by Jero is mime.

Structural weaknesses are also apparent in A Dance. Gerald Moore (1971:46) observes that Part II reads more like the synopsis of a symbolic ballet than a self-sufficient dramatic text. Indeed, in Soyinka's attempt at developing a total theatre - one that will utilize music, dance, and mime - he falls into the error of offering us a text which is too thin and unexplicit to guide through a complex labyrinth of stage action performed to music alone. There is clarity in presenting the interaction of past, and present events in the play within the play scene. But the devices he adopts for showing the complementary interaction of present and future are likely to fail dramatically through sheer obscurity.

The various spirits, the Ants, Figure in Red, Questioner, Interpreter, and Triplets present an apparatus which is too elaborate for its purpose, which is the simple one of underlining the limited scope of forest father's intervention in the repetitive follies of men and gods. The contest between Eshuoro and Ogun occupies too much dramatic time and threatens to make the dramatic storyline a bore. The loose points exhibited in the last speeches made by the three mortals at the end of the play give us clues linking each of them with one of the spirits who spoke through them during the Dance of Welcome; but the spirits of Precious Stones, of Volcanoes and of the Pachydens, who also speak, are not accounted for.

The stage direction "(At this, the Dead Man makes a dumb distressed protest, but Aroni leads him off)"(72) produces a structural weakness rather than embellishing the story. We never encounter the Dead Man again. Who exactly is he, and how does he fits into the overall structure of the play? In the court of Mata Kharibu he is the one who thinks. His protest against the futility of war and against Mata Kharibu's rule, is a highly intellectualized stance. He is engaged in verbal altercation by two other intellectuals in the court, the physician and the court Historian, but that is all about him. The failure to really contextualize a character in concrete terms in an important play like A Dance produces a lot of confusion for a reader.

In The Strong Breed one notes the all-out attempt to put Eman in Ifada's place. The play breaks into a series of unlocalized brief scenes moving towards the climax, involving Eman's death. The first of these is a rather complex and almost unsuccessful demonstration that Eman has in fact taken over the carrier's role. After a brief black-out, Ifada reappears, now free of fear, and begins stripping the toy - carrier of its cloths. The Girl disturbs Ifada and a fight ensures. The struggle is broken by the return of Sunma. Sunma realizes on seeing Ifada what has happened and so drags him out to help her find Eman. No explanation is offered for Sunma's reappearance, and this, coupled with the generally contrived nature of the scene, makes it one of the weaker points of the play's structure.

In Madmen and Specialists, Soyinka abandons the traditional concern with plot and the portrayal of fixed characters. Instead, he uses a fluid approach to flashbacks in such a way that changes in time are not fairly and clearly signalled. The complete structure of the play is far more fluid and there is continued fading back and forth so that time and place become almost abstract. There are too few definite references to time and even if there is, it only serves to blurr the time system. There is a similar abstraction of characters. The characters are fluid and change back and forth continually, requiring constant attention and interpretation from the readers.

The Swamp Dwellers offers us a different perspective of the problem. The problem is that of suitability of response

(speech) by characters to aid in putting the reaction in the expected mood prevailing at the time. Let us consider the following dialogue:

> IGWEZU: You lie upon the land, Kadiye, and choke it in the folds of a serpent.
>
> MAKURI: Son, listen to me ....
>
> IGWEZU: 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?
>
> KADIYE: (in a choking voice) Makuri, speak to your son ...
>
> BEGGAR: Master ... master ...
> (Igwezu suddenly shaves off the final smear of leather with a rapid stroke which makes the Kadiye flinch. Releases him and throws the razor on the table. Kadiye scrambles up at once, tearing the cloth from his neck. Makes for the door).
>
> KADIYE: (Panting) You shall pay for this ...
> I swear I shall make you pay for this ...
> (Three plays, 1978:39).

