A STYLISTIC CRITICISM OF WOLE SOYINKA'S PROSE

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of references.

BASSEY A. UFOT

Date: _____

CERTIFICATION

This thesis titled 'A Stylistic Criticism of Wole Soyinka's Prose' by Bassey Ufot meets the regulations governing the award of degree of Master of Arts in Literature of Ahmadu Bello University and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and presentation.

Chairman, Supervisory Committee — Date

Member, Supervisory Committee — Date

Head of Department — Date

Dean, Postgraduate School — Date

DEDICATION

To my family

To Rachel

To the memory of Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, and all the children of Jah Rastafari Almighty God in Jamaica, England and elsewhere.

To Michael Rose of'Black Uhuru' who said:

> It's not what you do
> It's how you do it
> It's not what you say
> But how you say it.

Special levitication fe all de brethrin cos Jah say that none of his seeds shall suffer.

Give thankx.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Title	i
	Declaration	ii
	Certification	iii
	Dedication	iv
	Acknowledgement	v
	Table of Contents	vi
	Abstract	viii
CHAPTER ONE		
Introduction and Theoretical Framework		
Part One		
1.10	English as a World Language	1
1.20	English and the Criticism of African Literature	5
1.30	Style and Stylistic Criticism	18
Part Two		
1.40	Statement of the Problem	36
1.41	Hypothesis	37
1.42	Definition of Terms	38
1.43	Choice of Passages	42
	Notes	45
CHAPTER TWO		
Literature Review		48
CHAPTER THREE		
Fictional Works: The Interpreters and Season of Anomy		
3.10	Theme and Vision	81

3.20 Prose Texture 92

3.20.1 Lexical Features 93

3.20.2 Grammatical Features 108

i Narrative 109

ii Cohesion 118

iii Devices 120

iv Dialogue 127

v Notes 139

CHAPTER FOUR

Autobiographical Works: Ake and The Man Died

4.10 Autobiography and Literature 141

4.20 Prose Texture 157

4.20.1 Lexical Features 158

4.20.2 Grammatical Features 169

i Narrative 170

ii Syntax 173

iii Cohesion 180

iv Devices 182

v Dialogue 188

vi Notes 201

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion 203

BIBLIOGRAPHY 211

ABSTRACT

This research utilizes a stylistic critical method to examine the use of the English language in Wole Soyinka's prose works, The Interpreters, Season of Anomy, Ake and The Man Died. The aim is to show, by means of a systematic and comprehensive description of the four prose works, that, contrary to criticisms of the lack of vision and commitment often levelled against Soyinka, his works display a consistency of visionary and committed themes realized by a revolutionary style. The study examines some of the charges of obscure and inaccessible diction. It demonstrates that although Soyinka's riddles and sometimes iconoclastic literary style may often tax the reader's intellect and require him to possess a certain amount of ingenuity necessary for proper appreciation, criticisms of obscurity and difficulty are most often exaggerated and so invalid.

Chapter one is in two parts. The first part attempts a general overview of the status of the English language in the world, showing its prospects and limitations. It also examines the debate on whether or not the English language is capable of properly expressing the African world view and so be in a position to enhance creativity. It goes on to discuss some of the definitions of style and stylistics and to show what stylistics can contribute to the criticism of African literature. Chapter one also distinguishes stylistic

criticism from literary criticism on the one hand, and from linguistic criticism on the other. It demonstrates that a purely linguistic or a purely literary critical approach to African literature is inadequate and concludes that, since matters of linguistic format are closely related to content in African literature, a synthesis of both approaches makes for a more acceptable criticism of literature. The second part addresses the statement of the problem that the study hopes to solve. The second part also contains a definition of the critical and stylistic terms used in the research.

In chapter two, the thesis reviews literature on Soyinka's use of language within the context of what has-been written about the language question in African literature. Chapter two also contains a review of literature on stylistics as a critical discipline and on Wole Soyinka's prose works. The chapter demonstrates that many of these opinions are either invalid or inexhaustive because they are restricted to one aspect or the other of Soyinka's works.

Chapter three appraises in detail the thematic, grammatical, linguistic and aesthetic aspects of the fictional works, The Interpreters and Season of Anomy.

In chapter four, the study carries out a similar detailed appraisal of the thematic, grammatical, linguistic and aesthetic features on the autobiographical works, Ake and The Man Died

Chapter five summarizes the major arguments of the study and draws conclusions.

CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

PART ONE

1.10 English as a World Language.

Wole Soyinka is one writer who feels exceedingly free to draw on the vast resources of the English Language. His versatile literary output of poetry, drama, novels, biography, autobiography, literary criticism, translation and music — it seems -- can be properly matched by only an equally versatile language such as English with its massively enriched vocabulary. And there is ample evidence to show that the language serves his writings, especially prose, very well.

The advantages to be secured from the use of the English language in creative writing derive to a large extent from its history and sociological prospects. The past five hundred years or so have witnessed the rapid rise of the language, formerly the language of a mere five or six million people living within the confines of the British Isles, to the status of the everyday speech of over three thousand million people *worldwide*.

The phenomenal growth of the language has no doubt been aided by the existence of a gigantic and an immensely powerful linguistic and cultural offspring of Britain, the mother country. This offspring, the United States of America, later became bigger than the mother country. The growth has also been aided

by the existence of many millions more in Australia, New Zealand and the new nations of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

As it is today, this original language of some ancient Germanic tribes — Angles, Saxons and Jutes — has passed through three historical watersheds to reach its present status as a world language. The stages are 'Old English' (OE, AD 700 - AD 1100), 'Middle English' (ME, AD 1100 - AD 1500) and 'Modern English (Mod. E AD 1500 - the present day). It has now become the mother-tongue of millions of people around the world. For many people in Africa and Asia however, it is the second language and in many places in Africa, it is rapidly acquiring the status of a mother-tongue. Thus the English language is at the moment the world's dominant and, perhaps, the most powerful language, behind which fall other world languages such as French, Russian, Portuguese and Italian.

R.G. Armstrong has this to say about the languages that are in the international forefront:

> The serious business of the mid-twentieth century is carried on in four languages: English, French, German and Russian. All other languages lag behind these as vehicles for understanding and participating in the main business of the modern world. To be confined to Spanish is to lag thirty years behind the times in science, engineering, business, and scholarship generally... To be confined to Arabic is to lag at least fifty years behind...1

Indeed, English leads all the others as the undisputable language of arts, music, sports, literature as well as science and aviation. It owes much however, to French for instance in the areas of fashion, culinary art, etiquette and social graces.

At one time English was relatively insignificant. For instance, according to Richard Mulcaster, an eminent sixteenth century London educator, English was a 'tongue of small reach, stretching no further than this island, and not there over all.'[2] Again, an English philosopher and statesman, Francis Bacon wrote in 1600 that when men were better educated, the English language would be obsolete.[3] Both Mulcaster and Bacon would probably be surprised at the enormous staying power that the language possesses. Its pertinacity is greatly enhanced by the fact that a stupendous amount of the knowledge mankind has amassed is available in English, either because English was the language of original publication or because English was the only attractive medium for translation. Soyinka's use of the language exemplifies Macaulay's statement to the effect that 'whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded.'[4] There is little doubt therefore about the seminal and international status of the language.

However, an unrewarding possessive attitude by the original owners continues to hover over the language. The rejection by some native speakers of the non-native speaker's variety of the language does not however have the blessing of all native users especially linguists. Some of these linguists have abandoned the prescriptive approach in preference for the descriptive one towards the language. David Brazil is one such linguist:

> And if a desire to protect the home-grown

> product from the effects of outside interference is questionable, the wish to prescribe standards for the much greater number of people who speak English outside the British Isles is even more so.[5]

Brazil goes on argue that there are only slight differences in the various forms that Standard English now takes whether in pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary. His conclusion agrees with the experimental nature of Soyinka's use of the language:

> The differences and distinctions obtaining in the use of English around the world seem hardly likely to wither away. Present conditions seem rather to indicate a gradual increase, and common sense suggests willing acceptance of them as natural and interesting aspects of the language and of the individualities of the people who use it.

With arguments such as Brazil's, black writers like Soyinka will not only feel compelled but also justified to continue to use English notwithstanding the negative racist connotations of certain English words and phrases that seem to portray the colour 'black' as something a little less than evil. Such words and phrases associated with blackness include 'blackmail', 'blackmarket', 'blacksheep', 'black magic' and so on. Thus it would appear that the development of English as a world language has not been without its problems. For the blackman, whether in Africa or elsewhere, the question remains to what extent the language can reflect his hopes and aspirations; and, if it does, to what extent it can do justice to those hopes and aspirations.

1.20 English and the Criticism of African Literature.

In Africa, the English language remains one of the few positive (some would disagree) legacies of colonialism. At the moment it serves as the lingua franca in several African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, The Gambia, Zambia and others. In these places, the existence of a myriad vernacular languages makes communication both within and among these countries impossible. The adoption of English in these countries has resulted in a situation where the indigenous languages are, in some cases, struggling against extinction. This is because, rightly or wrongly, literacy is associated with the acquisition of the English language. It is now the one language through which the ambitious African could obtain a truly solid academic grounding. It is also the only language that ambitious writers like Soyinka could hope to achieve a wide audience and thus realize their full creative potentials.