The melodramatic flatness of the Kdiye's response here is a fair example of what is weakest in the play. The language generally lacks Soyinka's usual distinction and energy, though at certain places it achieves certain broading strength. It is partly the failure to realize the Kadiye as a person which accounts for the weakness of his lines. He is supposed to be a stage villain, crook, rogue and ah false prophet.

3.3 THE RESOLUTIONS IN PLAYS

Closely tied to the structure of plays, this researcher notes,is the question of how satisfactory the idea of resolutions in plays is. A play presents problems which are expected to be resolved in the particular direction the playwright chooses. He may decide to resolve a problem based on his ideological orientation.

In Nigeria, most writers must contend themselves with the basic fact that Nigerians have become so disillutioned with their political, social, economic, systems. And as a result, they look forward to getting a messiah to help effect changes radically. However, in most of the texts written by Soyinka - social/political issues are often resolved in such a manner that some critics have accused him of a "reactionary sensibility and intellect" (Etherton 1982:243). The question then is, what is the effect of the resolutions in such plays taking into cognisance the problems pervading society and the quest for radically inclined change?

(a) From all indications Soyinka exemplify that he represents the class of rulers and that he simply is protecting them and not the ruled.

(b) Etherton's (1982) position on Soyinka seems relevant at this point, that is, though some of Soyinka's works look at society and its inherent power structures, his frequent resort to metaphysics to interprete such local situations not only obscures meaning, but also serves to mask his class affiliation. His reaching out towards an understanding of the universal basis of man's existence only serves to avoid

real social issues. He ends up protesting as a conservative bourgeois socialist writer and not biting at the status-quo. The effect is that respondents with radically inclined sensibilities have total reservations for a man who only cries when the class of the rulers are going awry and not for the ruled to get proper emancipation.

(c) Eldred D. Jones (1971) attacks Soyinka's resolution in The Swamp Dwellers more pointedly. He observes that the play does not hold out any easy solution though it does not in the same vein close the door of hope totally. He notes that Igwezu struggles with the physical environment, with other men and the gods. At each point in time, he fails. His efforts in the basic and necessary struggles to make the land yield him a living are a total failure. He returns from failure in the city to fall back on the land only to find total devastation:

> Not a grain was saved, not one tuber in the soil ... And what the flood left behind was poisoned by the oil in the swamp water ... It is hard for him, coming back for a harvest that isn't there. (Three Plays, 1978:16-17).

The tragedy of failure is a double one because Igwezu had also failed in the harsh city. He had hoped for success in the city but had not expected it, when it did come, he returned to the comfort and security of the country:

> When I met with harshness in the city, I did not complain. When I felt the nakedness of its hostility, I accepted it. When I saw its knife sever the ties and the love of kinship, and return brother against brother ... (p.30)

He took all the above philosophically, confident that the land in the country would still be there. This is borne out of the believe that if the city is harsh and unpitying, the country would be soft and indulgent.

> 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 ... (p.32)

In the city, Igwezu's failure had been made total by the final humiliation of having his wife taken by his own twin brother. So another fundamental relationship - "the ties and the love of kinship" - had been broken. But the land was supposed to be reliable - particularly if one observed the rites of the gods and paid one's dues to their priest. So the gods too had failed Igwezu through their representative on earth. What then was the gain in sacrificing to the gods? He asks:

> If I slew the fatted calf, Kadiye, do you think the land might breath again? If I slew all the calf 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? (p.39)

Igwezu's conclusion is apt:

> I know the floods can come again. That the Swamp will continue to laugh at our endeavours. I know that we can feed the serpent of the Swamp and kiss the Kadiye's feet - but the vapours will still rise and corrupt the tassels of the corn. (p.39)

The big question to be asked here is, is there no hope in man, God or the land? Even though the flicker of hope in the play rests in Igwezu's handing the land to the blind beggar to manage, it is some kind of hope as the man will continue to remain blind. Such conclusions in a play like this makes

readers to wonder if there is any meaning in existence and therefore hope is lost.

3.4 USE OF MUSIC AND DANCE

The components above are often used in Wole Soyinka's plays. When used, these elements are either rendered in the local languages or in English language through speech sound or mime but often danced out. The present researcher sought to know whether these aspects were perceived to contribute to obscurity and misunderstanding of the purpose of a text/performance. Most of them answered in the negative. They used some examples from some plays to buttress their points effectively. Many respondents made the following observations:-

(a) These aspects are very entertaining and so are always welcome as they serve to reduce tension or build it. The following examples were cited: Danlola's refusal to answer the Suprintendant when he advised against his singing at the beginning of Kongi's Harvest heightened tension. Similarly, Elesin Oba's final dance of passage in Death and the King's Horseman does not only heighten tension but also shows mime being used to engender meaning.

(b) A play that has no songs is often considered as drab and dull; thus, they reason that almost all literary plays from Nigeria should incorporate songs and dance (either in English or in the local languages). Some respondents believe songs have been incorporated into literary drama from traditional dramatic performances.

(c) In the course of reading a text, there is the tendency to Skip Songs. Such an omission, the researcher noticed, invariably affects the derivation of meaning since such songs (be they in English, pidgin, or local languages) form an integral part of any play.

(d) Dance sometimes becomes a problem if meaning is attached to its steps or movements. The example of the dances in The Bacchae of Euripides and especially the 'ampe' dance in A Dance of the Forests were cited.

This researcher notes that the other element discussed in Myth, Literature and the African World View is music, and its metaphysical significance. Music and dance are crucial to nearly all Soyinka's plays, and especially to A Dance of the Forests. Music, Soyinka writes "is the intensive language of transition." And as the "language of transition" it lies at the heart of his metaphysics. It is the actual means of communication to the readers both of the disintegration and the retrieval of self; it actually translates the actor and the audience to that state of awareness of the journey through myth, produces "weird disruptive melodies" which can unearth "cosmic uncertainties which pervade human existence", can reveal "the magnitude and power of creation", and can create the experience of the chasm, the yawning abyss, the chthonic realm.

It is the understanding of the place of music and dance in Wole Soyinka's plays as discussed in his collection of essays that can make clear the meaning of the plays. The question one may want to ask at this juncture is how can readers get to know of this in view of the fact that the

literary text and the collection of essays that explain that which the reader ought to know in approaching the text are two different entities?

No wonder, then, readers often fail in their interpretation of Death and the Kings Horseman when they are ignorant of the fact that music is the means by which Elesin Oba, the king's Horseman, is supposed to commit his ritual suicide in honour of the dead Oba and so restore harmony to the community which the death of the Oba has set at risk. Between the play and its readers, music shows the far greater disharmony caused by his failure to commit suicide, and carries the readers to a far more profound crisis. Music also fulfils a similar function in A Dance.

In his play Opera Woyonsi, the Dee-Jay functions as a narrator, providing a link between the scenes; and at the climax of the play it is he who reads out Bokassa's proclamation announcing the amnesty for criminals, which enables MacHeath to escape the firing squad. Each scene in this play contains one or two songs which serve to widen the relevance of the events in that scene and to extend the satire therein.

When all is said and done, one would want to conclude by observing that while music and dance serve an important function in Soyinka's plays, there is a distinction between music (song) when being read and when performed. The imagination of the reader will be greatly tasked in an attempt to realize the rhythm of the songs. A failure at lucid imagination would render such songs irrelevant to the reader.

Therein lies the contradiction: that since song when read does not readily bring out the different nuances of music as in performances, the use of song becomes useless in literary drama especially when that song is in the local language not understood by the reader.