More and more people speak and write in English in Africa. It seems as though its place will never be seriously challenged by any indigenous African language. Ali Mazrui predicts that by the end of the century, there will be more black people in the world who speak English as their native language than there will be British people. He also observes that already, African Americans alone whose mother-tongue is English are 'nearly the equivalent of half the population of Great Britain' and that the world is witnessing the emergence of a large number of Africans whose only language is English. He observes:

> English is already becoming the first language in the functional sense of dominating the lives of many Africans... It seems possible that English will continue

> to be the first language functionally of large numbers of Africans critically placed in the destinies of their nations, for the rest of the century. But in addition it looks feasible that English will become increasingly also the first language chronologically of many African children ... This emergence of black people who speak English as a native language chronologically is what we have termed the emergence of Afro-Saxons in the world.6

The optimism inherent in this statement is however qualified by the fact that many people — in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary — still see the language as a colonial language. They see it as an alien language foisted on the unsuspecting and helpless Africans and so a language of expediency. That it was the language of expediency, to bridge the communication hiatus caused by the glut of indigenous languages, is not in doubt. But to persist in seeing it as such even against the backdrop of its overwhelming advantages is an unrealistic stance.

There are other people who at least recognize the language as a positive phenomenon in the affairs of Africans and say so. Geoffrey Morehouse is an example and he argues:

> The remarkable thing is that English has not been rejected as a symbol of colonialism; it has rather been adopted as a politically neutral language beyond the reproaches of tribalism. It is also a more attractive proposition in Africa than either India or Malaysia because comparatively few Africans are completely literate in the vernacular tongues and even in the languages of regional communication.7

Blyden expresses similar sentiments and attributes the ascendancy of the language to its flexibility and cosmopolitan nature:

> English is, undoubtedly, the most suitable of the European languages for bridging over the

> the numerous gulfs between the tribes caused by the great diversity of language or dialects among them. It is a composite language, not the product of any one people. It is made up of contributions by Celts, Danes, Normans, Saxons, Greeks and Romans, gathering to itself elements ... from the Ganges to the Atlantic.8

The English language has therefore become an 'African' language leading such other 'African' languages as French, Portuguese, Swahili and Arabic. The implication which the language has for African literature has continued to be controversial, attracting the views and comments of critics, writers and analyst both within and outside Africa. Many writers have expressed displeasure at the critical tendency of judging African works of art in English with the same set of criteria as those applied to literary works in English elsewhere. These writers feel that the language and its concomitant critical semiotics cannot do justice to, nor express at all the African world view in literary works. Because English is 'alien' to Africa, and language is a vehicle of culture, they are of the opinion that it carries with it aesthetic and cultural principles which are alien in provenance. It is according to them, unable to clearly express sound African aesthetic principles.

Edgar Wright, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah, Obi Wali, Joseph Okpaku, Lewis Nkosi and Wole Soyinka himself are some of the writers and critics who have expressed opinions on the language and aesthetic question in African literature. Okpaku argues thus:

> The present practice of judging African literature by Western standards is not only in-

> valid, it is also potentially dangerous to a development of African arts. It presupposes that there is one absolute artistic standard and that, of course, is the Western standard. Consequently, good African literature is taken to be that which most approximates to Western literature.9

One of such standards has to do with the use of the English language. Okpaku goes on to suggest an alternative to the present set of English criteria with its emphasis on characterization, individualism and so on:

> The primary criticism of African arts must come from Africans using African standards ... Western critical standards are developed in the Western tradition and applied by Western critics to interpret and criticise Western literature to the Western audience. Thus, when a critic says of the Western writer that he smacks of Conrad, he immediately invokes a whole concept of Conradism with which the Western reader is acquainted as part of his cultural education... By the same token, an African critic trying to relate African literature or any literature in Africa must do so against the background of African culture. He must draw upon the patterns of the African aesthetic. In other words, he must use African critical standards.10

Some of the contributors to the issue of critical criteria take extreme positions and advocate a clean break with the English language and all its related critical practices. This group implies that a truly African work of art is one which is written in any of its indigenous languages and also scrutinized by means of a purely African critical procedure. Obi Wali subscribes to this position. Wali argues that the 'uncritical acceptance' of English and French as the medium of educated African writing is 'misdirected and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture.' For him therefore, African literature can

only be authentic if it is written in African languages. Similarly, literary criticism of African writing, to him, sounds 'so dull, drab, flippant, mainly because there is no opportunity for original thinking,' as Africans merely 'repeat European cliches like "romantic," "classic", " realism" and so on.' Wali then advises critics and writers to 'go in for the hard school of African linguistic studies' if they are to produce worthwhile criticism.[11]

Writers like Ngugi have also taken similar positions and have broken ranks with the English language as a medium of African literary communication; he has called for the scrapping of the colonial concept of an English Department in African universities. Ngugi now writes in his native language.

Yet not all writers in Africa share these extreme views about English or even 'Western' critical standards. To some it continues to be a 'necessary evil' to which any writer who seeks an international audience inevitably turns. To these, the clamour for an African set of critical standards is sometimes vitiated by overstatement. Achebe singles out three categories of critics who do a disservice to African literature: hostile critics, critics who are surprised that Africans can write and write in English too, and those who say that African writers should be judged by the same standards as European writers, and thus conclude that African writing is inferior to European writing. On his own part, Achebe supports the continued use of the English language. His ideal English language is one which is slightly but significantly modified to embrace the African writer's

unique experience while at the same time retaining its universal communicative value:

> The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his own experience... But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.12

Achebe illustrates this suggestion with a reworked version of the speech of Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu in Arrow of God in which he (Ezeulu) explains the reason he sends his son, Oduche, to the white man's school. The reworked version, unlike the original, is in standard English, and so according to Achebe, it is out of character with the personality of Ezeulu. If standard English is out of character with many of Achebe's characters, then it (standard English) is the norm with many of Soyinka's characters. Soyinka's use of language, especially as seen from his characters, results in a situation whereby his characters cannot be easily identified with any known cultural group. As will be seen, it is a deliberate technique on the part of Soyinka to make his work universal. His characters exist more to give voice to his ideas rather than as characters in themselves. In this Soyinka differs markedly from say, Achebe who realizes his characters in themselves.

Armah on his part reacts to Charles Larson's views concerning his (Armah) works. Armah disagrees with 'that style' of criticism which consists of the 'judicious distortion of African truths to fit Western prejudices' and observes epigrammatically that it is 'the art of using fiction as criticism of fiction.'[13]

Some writers, especially European writers, defend the call for African writing in English to be seen as part of English literature and to be treated as such. Edgar Wright is of this opinion though he concedes that there are slight areas of divergence between the two literatures. African literature, for him, 'presents a particular problem within the broad field of literature in English.' He says further:

> It is impossible to avoid recognizing that writers using English produce work that moves into the current of 'world literature' in English. African literature in English has emerged to a state where it deserves and demands the careful consideration that is given to any other writing in English, and is best served by applying to it standards and procedures as carefully considered as those we apply to literatures whose norms and tradition have already been thoroughly understood.14

Another critic attacks what he sees as the plea for critical separatism by some African writers and critics. McLouglin refers specifically to the novel genre and posits:

> The African novelists in English are not sui generis. They are writing within a generic and linguistic tradition which the reading public is conscious of... The argument for critical separatism strikes one as unsound because it does not pay sufficient attention

to this last point.[15]

This position is supported by M.R. Webb, who because the criticism of African literature in many cases ignores aesthetics and language, is dissatisfied with the way it is taught. He argues that it is 'so bound up with politics, in a very simple way.'[16]

Yet another critic, Bahadur Tejani, condemns those he sees as 'dogmatists who insist on the singularity of literary tradition or effort.' Tejani advises the critic to be free from 'isms' and 'tudes'.[17] Tejani's and Webb's position has been questioned by the Nigerian critic, O. A. Ladimeji, who points out:

> African literature reverberates largely within the structures of African culture and history, on which English literature sheds very little light but much distortion... The standards by which African literature is to be understood issue from that literature itself.[18]

In his contribution to the debate, Emmanuel Ngara, the Zimbabwean critic, prefers to tackle the question as to whether African literature is part of European literature by asking critics to pause and consider whether European literature is part of African literature. He suggests that African literature has an autonomous existence. He concedes though that much of African literature has been influenced by Western literary thought. Indeed Soyinka's and Achebe's major works draw their themes and sometimes

titles from Western writers.

Ngara observes in a related discussion that it is a common practice among students of literature in Africa and elsewhere to regard the study of literature as consisting merely in the narration of plots and the discussion of themes and characters, at the expense of the aesthetic aspects of literature. As a result, according to him, the discussion of 'issues' raised in literary works of art becomes the primary, if not exclusive, concern of the student of literature. It is with this unhealthy approach that Soyinka's works are usually examined leading of course to charges of 'obscurity' and 'difficulty'. Ngara suggests that this approach is inadequate:

> Such an approach may lead us into a situation where we are concerned 'solely with the slogan of the day which may be completely forgotten tomorrow.' Today we are shouting something like 'Down with imperialism! Down with colonialism!' Tomorrow we will be shouting something else. Now when the political slogan has become irrelevant, the criticism that was based on it will also become irrelevant. Criticism based on sound aesthetic principles will forever be useful. It may be overtaken by a more satisfactory theory but, like Aristotle's Poetics, it will form a basis for further developments.19

This study agrees with this opinion for it represents to a large extent the raison d'etre of the thesis. But this is not to be construed to mean that we advocate art for art's sake. Though such art has its merits, it cannot be justified in the context of largescale illiteracy, oppression, disease and exploitation. The emphasis is on

how the aesthetic features of a work of art cohere in order to send a 'message.' We equally recognize the legitimacy of belles-letres as an integral part of the corpus of writing everywhere.

Our submission here is that African literature is not just African literature, but a part of world literature in English. Therefore while we take cognizance of the distinct culture and world view with which it is associated (other cultures are distinct too), we are of the opinion that it should nevertheless be able to facilitate and withstand universal scrutiny. This is an obvious common sense fact. There should be points of contact and similarity. This opinion is held by Soyinka when he criticises Achebe and many other writers for drawing on what he (Soyinka) sees as 'a common backcloth' to write novels of culture clash and especially writers who overstate the literary uniqueness of Africa.[20]

At the moment, it does not seem as though any literature written in any of the tribal African languages meets the universal requirement. This is obviously because of the ponderous task of translating every work into an international language. Indeed, it would also involve translating every critical opinion since a vernacular literature in order for it to be 'authentic' should be criticised only in a vernacular language.

Wole Soyinka asks that writers in Africa be seen 'not as African writers but as simply writers.' He feels free to cross literary and cultural boundaries:

I borrow seasons from an alien land
In brother-hood of ill, pride of race around me
Strewn in sunlit shards.
I borrow alien lands
To stay the season of a mind.[21]

That Soyinka should borrow from alien lands is a phenomenon which is perhaps suited to the English language which has borrowed from every major language in the world to enrich its vocabulary. This is what was meant when it was observed that the language serves him well. This eclecticism of Soyinka's has been strongly criticised by Chinweizu et al, who question why he should borrow images from an alien landscape to mourn the victims of the October, 1966 massacres in Northern Nigeria. But for Soyinka as for many writers, the English language and its universal stock of imagery hold a great appeal. Their attraction, especially in the case of English, lies in the rich capacity of the language as a medium of discourse — the range of its vocabulary, the subtle shades of meaning and implications of attitude and feeling that are attached to its words. Its attraction also lies in the potentialities of the idiomatic usage in the language, the varieties of grammatical structures that it has developed, and its large repertory of rhetorical figures. Clearly the language has more advantages for African literature than disadvantages. It is little surprise therefore that Soyinka chooses to write in it.

Because the English language is dominant in African literature, it becomes necessary to take a close look at it

especially in relation to other aspects of a literary work. Put succinctly, the criticism which places emphasis on the language itself and other aesthetic aspects stands a better chance of offering more objective interpretations of the work when juxtaposed with other modes of criticism.

That literature is language in action is not likely to be disputed. Thus, the criticism of literature will focus to a very large extent on language. In the case of the African writer, that language is either English or French. Many people would however disagree. Many a critic or student of African literature would often cite 'ideology' and 'commitment' as the main props of literature. This position is problematic in that it frequently reduces literature to a mere exercise in historicity, anthropology and ideological pamphleteering. As a result, what we all too often get is a mere rehash of political and ideological ephemera dressed up with such euphemisms as tasks, commitment and so on and presented as literature.

Marxist criticism is another approach to African literature. It differs from linguistic criticism in that the marxist critic sees literature as being socially conditioned and that the writer cannot afford not to mirror social realities in his work. Terry Eagleton points out that 'Marxist criticism has traditionally opposed all kinds of literary formalism, attacking that inbred attention to sheerly technical properties which robs literature of historical significance and reduces it to an aesthetic game.'[22]

The major advantage of Marxist criticism is its 'global vision that seeks to encompass the entire field of reality,' and its aim at totality.[23] It holds for instance that the novel as a literary genre, with its elaborate network of plot and narrative, arose as a result of the rise of bourgeois individualism in Europe. Thus Marxist criticism frequently goes outside the text to the society in order to explicate the text. It tends to subordinate form to content in a rather disproportionate manner. It relies too heavily on the temporal and spatial context of the work such as the background of the writer, the dialectical forces operative at that period in that society and the contextual relevance of the work of art in order to explain it.

Linguistic criticism on the other hand sees the text as illustrating aspects of language use. For the linguist, extra-textual information is largely irrelevant and only serves to obfuscate the beauty of the text in question. We believe that critical attention directed at the meaning of a work of art in relation to its context is healthy, indeed desirable. But it must not preclude or prejudice similar attention directed at the literary and aesthetic tools with which a writer works. The means by which meaning is achieved — imagery, diction, grammar — constitute a more viable and comprehensive area of study than exclusive political postulations.

It is necessary (in addition to appraising the import and 'commitment' or otherwise of the work) to shift the

emphasis to considerations of syntax, vocabulary, rhythm and euphony; but of course, the goal is to relate these to some meaning or the other. We ought to be able to illustrate the struggle that Soyinka is engaged in while trying to find the right words and the appropriate imagery. The selecting, expunging, coordinating, concord, narrative structure, dialogue and characterization are often neglected aspects of Wole Soyinka's works in conventional critical methods.

This research proposes a synthesizing approach. In spite of being concerned mainly with the aesthetic and linguistic aspects of literature in general and Soyinka's prose in particular, the study considers some of the political, social and moral issues raised by placing them in a proper perspective where necessary. Thus, though the emphasis is on Soyinka's linguistic idiosyncracies, that is, focusing on the texts themselves, the discussion inevitably goes outside the texts for some background information. Thus, the stylistic criticism advocated here differs from both a purely linguistic approach on the one hand, and a purely literary approach to the criticism of literature on the other. Both approaches are briefly explained below.

1.30 Style and Stylistic Criticism

Stylistic criticism is an area of mediation between two modes of criticism, literary and linguistic approaches to the criticism of literature. The role of the literary

critic for instance is interpretative. He is in most cases concerned with the meaning of a work of art. The linguist on his part takes the code as his domain, and the meaning of the work is relevant only in so far as it illustrates the language use. H. G. Widdowson explains this difference between the functions of the literary critic and the linguist in the following way:

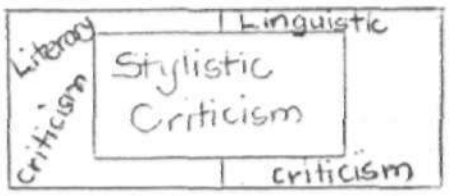
> ...the ultimate purpose of literary criticism is to interpret and evaluate literary writings as works of art and that the primary concern of the critic is to explicate the individual message of the writer in terms which make its significance clear to others...He is interested in finding out what aesthetic experience or perception of reality [the work] is attempting to convey and his observation of how the language system is used will serve only as a means to this end.24

As has been noted, this is not, strictly speaking, the position taken in this work. Widdowson next clarifies the function of the linguist. He observes:

> The linguist, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the codes themselves and particular messages are of interest in so far as they exemplify how the codes are constructed...This is not to say that the linguist will necessarily ignore the meanings... it may well be the case that the linguist's analysis of the language of a [work] is dependent on some prior intuitive interpretation of what the [work] is about. But although interpretation may be an aid to his analysis, it is not its aim.

This is also not the position taken by this research. The approach adopted here is stylistic, that is, critical stylistics; and it seeks to link the two approaches by extending the linguist's'literary intuitions' and the literary critic's

'linguistic observations' in order to make their relationship explicit. This approach is expressed panoptically as follows:



Stylistic criticism here seeks to synthesize the work of the literary critic with that of the linguist and produce a more adequate criticism of Soyinka's prose. This is especially so as the literary critic also arrives at his conclusion, in many cases, from inferences and interpretation of language use — diction, images and symbols. This study is however aware of the numerous difficulties and the limitations of a linguistic criticism of literature. Halliday cautions for example:

> Linguistics is not and will never be the whole of literary analysis, and only the literary analyst — not the linguist — can determine the place of linguistics in literary studies. But if a text is to be described at all, then it should be described properly; and this means by the theories and methods developed in linguistics, the subject whose task is precisely to show how language works.25

The literary critic searches for underlying significance and essential artistic vision of a writer and treats his work as 'messages'. The linguist, who is concerned with how a piece of literature exemplifies the language system, treats literature as 'text'. Stylistic criticism merges some aspects of both and treats literature as 'discourse'.

As a discipline, stylistics or the study of style is still

relatively new, and stylistic criticism of literature is even more so. It is therefore necessary at this point to proceed with a clear and precise working definition of the concept of style and stylistics.