3.5 THE PLAYWRIGHTS CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Going through Wole Soyinka's works the researcher observed one pervading influence: the local cultures and traditions of the writer. Soyinka delves into the legends, stories, mythologies, mores, lores etc that are peculiar to his people and sometimes those of other nation-tribes (e.g. the Greek) to interprete man, his action or to put across any desired message(s). Soyinka uses the Yoruba mythology a great deal in his works. But inasmuchas no writer writes in isolation and that a writer must at each point in time always exploit that which is nearer and more known to him, the researcher sought to know whether such influences/allusions can obstruct understanding of the content of a literary text thereby causing dysfunctionalism. The respondents answered thus:

(a) Wole Soyinka's first problem as regards this question is that he is near negritudinist in the regard above and bears cultural imperialistic and colonizing tendencies. The respondents noted that just as the Greeks saw their culture and traditions as superior to those of others in the past, Soyinka has the same perception of Yoruba culture vis-a-vis its relationship to others.

Respondents felt he ranks the Yoruba culture at par with that of Greeks while other cultures are made to look immaterial , and insignificant. The myth of Ogun is so extensively treated in his works that readers are subtly indoctrinated into believing in Ogun just as the writer.

The researcher chipped in to observe that taking into cognisance the politics, religious, cultures, etc which are always at antagonism in the country, one would not be surprised to find people of different tribal inclinations not hesitating to hate both the writer and his work after reading him only once.

(b) Respondents also said that one would have to be versed in the culture and mythology utilized before one can properly interprete the literary product under consideration.

The last response above engineered the researcher to do a more detailed study of the Yoruba culture with the view of knowing the extend of the influence of this culture in the plays of Wole Soyinka. The researcher could not help but start with Wole Soyinka's Myth, Literature and the African World View, the gospel that unlocks the gates to his plays. In the essay titled "The Fourth Stage", he develops a theory of Yoruba tragedy by examining the ideas underlying Yoruba theology. The effect of this deep scholarly interest in Yoruba culture endows him with a base of ideas from which his work flow. This is why some knowledge of Yoruba culture is very necessary for any serious study of this author's work.

Traditional Yoruba life is dominated by religion posits Ojo, J. Afolabi (1966). The Yoruba are surrounded by gods and spirits with which the lives of mortals interract. In what is like an idiomatic expression for the idea of multiplicity than an actual count, the Yoruba ascribe to themselves four hundred and one gods. This number is made up of both major and minor deities in Yoruba religion. Oludumare is the supreme god. He appears as Forest Father in A Dance of the Forests. Ogun, the possessor of the contradicting dual characters of creative and destructive essence, becomes an enigmatic symbol in Soyinka's own creative works.

Human life itself is regarded as a part of a continuum of life stretching from the spirits of unborn children through bodily existence to the spirits of departed ancestors. The abiku child that appears as a symbol at the end of A Dance is a manifestation of a restless child spirit who is constantly shuttling back and forth between the land of the unborn spirits and the living, causing itself to be born over and over again by the same mother only to plague her by its death. These are the gods and spirits which make up the teeming population of Soyinka's forests in A Dance.

The ancestors are worshipped through the egungun, masked figures who, if the ceremonies are duly observed, become possessed by the spirits they represent, and are able to speak with unearthly wisdom. Soyinka makes use of this idea of possession in A Dance and The Road, two of his most important plays. The carver is central to Yoruba life and workship; this central position is reflected in the symbolic

role of Demoke the Carver in A Dance who becomes a representative of humanity.

Yoruba culture is rich in ceremonies ranging from the simple ceremonies of regular worship through family ceremonies associated with birth, marriage, death, to the big festivals of particular gods, and special ceremonies relating to the crowning and rule of the Obas. The principal external features of these festivals are drumming, singing, dancing, feasting and sacrifice. Oyin Ogunba has pointed out how the Yoruba festival has influenced Wole Soyinka's plays thus:

> But by far the most significant traditional element in these plays is the overall design of a festival. This is particularly true of the plays, namely, Kongi's Harvest, The Strong Breed and A Dance. In each of these plays, the prevailing mood is that of the preparation for a celebration of a great event which produces so much excitement or tension in the whole populace that everybody thinks of nothing but the great event. This is, in fact, the atmosphere that prevails when important ceremonies are performed in traditional Africa, and Soyinka in these plays very often catches the essence of the festival mood with drumming, bustle and other manifestations of a holiday. (Jones, E.D. (ed.) 1970: 8).

Politically, the head of Yoruba government is the Oba. He is a king who rules surrounded by ceremony and combines both political and priestly functions. The Oba's spiritual authority is exemplified in Kongi's Harvest in which even when the Oba's political authority has been eroded by the new regime of Kongi, he still has reserves of moral and spiritual authority with which to compel deference from the functionaries of the new regime. Baroka, the wily Bale of Ilujinle in The Lion and the Jewel, is another of Soyinka's

evocations of the Yoruba traditional ruler.

All Yoruba culture is enshrined in the language. Yoruba language is highly tonal and musical and gives the impression that it is being chanted rather than spoken. These rhythmic and tonal qualities do not come over into English which is of a very different type. What does flow over into Soyinka's English is the wealth of imagery and proverbial formulae which he uses with remarkable effect.

The above serves as examples of those influences derivable from the playwright's cultural background. It was noted earlier, and reiterated now, that a lack of a sound knowledge of the above makes all efforts of the ignorant reader to be futile.

However, apart from the influence of his cultural background, there is that of the christian religion. One example stands out very strongly in The Strong Breed. Eman's sacrifice is modelled on the sacrifice of christ, whose death is recalled in a number of subtle references. Like Christ, Eman is both teacher and healer. He eventually goes on to carry the evil of the village on his own head. The parallel with Christ continues in that Eman works among people who neither understand nor really want him. As Sunma complains: "You are wasting your life on people who really want you out of their way" (88). Other anologies with Christ are Eman's conscious sacrifice of himself for an ungrateful people. Towards the climax of the physical sacrifice, his body flinches, and he needs water. Eman's pathetic appeal to the girl who betrays him parallels Christ's agonized cry "I thirst."

Eman's death, like Christ's, stuns the people in whose name it had been demanded, and leaves a remarkable impression on some unlikely minds.

3.6 THE INFLUENCE OF CLASSICAL AND EUROPEAN DRAMA

The researcher also carried out general survey on the type of dramatic texts used in Schools, that is, from Secondary to tertiary levels. It was discovered that for long, the syllabi of each year especially for Secondary Schools normally included a European writer. In the University, also, playwrights like Sophocles, Ibsen etc are also studied. At the Advanced level, especially of the defunct School of Basic Studies and College of Advanced Studies in Zaria, African playwrights were read as attendant texts to the main texts. These main texts were always foreign. The question the researcher asked was what could possibly be the reason for this? Respondents answered that:

(a) Those classical and European playwrights are considered as masters of the art.

The researcher also asked of the possible influence of these writers on the Nigerian playwright.

Research respondents said:

(a) Students, especially, perceived the classicists as masters of the game;

(b) These masters then become the norm and yardstick for measurement for both playwrights and critics.

(c) The tendency therefore is for these local writers to start by imitating the classicists in both style and content, leading to transpositions and adaptations.

(d) The rules of drama, especially those of tragedy as postulated by Aristotle and utilized by Sophocles and or Shakespeare have also become models for writing and criticism. This view is amply illustrated in the words of J.P. Clark:

> "In my play, Ozidi, I treated the combined accounts of the Ozidi myth given by Okabou, Afolua, and Eririni, just as Shakespeare in his Roman and English plays handled history that Plutarch and Livy on the one hand, and Hall and Holinshed on the other, had written up. The parallel may be stretched to the Greek playwrights in their exploitation of a body of myths that was the public property of their people (Etherton, 19982: 89 and 90)."

To the respondents, the development of literary drama (as stated above) has lead to killing innovativeness and so hindering the emergence of a literary drama to suit the Nigerian locale.