Nils Enkvist for instance defines style as a variety of language which correlates with context including situation. He goes on to say:

> Style is comparison, a relation, a differential. The total impression of the style of a text may often arise from a complex network of such comparisons which are performed by matching a text against a whole set of experiences of other texts, similar and different that emanate from a spectrum of contexts, situations and backgrounds.26

This definition sees style from a comparative point of view. This comparison is also implicit in Leech's definition of style in his book, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry. According to Leech: 'When we discuss style we often have in mind the language of a particular writer, a particular period, a particular genre.' Most critical discussions of literature,' according to him, 'revolve, at some stage, round appeal to linguistic evidence,' that is, the 'evidence of words and sentences which actually occur on the printed page in literary texts.' Leech concludes his definition of style and stylistics by saying:

> Much of the basic vocabulary of literary criticism (metaphor, figurative words, antithesis, irony, rhythm) cannot be explained without recourse to linguistic notions. As a meeting ground of linguistics and literary studies, stylistics is the field within which these basic questions lie.27

In a latter publication, Style in Fiction, Leech, together with Michael Short, sees style in relation to the

well known Saussurean distinctions between 'langue' (the code or system of rules common to speakers of a language) and 'parole' (the particular uses of this system by speakers or writers in particular circumstances). 'Style, then,' they say, 'pertains to parole.'[28]

Friedman and McLaughlin define style as:

> The selection of words, the organization of words into longer units (phrases, clauses, and sentences) and the use of figures of speech...a writer's characteristic selection of words,sentence patterns and figures of speech in a given essay.29

For Bally and Riffatere, style is that 'expressive or emotive element of language which is added to the neutral presentation of the message itself.'[30] On his part, Bernard Bloch sees style in terms of frequency of features. He defines it as the 'message carried by the frequency distributions and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole.'[31]

Two more writers, Widdowson and Ngara, closely link stylistics with literature in their definitions. According to Widdowson, stylistics entails:

> The study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation... what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is essentially a means of linking the two. Stylistics...involves both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological make-up suggests: the 'style' component relating it to the former and the 'istics' component to the latter.32

Ngara distinguishes between two types of style study, the literary stylistician's and the stylistic critic's approaches. The literary stylistician, he says, 'applies

the methods of stylistics to the language of literature.' He also observes that the stylistic critic has a wider domain because in addition to using the 'analytic tools of the linguist and the stylistician such as grammar, lexis, phonology, prosody, he must also concern himself with the wider issues of deviation from the norm.' He must deal with 'the relationship between language and character, the relationship between author and audience, and inevitably the relationship between linguistic features and content value.' And so for Ngara, stylistic criticism 'aims at being more precise and more systematic than conventional criticism.'[33]

This work understands stylistic criticism to consist in a celebration and critical appraisal of the manner in which a particular writer communicates both aesthetic and informational qualities through language. By 'celebration' we mean that the stylistic critic does not come to the work with preconceived notions, neither does he seek to prescribe for the writer. Instead, he examines, by means of qualitative and quantitative foregrounding, the consistent deviations from the norms and then tries to explain the reasons behind them.

The analysis of style is conventionally limited to sentence structure, diction, and the use of figures of speech. The development of a style and of a characteristic manner of speech is a matter of conditioning. It is a conscious choice by the writer or speaker as will be seen

in Soyinka's works. Sheridan suggests that when we ask questions about the kind of sentence structures characteristic of a writer's style, we are looking for: (a) a pattern of phrases and clauses based on the three types of sentences, 'simple', 'compound' and'complex'. (b) the sequence in which these types may occur with a resultant rhythmical pattern.[34] He also observes that a style characterized by simple sentence structure, by a familiar, concrete word stock drawn chiefly from old English or other alien sources, and by few figures of speech is plain. Similarly a conversational or informal style is characterized by a mixture of sentence structures, incomplete sentences, colloquialisms, occasional slang and figures of speech which though present are not expansively developed. A formal style then is one which is characterised by complex syntax, ornate and unusual diction and a rich use of figures of speech. Our task is to fit Soyinka's prose into the appropriate category.

Our approach is to compare the norm to the deviation or vice versa. The deviation refers to those conspicuous features in a work of art. The analysis is presumably part of the decoding of a text. Style contributes to the total meaning of a message, for instance by letting us know a character's attitude from his choice of levels of formality. Styles are thus context bound varieties of language as well as sums of differences between text and norm.

A conspicuous feature is that feature whose density in the text is significantly different from its density in the contextually relevant norm. It is referred to as a style marker. The occurrence of a given feature is a style marker if that feature does not occur in the norm. It is a minus style marker if it is absent in the particular work but present in the norm. The emphasis is not however on isolated style markers but on cumulative discriminants. Style is characterized not by the length of any single sentence or narrative technique but by the mean sentence length, narrative features and the standard deviation of some such appropriate stylistic features.

As a vehicle for communication, style consists of five parts. First, the encoding of the message, second, the transmission. Third, its realization as a signal, fourth, its reception, and fifth, its decoding. The style of a particular writer is usually determined by the following factors:

Context: This refers to the situation that produces any language use. The geographical and historical setting of a work of art will in part determine the linguistic possibilities before the writer. Though he may make use of linguistic devices that are essentially his, he would not he able to completely do away with the imprint of the times. Shakespeare's and Chaucer's writings are good examples of this. The African writer's culture is a complex one. He writes in a language which is not native to him nor most of his readers. The writer now tries to

strike a balance among the three centrifugal forces — his ethnic culture, western education and sometimes sympathy with eastern ideology of socialism — that threaten to tear him apart.

Medium: Here we discuss the physical embodiment of the message conveyed. We examine whether it is a written or spoken work of art. If spoken or written, we inquire whether the dialogue is simulated or real, that is, is it real conversation or the ones in a novel? Written language requires more explicitness than spoken language. This is because the former, unlike the latter does not depend much on context of situation. For instance, in a real conversation a participant may break off, point and say, 'Look at that,' and it would be understood. But in the novel, the object is not there for the reader to see, and so the writer has to give adequate information to help his readers understand him.

Mode: By 'mode' we refer to the primary distinctions of literature — prose, poetry and drama — and other sub-categorizations such as 'epic','lyric','ballad','sonnet' and 'elegy'. A good work of art usually manifests a highly artistic handling of narrative, description, dialogue and interior monologue. Poetic prose is a characteristic of accomplished writers, but the language of a work of art should normally be credible. Indeed, proper handling of poetic prose can excite the reader's faculties.

Audience: The relationship between the author and his audience is significant though it belongs more under 'tenor'. This relationship should not however legislate away the

writer's private style. This is because style is a deviation from the norm. But the tastes of the reading public cannot be completely ignored by the writer or he would stand the risk of losing his readers.

Tenor: The way in which the social relationships between the encoder and decoder of messages influences the language use is discussed under 'tenor'. It is not restricted to just the general myth but also to what the speaker or writer thinks, feels, knows or imagines about the listener or reader in relation to the context, sense and medium.

Personal Factors: Since style is something ingrained in writing and not stuck on the top like a veneer, a man's way of writing will be an expression of his personality and his way of looking at life. This is particularly true of Soyinka whose characters are usually his spokespersons. It was this that perhaps led Buffon to say, 'Le style, c'est l'homme meme' (Style, it is the man himself). All these factors together contribute significantly to the study and criticism of a particular style.

The stylistic investigator seeks three sets of apparatus. There is first the necessity for a grammar providing a simple but adequate description of language styles, the uses of which he is interested. He states the norm against which the deviations can be measured and finds technical terms to name them. There is secondly the necessity for a contextual apparatus with which to relate language use under investigation or its registers. This means that the stylistic critic

seeks a simple historical or sociological description so that the language use can be related to its period and provenance. The third set of apparatus is a critical one which can allow him to draw, from the grammar and the contextual apparatus, any conclusions about the language use in question. This implies that the social context cannot be completely ignored. It is a necessary help to the stylistic critic of an African work of art particularly Soyinka's works.

In stylistic analysis, we isolate two sub-sets of features. These are para-linguistic affective devices and linguistic features proper. Under para-linguistic affective devices, we discuss such features as symbolism, myth, allusion, allegory, imagery because these are not purely linguistic features. The features we discuss under the purely lingistic sub-set are lexical, grammatical, graphological and sometimes phonological.

Under the lexical features we examine what choices are open to the writer, and the choices he makes, for example, collocation, similes, metaphors and how these relate to his meaning. The grammatical level is where the questions of syntax lie. The type of sentences is of particular interest here. A writer may be fond of inserting parenthetical statements enclosed within a pair of dashes, commas or brackets in his sentences. Such a device requires the reader to store up interrupted information for a significant period to reconnect later after the closing dash, comma or bracket. Such questions lie within the purview of grammar.

Issues such as punctuation marks and capitalization are discussed under the graphological level. The phonological level includes such devices as rhyme, alliteration, assonance and rhythm. These categories often overlap and the stylistic critic is not obliged to use the titles of the categories named above.

Stylistic criticism of literature then is both a criticism of a writer's idiosyncracies as well as his social vision. It is a criticism of the struggle to devise patterns of language which will bestow upon the linguistic items concerned just those values which convey the individual writer's personal vision. Eliot describes this struggle as follows:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.[35]

Finally, because stylistic criticism of literature involves words, phrases and clauses, the thesis employs the systemic analytic tool, not the traditional grammatical mode of analysis, to explicate the syntactic structures of Wole Soyinka's prose. For a proper understanding of Soyinka's grammar and indeed the grammar of every work of art, our critical stylistics borrows the tools of the systemic linguist, who has developed the 'scale and category' rank to account for various levels of grammar. It is necessary to explain this here in detail since it forms a major

turn comprises the phrase or group which in turn is made up of words and so on. When we look downwards like this to determine the component parts of each unit, we are engaged in morphology.

A second way of looking at the structure is to begin from the bottom — the morpheme — and ascend to the sentence. Here we study the relationship between two items on the same scale as they function in the unit directly above them. Upwards in this manner, the relationship among the component parts vertically and horizontally is clarified. This is syntax.

The Sentence

The sentence is made up of either one clause (a subject and a verb): 'You cannot judge a book from the cover.' Or two main clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction (two or more subjects and verbs): 'You cannot judge a book from the cover but you have to read it,' or still the sentence could be made up of a main clause linked with a subordinate clause (dependent on the main clause for interpretation) by any of the numerous subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns:

1. 'You have to read it if you want to discover'
2. 'The man who made this statement is a musician.'

The Clause

A clause is a group of words containing a subject and a verb. The components of a full clause are abbreviated as follows: (S) P (C) (A) meaning:

S ⟶ Subject (often nouns, pronouns or noun phrases)

P ⟶ Predicator (verbs and verb phrases)

C ⟶ Complement (often nouns, adjectives, pronouns, noun phrases)

A ⟶ Adjunct (adverbs and adverbial phrases)

The brackets indicate the optional nature of the elements. Thus the sentence 'You cannot judge a book from the cover' is analysable into the structure: S P C A

Subject: You

Predicator: cannot judge

Complement: a book

Adjunct: from the cover

Sometimes however, a 'predicator' may be split up by elements that are not verbs eg 'to' in 'I want to go there.' Such a predicator is referred to as a phased predicator and is represented as the (Z) element in clause structure.

The Phrase/Group

Though there are four clausal elements, there are three types of phrases/groups. This means that one type functions twice in clause structure. The group that functions under the subject equally functionsunder the complement position. The three types are:

1. nominal (noun) phrase: (operating at S and C in clause structure)
2. verbal phrase: (operating at P in clause structure)
3. adverbial phrase: (operating at A in clause structure.)

nominal group: This usually has the structure (m) h (q) where:

m ⟶ modifier (eg articles, adjectives, determiners etc)

h ⟶ headword (substantive; nouns; syntactic determinant of concord)

q ⟶ qualifier (prepositional phrase or relative clause)

As before the brackets mean that only (h) is obligatory. The headword may be preceded by more than one modifier such that the group may have any of the structures mmmhq, mhq, hq, mh, h . There are two types of complements. These are complement intensive (subject complement: 'He is a teacher'; or object complement: 'He made me an offer'), and complement extensive referring to the direct object: 'He called the teacher.' And indirect object: 'He called us a teacher'.

verbal group: There is an obligatory element here known as the lexical verb. The structure here is (a) (n) l, meaning:

a ⟶ auxiliar (auxiliary verbs: can, may, must, will, do etc)

n ⟶ negator (negatives: not, never)

l ⟶ lexical (verb: walk, talk, is, are, sing etc)

Again, the brackets indicate optionality.

adverbial group: There are two types of adverbial groups in English but both are initially classed under the A element in clause structure. The one is adverb-headed adverbial group and it has traditional adverbs as its obligatory element called 'apex'. The apex may be preceded by other elements 'temperer' and followed by other elements 'limiter' giving a complete structure (t) a (l) where:

t ⟶ temperer (submodifiers: very, more, nearly, just, exactly)

a ⟶ apex (adverbs: slowly, swiftly, fast, soon, now)

l ⟶ limiter (indeed, enough etc)

The second type of adverbial phrase is the preposition-headed adverbial group and it is made up of two elements of structure: pc where :

p ⟶ prepend (prepositions: to, for, against, up etc)

c ⟶ completive (noun phrase, which is rankshifted)

eg: up the hill (pc)

by the river (pc)

The similarity of the pc of adjunct to the PC of clause structure is meant to reflect the transitivity of prepositions (pc) and verbs (PC).

The Word

A word is made up of one or more morphemes with the structure (p) b (s) where:

p ⟶ prefix (en-, un-, il-, dis-, ir-, in- etc)

b ⟶ base (-danger-, -faith-, -legal-, -boy-, -fast- etc)

s ⟶ suffix (-ous, -ful, -ly, -s, -er)

Thus the word 'unfaithful' has the structure pbs. It is made up of a free morpheme 'faith' (so called because it can stand on its own as a word), and two bound morphemes 'un-' and '-ful' (so called because they do not constitute words).

The word 'boys' is made up of two morphemes:

boy = free morpheme

-s = bound morpheme; but the word 'blackboard' consists of two free morphemes: black (free morpheme)

board (free morpheme)

Finally, the order in clause structure is not fixed. We may have SP, SPC, SPCA, SPA, SPAC, ASPA, ASPC, ASPCA, PC, PCA .

Rankshifting

It is possible for a unit on the rankscale to descend and function in an inferior position, that is, in the rank below it; it is also possible for an element to function within another element on that same rankscale. For example a clause could descend and function as the qualifier under group/phrase: 'The man who made this statement is a musician' where 'who made this statement' is a relative clause now functioning under the nominal group 'The man' in the subject position. An example of a group functioning under another group is 'The house by the river has collapsed' with the phrase 'by the river' qualifying another phrase 'the house'. When this happens, we say that such an element has been rankshifted.

The merit or significance of this type of sentential analysis for African literature is that this literature is made up of English sentences, and so for a proper appreciation of a writer's type of sentences, the sentences cannot but be systematically investigated.

But this type of sentential analysis has its limitations and this will be discussed under the literature review.

Suffice it to say at this point that this analysis is not an end in itself but a necessary tool in the hands of the stylistic critic who seeks a more ambitious criticism of African literature.

PART TWO

1.40 Statement of the Problem

Stylistic criticism is a relatively new phenomenon. It has received little attention, especially in the criticism of African literature. As Widdowson observes, 'it has as yet at least no autonomous domain of its own.'[36] Though so much has been written on Soyinka's works, these writings have been restricted to analysis of his 'messages'. Not much work has been done on their aesthetic appeal except for the usual cry against his 'difficulty', 'obscurity' and 'lack of commitment'. The consequence of this oversight is that such criticisms, in their penchant for overstatement, overlook Soyinka's stylistic appeal. Criticisms such as Palmer's that 'verbal dexterity becomes ends in themselves' in Soyinka's works are not valid as will be seen. Similarly, it is doubtful whether The Interpreters can be said to leave the impression of a 'tedious formlessness'; neither can we accept as valid Osundare's view that 'Soyinka is the most prolific but most inaccessible writer in English in Nigeria today.'[37] This is because these claims are a little more than hearsay. They are inadequate because they seek to be prescriptive rather than descriptive.

Another reason for the inadequacy of some of these criticisms of obscurity is that they place a disproportionate emphasis on extratextual considerations such as the reading habits of the audience and of course, they try to impose their own criteria on Soyinka. The criticisms do not do justice to his stylistic achievements and frequently ignore his unique vision: his consistent portrayal of the dialectics of the struggle, and his awareness of the implications of this struggle for social justice and egalitarianism are frequently played down. These themes run th rough his major works, and the four prose works constitute a cohesive whole thematically and aesthetically.

This research therefore attempts to examine these criticisms of obscurity. In doing this, it goes beyond these generalisations. It develops a more robust approach and specifies portion by portion any difficulty that may arise and why it may arise. The study also addresses the limitations inherent in the stylistic approach to the criticism of literature. It dwells also on the disadvantages of excessive reliance on a criticism based exclusively on the content value to the detriment of the aesthetic aspects of a work of art.

1.41 Hypothesis

The research is based on the premise that Soyinka is a visionary writer. He is a writer on the side of social justice. This aspect of his works can only be properly appreciated if close attention is paid to the aesthetic

ects of his works. In other words, satisfactory conclu-
ons about Soyinka's works are possible only with the
employment of a comprehensive and systematic analytic tool such as stylistic criticism has to offer.

A critic whose preoccupation is not with the devices and imagery in Soyinka's works is likely to overlook the plethora of allusions. The study believes at the same time that adequate conclusions about Soyinka's works cannot be drawn exclusively from the text. It is sometimes necessary to repair to selected extra-textual considerations in order to get a clearer understanding of the author's style. Soyinka's prose is conditioned by the complexity of ideas which his works treat. The complex ideas derive from the equally complex nature of living. His language therefore is necessarily complex.

1.42 Definition of Terms

It is necessary to define and clarify some of the terms used in this study; especially, the peculiar sense in which some of them are used. Literature is about man, society and the universe; it is about man's conflict with man, man's values, man's fight against nature and man's search for a better society. Criticism of literature gives rise to some critical terminologies such as 'para-linguistic affective devices' which as noted earlier refer to such features as "myth','allusion', 'symbolism','allegory' and 'rhetorical anaphora'.