Etherton (1982:65) sums the effect of this influence thus:

> ... the main problem is that many African writers approach the Greek plays through Aristotle's analysis of them, rather than responding to the text directly. The result is that the subsequent transposition into an African setting can frequently become socially prescriptive and mechanical, and not really a response to the actual social preoccupations of the (readers). Almost without knowing it, the playwright finds himself using Aristotle's theories to think about his own (reader's) reactions; and this may be completely inappropriate.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have examined the dysfunctionalism of literary drama in Nigeria by applying the factors that lead to such dysfunctionalism on the plays of Wole Soyinka. The consideration was made out of the realization that literary drama in Nigeria is limited in achieving its didactic or pedagogic objectives. The existence of these factors which were identified to be in the content, form and the surrounding's influence on the playwright were researched into and brought through polemic study and the use of the interview method.

The researcher has easily arrived at the broad conclusion that the problem emanates first and foremost from the failure to come to an understanding of the workings of the process of communication in general. It is the apparent lack of care on the part of the playwright to the fact that whatever is written must issue from some pre-conceived ideas and observation with an objective to be realized when the play is read. This oversight, whether conscious or unconsciou, ends up being a source of marginalization of the expected consumers who end up not understanding what has been written. This apart, they can also misunderstand when they interprete wrongly what has been written. The apparent failure by the playwright to package the message appropriately in writing to his expected consumers has led to consumers' conclusions like

> Soyinka is "difficult", "obscure" and "inaccessible" only if one is thinking of plays like A Dance, Madmen, and perhaps The Raod. The popularity and wide appeal of his other works such as The Lion, The Trials, The Strong Breed, and the revues and sketches in the collection titled Before the Blackout are uncontestable. (Ogunbiyi, 1981:413).

What accounts for the 'accessibility' of the earlier works is that they are consciously written having the expected readers at the back of the mind. The ones that are inaccessible are the ones the writer departed from and refused to take his readers along in total negation of and indifference to the process of communication.

The failure to obey the process of communication as outlined in the theoretical framework manifests itself again in various other aspects of the play. The question of language was identified as a problem. The issue does not only manifest itself in the literary plays of Wole Soyinka alone, rather, it is a continental feature. African playwrights have experimented with a number of solutions to the problem of writing in English, and yet in an English that will be appealing to their readers. One solution is to try to forge a poetic diction which will be high-sounding but have the right cadences. Another solution is to use a variety of English registers within one play, making, say, the main characters speak normal and "correct" English, those who are pompous and elitist, a pedantic form of "proper" English, and the servants pidgin. A third solution is to lard the dialogue with proverbs and axioms, making it heavily metaphorical with an emphasis on nature and the rural routine. In this last option, the

authentic tone is achieved lexically rather than structurally, but it is rather inappropriate for plays with a contemporary urban setting (Etherton, 1982:97-8).

Field research has however shown that due to the eminent and reconcilliatory role of standard English in literary production in Nigeria, the second option outlined above, the use of a variety of English registers for the various characters is better. But even then, the playwright must mould his English usages consciously so that obsfuscation is eliminated. The achievement of this helps eliminate dysfunctionalism. To write well in English today it is necessary to write clearly using contemporary diction and idiom so that anyone literate in the language can make literal sense out of every sentence or line that is written. Let the educated elite worry about the many layers of rich meaning that may be buried beneath that surface clarity.

Tied up to the above was the observation that since the two aspects, content and form, are integral to each other, these two basic literary dimensions should be handled with care. They should be balanced in such a way that they compliment each other towards a realization of clear and undiluted meaning. This also means that the choice and use of literary devices should be intensively employed but never allowed to cause dysfunctionalism.