Myth is defined as a body of stories taken by some

societies to be a true account usually of how natural phenomena or social custom originated. In modern literature, it is often taken to mean a theme or character type embodying an idea. From the word 'myth' we get the words 'mythopoesis' and 'mythopoeic' particularly associated with Soyinka's writings. Mythopoesis refers to the composition or making of myths. It is a term that comprehends Soyinka's obsession with the deities, gods, ritual archetypes and the 'cosmic scale of values'.

Soyinka's use of symbols as will be seen is a little more complex than conventional ones.

Allusion in literature refers to an indirect reference. That is, an oblique and obscure mention of some idea.Soyinka's works are replete with allusions. If in a work of art a policeman is described as Pilate who washes his hands in a stream of traffic, the biblical story of Pilate is immediately conjured up to describe official dereliction of duty.

An allegory is a sustained metaphor. Though it has been susceptible to many interpretations, this is the sense in which Soyinka uses the term. It is a poem, play or novel in which the apparent meaning of the characters and events is used to symbolize a deeper moral or spiritual meaning. A writer utilizes a particular set of events or characters to make general statements about similar phenomena. The particular characters and events, from this standpoint, are seen as representatives or archetypes.

Rhetorical anaphora is a term used to describe the

device of repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences. Such a device has the effect of heightening the rhetoric of speech or writing by raising the tone a notch each time the word or phrase is mentioned again.

Grammatical anaphora is slightly different from rhetorical anaphora. Anaphora in grammar refers to the use of a word or phrase, especially a pronoun, whose referent can only be found by going back a few words before. It is employed to avoid unnecessary repetition. When the referent of a word or phrase is found only after it, we speak of cataphora.

Vision as used in this research means the ability or an instance of great perception especially of future developments as reflected by the author in his work. Social vision in literary works embodies the writer's portrayal of lofty ideals which he hopes society can attain. It is therefore his dream of how society should look. In Soyinka's case, it consists of deliberately patterning images that presage a better future always with the caveat that this is attainable only if action is taken today. Thus many writers are in their writings involved in a continuous struggle today for a better tomorrow. This is social vision.

Lexis and morphology are two linguistic terms also used here. Lexis means the totality of words in a vocabulary, but in a more precise sense it looks at a word as simply a word regardless of its context in a sentence. It is a tidier term used to describe both content words (words with meaning) and function/grammatical words(without meaning in themselves:'to',

'for', 'the', 'at' etc) thus blurring this cumbersome distinction. Morphology has already been defined from a systemic point of view but generally it refers to questions of word complexity and rhythm.

Questions of neologism — the practice of coining new words or phrases from existing ones by adding or subtracting some letters — are within the purview of morphology. Under lexis we examine what choice of words a writer makes and why he makes them. Are they complex, simple, or an admixture? Are they characteristically short and simple Anglo-saxon words or polysyllabic Latinate words?

A sentence, although grammatically correct and containing properly used and judiciously chosen words, may yet be unsatisfactory because it lacks 'euphony'; that is, it is not a harmonious combination of words. No sentence can be regarded as satisfactory if it offends the ear when read aloud. It should therefore have an agreeable 'rhythm' so that it may not be said to be too abrupt, too colloquial, too bumpy, too fast or too formal. A piece of writing has euphony if it secures the right tone.

Rhythm is particularly important because proper arrangement of the words in a sentence can form an almost musical pattern. Dr. Samuel Johnson, eighteen century critic and lexicographer, though sometimes criticised over his love for words of Latin origin, was nevertheless master of rhythmic prose. A good example is his famous letter to James Macpherson.

Another device is called parataxis and it refers to the technique of juxtaposing closely related clauses without employing conjunctions. An example is: 'No food was left.We ate everything.' The two clauses are closely related and so would normally be linked by the conjunctions 'for' or 'because'

We use the term 'foregrounding' to refer to the stylistic practice of highlighting certain items as style-markers in a text. An item has been foregrounded if it is made conspicuous; that is, if it is stylistically isolated for further analysis. Our idea of criticism in this study is not limited to analysis of themes and character. It is expanded to take in all the aesthetic aspects, and of course they are related to the meaning and purpose of Wole Soyinka's works.

1.43 Choice of Passages

The stylistic critic who seeks to illustrate his arguments with certain portions of the text by means of foregrounding faces an acute problem of how to select sample passages and features to study. The problem is even more acute in prose than in poetry because poetry is in most cases shorter and can be taken in at a sitting. But the prose work, novel or autobiography, tends to yield its distinguishing features only over longer stretches of the text. The sheer bulk of prose is thus intimidating. This problem of the choice of passages has been acknowledged by Leech and Short who attribute to it the disjointedness which sometimes occurs in stylistic analysis. This is what they write: 'Because of these difficulties of scale and concentration, it is understandable that the study of prose style has tended to

suffer from "bittiness" .[38]

Many stylistic critics have faced similar problems in their criticism of prose. Leo Spitzer for instance admits to his readers:

> How often, with all the theoretical experience of method accumulated in me over the years, have I stared blankly, quite similar to one of my beginning students, at a page that would not yield its magic. The only way out of this state of unproductivity is to read and reread.[39]

Yet another writer on prose style suggests the copying out of the whole text as a first step to the analysis. In order to solve this problem, stylistic criticism parts company with a purely linguistic analysis. The research comes to Soyinka's prose armed with selected but useful information on his background, beliefs and other predilections. We now match the information against its correlative imagery and devices in the works. When these steps are adhered to in any stylistic analysis, style markers will present themselves with little difficulty.

The method adopted in the selection of passages in this study is based on this theory. Soyinka's mythopoesis, with its components of myth, ritual archetype and sacrifice, water, iron, concrete, creativity, individualism and cosmopolitanism, forms the basis of the choice of passages. Soyinka's stock of imagery and sentence pattern illustrate this tendency.

In the choice of passages in this study, accent is placed on those passages that describe seaside or generally secluded environment, ritual and sacrificial ceremonies, interior

monologue that flow from the author himself, and those that discuss the struggle of which the author is a part. Our choice of passages also includes rhythmic passages; those passages that illustrate the reactionary roles played by characters who, by their grotesque demeanour, dialectically contribute to the struggle; and the way their speeches exemplify their characters. We also highlight the author's Catholic stock of imagery: images as disparate as'bull', 'organ','woodsprites', 'mat', and so on.

Soyinka is essentially a poet and a dramatist. This means that large portions of his prose often resonate with poetry in their rhythm. They are also often dramatized.Such passages are considered stylistically significant to our goal and foregrounded. The work however does not lay claim to having exhausted all the images and other features. It identifies the major ones and leaves others for the subsequent studies which this study hopes to excite.

Notes

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3. See Mackay, p. 39.

4. See John Spencer ed. Language in Africa, p. 30

5. David Brazil, 'The Making of English' in Patrick Hanks ed. Collins Dictionary of English Language (London: Collins, 1985) p. xxiii.

6. Ali Mazrui, The Political Sociology of the English Language, (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1975) pp. 10 - 11.

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15. T. O. McLouglin in Times Literary Supplement cited by Ngara, Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel, (London: Heinemann, 1982) p. 5.

16. See Ngara, p. 5.

17. See Wanjala, Standpoints on African Literature. (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973) pp. 5 - 6.

18. See Ngara, p. 5.

19. Ngara, p. 34.

20. See Ogunbiyi ed Perspectives on Nigerian Literature Vol 2, (Lagos: Guardian Books, 1988) p. 134.

21. Wole Soyinka, 'Massacre, October '66' in Idanre and Other Poems, (London: Methuen, 1967) p. 52.

22. Terry Eagleton, cited by Ngara, Art and Ideology in the African Novel, (London: Heinemann, 1987) p. 4.

23. See Ngara, Art and Ideology in the African Novel, p. 8.

24. H. G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (London: Longman, 1975) p. 5.

25. M.A.K. Halliday, 'Descriptive Linguistics in Literary Studies' in McIntosh and Halliday, Patterns of Language, Papers in General, Descriptive and Applied Linguistics, (London: Longman Group, 1967) p. 67.

26. Nils Enkvist, 'Stylistics and Text Linguistics' in Dressler ed, Current Trends in Text Linguistics (Berlin: Walter de Gonyter, 1978) p. 175.

27. Geoffrey Leech, A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry (London: Longman, 1969) p. 2.

28 Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, Style in Fiction (London and New York: Longman, 1981) p. 11.

29. N. Friedman and C. McLauglin, Logic, Rhetoric and Style, (Boston: Little Brown and Co, 1963) p. 78.

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31. Bernard Bloch,'Linguistic Structure and Linguistic Analysis' in Hill, ed, Report of the Fourth Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Study. (Washington D. C: Georgetown University Press, 1953) pp. 40 - 44.

32. Widdowson, p. 3.

33. Ngara, Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel, p. 12.

34. Harriet Sheridan, Structure and Style (New York: Harcourt Brace &World, 1966) pp. 10 - 11.

35. T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' Four Quartets (London:

Faber and Faber, 1959).

36. Widdowson, p. 3.

37. Niyi Osundare, 'Words of Iron, Sentences of Thunder: Soyinka's Prose Style' in African Literature Today (No 13, 1983) p. 36.