The tendency to produce open-ended plays where the consumers are made to decide the end for themselves was also identified as a potential problem. At conception, the playwright should have had every idea worked out to the minutest

detail and that should also include solutions to the problems discussed in the play as he deems fit. This would form his conclusion. But to refuse to posit what the playwright considers as solutions to issues raised is tantamount to saying one does not have his logical answer. This can be dangerous to consumers who sometimes have to be guided. Besides, since the playwright is part of the society he writes about, finding solutions should also be a prerogative so that others can feel confident to follow suit.

Our research also established that literary drama was middle-class-dominated activity functioning as a tool of the middle-ruling classes in disseminating their own ideology. As opposed to this trend, literary drama should ideally identify with the aspirations of the down trodden of society. Characters in this kind of committed literary drama should be viewed not as mere mouth-pieces of dominant forces in society, but as individuals in real life. This should be so because the taste of literary drama is to make one see as well as to deliberate society in a dialectical manner in order to show the cause-effect phenomena. This means playwrights have to view the people they write about and also side with optimistically. They have to see for them a ray of hope of inevitable change using the Marxist aphorism of unity. Above all is the need to dramatize change in an attempt to encourage the communal acceptance of the struggle.

The researcher and his respondents also noted how adverse effects of external influences can be to the playwright. For Soyinka, it was observed that the inflences of his cultural background, christian religion, contacts with

classicists in his reading career, contacts with avant-garde playwrights like Benson, Ibsen, Chekov, etc, very close relationship with his lecturers like G. Wilson Knight and Thomas Blackburn, attachment at the Royal Court Theatre where he was a play reader etc all have had a stronger bearing in his plays. The effect is a manifestation of all these various influences, which the researcher discovered could become an impediment to the unwary reader who is not conversant with those. While allowing these influences to have strong bearing on the playwright is not condemned, the over-use and dysfunctional effect is decried.

In our study, it was noted that a responsibility of literary drama cannot take precedence over responsibility to society. Literary drama should have a social responsibility or political engagement in so far as it is a means for serving society. A playwrights' commitment as we saw it, is therefore a matter of orientation, a matter of perceiving social realities and of making those perceptions available in literary drama in order to help promote understanding and preservation of or change in, society's values and norms.

The job of the playwright is therefore to be articulate, and to present to the readers the stresses and joys of their societies as they take place, and also in their public manifestations. The playwright must capture and recreate the tone, flavor and texture of life in the society for those who read. Biodun Jeyifo captures this issue in its totality when he says that:

> If a way is to be found out of the present dilema of literary drama which is .... obscure and inaccessible, unconscious, instinctive formalistic experiements must become conscious, determined. And such determination and conscious aspiration can come only from an attention to the socio-historical roots of our present cultural dilemas. (Ogunbiyi 1981:418).

APPENDIX 'A'

The following formed the bulk of the questions the researcher not only used as guide in the polemical discussion but to also test research respondents.

1. Do you often understand the significance of Wole Soyinka's Plays?

2. Why are Wole Soyinka's latter plays not too exciting to readers hence leading to poor patronage?

3. To what extend are the plays of Wole Soyinka generally obscure?

4. How effective are the use of literary forms like mime, symbolism, metaphor, proverbs etc in putting across message(s) to consumers by Wole Soyinka in his plays?

5. What conflicts do you forsee emanating from Wole Soyinka's view, on the one hand, and christians view of christianity in his plays?

6. What is the effect in Soyinka's approximate transliteration of Yoruba language into English in his plays?

7. How do the poor structure of Soyinka's plays hinder the disemination of meaning?

8. How does the resolution of plays by Soyinka affect the readers?

9. To what extend do the elements of music, dance and mime contribute to obscurity and misinterpretation of the purpose of a playtext?

10. How do allusions to certain cultures, legends, stories etc aid in dysfunctionalism?

11. What is the effect of the influence of classical and European drama to Nigerian literary drama? How does this influence aid in dysfunctionalism?

12. What is and has been the effect of literary drama on Nigerians who are the consumers of such products of ideation?

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