38. Leech and Short, Style in Fiction, p. 3.

39. Leo Spitzer, Linguistics and Literary History (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1948) p. 27.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been written on Soyinka's use of language. Many writers criticize what they perceive to be his linguistic inaccessibility and go on to suggest what the 'proper' attitude to language should be in African creative writing. Others have found the need to defend his linguistic style. Since style consists in measuring the deviation against the norm, it is necessary to examine in detail the various opinions on the language question and then examine to what extent Soyinka's literary and linguistic practices conform to, or deviate from these linguistic 'norms'.

In an answer to a question as to who is an African writer, Giagne replies: 'For me, one is an African writer in so far as he writes in the language spoken by the African masses; that is in Lingala, in Swahili, in Yoruba etc.'[1] This opinion is probably so ideal that is ceases to be true. This is because this definition excludes all African writers at the moment whose genuine contributions have ensured for African literature international recognition and respect. The definition implies that at the moment, there is no African writer, in which case the Soyinkas, Achebes, Armahs and Ngugis are probably not African writers.

However, to the same question of identity of the African writer, Cheik Hamidou Kane has this to say:

> They [African writers] are truly African because they are born in Africa, they live in Africa, their sensitivity is African. Sometimes even their language, the way they write

> is influenced by African cultural tradition, even if they are not writing in their traditional language.2

The point being made is that with the quality of literary works produced by such writers as Wole Soyinka, who writes in English, there is every reason to believe that African literature in English has a bright future. One can hardly speak of a 'dead end' because the language itself engenders competition and thus aids seminal minds. This however, does not mean that the possibility of producing African literature in an African vernacular language is not desirable. It is desirable. Indeed every genuine African prays for a time when the continent would be able to evolve a common language (chosen from Africa) capable of expressing at once the indigenous experiences and the heterogeneous outlook of the African peoples.

Ngugi predicts a bleak future for the English language: 'I think English is only a stop gap; it will not be used always. It is not a language that expresses the people's culture. I see it as a temporary phenomenon that is dying.'[3] But even Ngugi owes his fame to the language. It is highly improbable that Ngugi could have risen to his present literary status if he had started out writing in his native Kikuyu language. In any case, he has not abandoned the English concept of the novel with 'setting', 'plot', 'structure', 'theme' and 'symbolism'. English is not the only language that has produced the accomplished writer, true, but it is equally correct to say that in the present linguistic balance in the world, any writing in an indigenous language of Africa is

courting obscurity, and in its present state of strifes and struggles, Africa cannot afford obscurity. It ought to constantly be in the eyes of the world, and if it takes a language of convenience to achieve this, the better it is for its prospects.

The issue of language in African literature encompasses other issues including what set of criteria ought to be employed in the criticism of it. Language is vehicle for culture. Phanuel Egejuru for instance does not think that criticism of African literature is being done properly at the present because it is criticised from alien perspectives:

> What we have are fragments of critical works hastily pieced together by Western and amateur African critics both of whom base their judgments on Western literary critical standards. Furthermore, they taint their efforts with their patronizing or possessive attitudes. Therefore until some critical criteria are established to guide both writers and the critics, African literature will continue to stagnate, if it does not die completely.4

It is surely taking mere cynicism to an exaggerated extent to disregard the insightful critical commentaries contained in such critical volumes as Soyinka's Myth, Literature and the African World, Achebe's Morning Yet on Creation Day, Ngugi's Homecoming and Nkosi's Tasks and Masks, unless of course they are seen as events which later overtook Egejuru's comments, but the trends even then pointed to a literary and critical turbulence so to speak.

Ngara observes:

> Like Wali, I look forward to the development of African writing in African languages and, in

> particular, to the rise of an African language which can be used by all Africans as the African medium of artistic expression.5

But the question still remains how this can be achieved considering the formidable nature of the problem. The problem is much more complex than some of the idealistic prescriptions allow. Senghor's assessment of the problem is sober and level-headed when he says:

> It is a very big problem, but we cannot create this literature overnight. First of all, we have to transcribe our languages. We have to set up a grammatical structure for our languages. It is a long term project; it is little by little that we shall arrive at creating a literature in Negro-African languages.6

Because of the formidable nature of this problem which Camara Laye sees as a political rather than a literary one, he (Camara Laye) insists that 'foreign languages, which are indispensable as a means of communication with the outside world, must be preserved.' Based on a similar argument, this study believes that English should be preserved and developed to reflect the African experiences.

Adrian Roscoe writes that the problem of the search for a single indigenous language for the whole continent is further compounded by the fact that 'each [vernacular] language has its spokesmen who know, feel, and can prove the superior qualities of their particular vernacular, can point to its flexibility, its richness in proverb, its simplicity for others, texts which have already honoured it, and the speed with which it is spreading among neighbouring groups.' But, as Roscoe says further, this is rather not the

consideration at the moment:

> Power now lies with central governments, and given the sensitive nature of language issues, even in a world of increasing centralisation, only a foolish statesman would dare impose one language on a nation without the clear support of the majority.7

Even with the clear support of the majority, the imposition of a language of the majority on the minority is equal to abandoning one form of colonialism for another. Instead of calling for a complete halt to the use of the English language in African literature, the writers should, like Achebe, see the language as malleable and that in the hands of a skilled writer, it proves itself a capable and convenient tool to capture the essence of African experience.

Achebe observes that it is not necessary or desirable for the African to use the English language like the native speakers. But this opinion ignores the fact that the native speaker does not in all cases possess a hundred percent proficiency in a language. There are many native speakers who intuitively possess a passing knowledge of the language but do not understand fully how it works, that is, its syntax, lexis and so forth. Many grammarians may disagree with this opinion; but Marjorie Boulton, herself a native speaker of English, comments about the comparative abilities of the foreign and native speakers of the English language and says:

> Foreigners often speak English more grammatically than we do, because they have learned it as a foreign language, with rules; the foreigner is usually bewildered, not by grammar, but by idiom, which is unpredictable and completely irregular, The intelligent foreigner who knows some English never says, 'We was' or 'I wented'...8

Many would say that the native speaker always has better competence than the second or foreign speaker although his performance may not always be excellent. Proper education therefore should be the parameter for determining linguistic proficiency and not, as Achebe claims, the native speaker.

Adrian Roscoe again suggests:

> Despite the English language's history in Africa, despite its having been 'transplanted' into African societies, [writers] choosing to use it face a situation in which the ... diction and imagery provided for the home tradition are at odds with the features of their own inner landscapes which have been shaped by an entirely different culture and enviroment.9

But the solution which he goes on to suggest — the creation of a new, Africanised English idiom known as transliteration — begs, as in Achebe's case, more questions than it attempts to answer. For the beauty of the preserved idiom and syntax can only be registered and appreciated by readers who speak the original language from which the transliteration has been made.

Taking Gabriel Okara's The Voice as particularly illustrative of the above point, Wright observes that for the non-Ijaw reader the syntax of the novel is just so much exoticism. This is because he that speaks only the target language, in this case English, judges the success of the novel on the basis of his own understanding of its significance. And if he does not understand, then he would look for the nearest alternative aspect of the novel to criticise. Wright tries, in this statement, to highlight the particular difficulties facing the experimental writers like Soyinka and

Okara if they are 'deliberately drawing on the capacities of not one but two languages and attempting to conflate them realistically'[10] and also of the critic who has to interpret the result from the 'basis of only one language.'

Soyinka has often resisted the attempts to drag him into arguments about the desirability or otherwise of the English language as a medium of African writing. He prefers to approach the language question from a purely universal and mytho-ritual perspective. Here is how he describes language in myth, literature and music:

> Language reverts in religious rites to its pristine existence, eschewing the sterile limits of particularisation... words are taken back to their roots, to their original poetic sources when fusion was total and the movement of words was the very passage of music and dance of images. Language is still the embryo of thought and music where myth is daily companion, for there language is constantly mythopoeic.11

Though not directly linked with the issue of language in African literature, this statement explains the preoccupation of Soyinka as far as the language in his works is concerned. Soyinka believes that whatever language is employed in creative writing, there should be a sense of drama, of esotericism and of poetry around it. But the problem here is that the mythopoeic and dramatic writer risks obfuscating the concrete and urgent tasks of eradicating illiteracy and ignorance if he relies too heavily on conundrums. For then the reader may respond to the chant and music as ends in themselves without detaching any essence from them. But Soyinka is right to view language as

contributing to excitement and drama in literature.

Ngugi's statement that the increased study of African languages 'will inevitably make more Africans want to write in their mother-tongues and thus open new avenues for our creative imagination'[12] loses sight of the obvious fact of readership. Many writers desire an international and varied readership and thus fame.[13] This cannot at the present be achieved by writing in a language whose speakers number just a little over a thousand. At any rate there is evidence of increased study of vernacular languages in Nigeria particularly Yoruba; but there is obviously no corresponding increase in vernacular creative imagination. International readership may not be the sole purpose of literary creativity, but it is the stepping-stone — it is the foundation.

The problem of language in African literature transcends cosmetic solutions so far proffered by the critics of the English language. Language goes deeper than just a means of communication. It is internalised within the individual and firmly entrenched within society. It penetrates the very fabric of society papering over potential cracks. To ask therefore that another language be developed in the place of an established one is, it seems, to pay lip service to the language problem. The task would be forbidding because all documents and books in the established language would now have to be translated into the 'new' lingua franca. And the country would inevitably need the services of a plethora of translators to translate the speech of people, who in the

immediate past did not require the services of translators because they spoke an international language.

On the question of traditional African aesthetics, the Chinweizu group of critics is perhaps the most vociferous. They seem to hold a somewhat fanatically African view of literary art which Nwoga says is a merely polemical stance.[14] For instance, they examine the literary tendencies of a number of writers especially poets such as Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark and Christopher Okigbo and come to the conclusion that these writers write works which are vitiated by the following:

1. old fashioned, craggy and unmusical language
2. obscure and inaccessible diction
3. a plethora of imported imagery
4. a separation and departure from African oral poetic tradition.

The critics find Soyinka particularly guiltier than all the rest. Taking Soyinka's collection of poetry, Idanre, as an example, Chinweizu et al express the following opinion:

> The imagery is imprecise and opaque and lacking in evocative power... The language is a formidable barrier; and even after you have hacked your way through it, you still cannot understand what, if anything, is supposed to be going on.15

As Nwoga states, Chinweizu overstates his case. His is a denial of Soyinka's right to experiment; that is, to stretch the language in order to accommodate complex and mystical concepts. It is really as undesirable to attempt to circumscribe a writer to a singularity of tradition that comprises a tendency to rely only on considerations of 'local colour' as it is to completely ignore the local flora and

fauna in any work of art. The opinion of Chinweizu et al is perhaps too subjective because it is a representation of what Africa and indeed literature mean to them rather than to Soyinka. The validity of their criticism is perhaps called in to question since they attempt to impose on Soyinka their own personal interpretation of African aesthetics.

The language of poetry can be and is often obscure; even in African oral tradition, especially poetry, the cantor speaks in a highly elliptical and esoteric language often accessible to only a small and exclusive coterie of initiates. This much is acknowledged by the Chinweizu critics. Thus the attempt to interpret, the power to interpret the incantations of the oral poet, which were really conundrums, marks out the genius from the uninitiated.

W. B. Yeats in 'The Symbolism of Poetry' observes about obscurity:

> The form of sincere poetry... may indeed be sometimes obscure, or ungrammatical... but it must have the perfections that escape analysis, the subtleties that have a new meaning everyday...[16]

The poet, and indeed other writers, should be free by virtue of their poetic licence to stretch the language, to take liberties with it and to be occasionally inaccessible. The objective would in such a case be to increase the mystery, suspense and excitement that arises in the critic's or reader's attempts at having access to the writer's meaning.

The language should sometimes be 'charged and mythic as words are taken to their roots.' The Chinweizu critical group however serves its purpose; as gadflies of literature and literary practices, African literature is sure to benefit from their ebullient criticisms in spite of their criticisms' often subjective and polemical nature. Again, their criticism is important because it serves to debunk Egejuru's assertion which we have already encountered in this review.

Ngara is of the opinion that marxist criticism has a lot to offer to African literature. Marxist criticism believes that the form of literature is socially conditioned. Ngara eleborates on this:

> Form is the result of historical, social and ideological factors. The novel for instance resulted from a change in ideological orientation. It was the result of the rise of the bourgeois class which challenged the older aristocratic order and held individual material achievements supreme.17

The marxist position seems attractive especially in the African context of poverty and inequality, but its weakness lies in the oversimplification of all questions, including aesthetics and art. It consists of the tendency to always allow sociology to interfere with literature in a rather simple way which does little credit to creativity and originality. This ensures that the primary purpose of art — to satisfy the creative, and perhaps communicative, urge in the writer — is subordinated to extra-textual considerations. Of course this does not mean that sociological issues are entirely irrelevant in African literature. A

work of art is both textual and contextual, but the contextual aspect should only complement, not overshadow the textual aspect. This is a weakness inherent in the marxist's emphasis on sociological issues.

Soyinka's comments about the weaknesses of the marxist approach to criticism are perhaps the most coherent yet. In *something of an epigram*, he uses the language of marxist logic against marxist criticism and maintains that marxist criticism often treats art the way bourgeois capitalists treat labour. Marxist criticism, he says, treats art as simply an economic commodity:

> The work of art is the product of intellectual labour which, without any self-criticism, the critic appropriates to ends other than the ends for which the work is produced and marketed.18

Of the language of the marxist critic, Soyinka writes that in spite of the critic's professed sympathy for the proletariat, his language is not proletarian. 'It is,' Soyinka continues, 'a seminarist language replete with its infinite discursiveness submerging, distorting and finally appropriating the original commodity in its quotational garrulity,'[19]

On the general question of what aesthetics to use in a work of art, Soyinka defends the right of the artist to draw on a universal stock of imagery to embellish his work. He describes this tendency as 'selective eclecticism' and explains that it enables his sensibility as a poet to be enriched and his imagination rewarded. This imagination, he says, is not restricted to considerations of local colour as

Chinweizu would prefer, and that even the African images in his works are not just ordinary images:

> My African world is a little more intricate and embraces precision machinery, oil rigs, hydro-electricity, my typewriter, railway trains (not iron snakes), machine guns, bronze sculpture etc plus an ontological relationship with the universe including the above listed pumpkins and iron bells.20

What Soyinka is saying here is that the provenance of a particular image is immaterial as long as it enhances creativity, for despite the disparate nature of the images named above, they all share the quality of creativity in common. But this kind of poetic licence may result in a situation in which the resulting work becomes quite difficult to situate properly or, is bereft of focus. This is a limitation of 'selective eclecticism'. It is likely to have a somewhat disorienting effect on the reader. Still, one cannot but agree with Soyinka when, as a result of Chinweizu et al's advocacy of a complete return to tradition, he says that 'tradition does not imply raffia skirts or menstrual loin cloths.'[21]

It is perhaps to reaffirm the individual writer's right to create as he deems fit that stylistics is interested in the criticism of literature. At the present however, there is a dearth of critical writings concerning stylistic criticism of African literature. This is hardly surprising since stylistics is a relatively new discipline.

Richard Ohman cautions against too optimistic a view of stylistics and its criticism especially as it relies

rather heavily on intuition. He writes:

> Generative stylisticians never have sketched a model of how sentences are read, and, lacking that model, have described connections between syntax and cognitive processing which treats others as vague or fanciful, a mixture of inspired hunch, intimation, and bald assertion in no way more explicit or insightful than traditionally based analyses. 22

Stylistic criticism when properly handled is more than just intuition, which is nevertheless an important part of it. A stylistic theory based on sound correlation between aesthetic principles and purpose such as the one advocated here does not just restrict itself to sketching a model of how sentences are read. It goes beyond this to take in issues of themes and imagery and so it does seek to be more insightful than the traditionally based analyses.

Some writers writing about style give the impression that there can be a writing without style. Thus the implication is that style is something stuck on a piece of writing like some coating. Roland Barthes implies this when he speaks of 'transparency' and 'writing at degree zero.' According to him, 'a style of absence' is 'almost an ideal absence of style.'[23]

Murry writes in a similar vein when he observes that 'style consists in adding to a given thought all the circumstances calculated to produce the whole effect that the thought ought to produce.'[24] We do not agree completely with these claims because that would mean that style is optional and progressively irrelevant. If we have made up our minds

that something is absent, there will be no purpose served by trying to look for it in the same work; surely the absence of a feature is not an absence of style but a feature of style. It is a style marker itself, even if a minus one. It is perhaps a contradiction to attempt to judge the work we have condemned as lacking in any style.

The problem with Murry's definition is in the word 'adding', even though his definition of style is largely correct. Style does not consist in an addition. It is what is given and how it is given. What is presented is in itself a style, and how it is presented is more so. Calling it an addition is making it secondary to what is presented. Surely in every work of art, every word, every sentence ought to attract to itself some connotation — emotive, moral or ideological — apart from its literal messages.

In a largely prescriptive vein, Wesley says of style:

'Style is the dress of thought; a modest dress
Neat, but not gaudy, will true critics please.' 25

This reads like another attempt at prescribing the ideal style for a writer by restricting him. The terms 'modesty', 'neatness' and 'gaudiness' are likely to mean different things to different writers. A writer who speaks of gaudiness has a specific motion of it and it is possible that that same writer would employ another form of gaudiness while castigating a particular form of it. Style should be descriptive not prescriptive. It is a property of all texts. The question is not really whether the writer is 'modest', 'neat' or 'gaudy'. Rather, the question concerns the purpose

and audience of the work in question. Boulton says: 'Thus when we are seeking to judge a style, though we should ask, "How satisfactory is this grammatically?" we should also ask the more important question, "At what particular emotional or intellectual effect is this aiming, and does it succeed? if so, by what technical means?" Indeed, this question might be said to sum up the whole of literary criticism.'[26] Therefore the question of modesty in style should defer to the question as to what the aim of the style is.

Ben Jonson writes that 'a strict and succinct style is that, where you can take away nothing without loss, and that loss to be manifest.'[27] This is correct because a particular style is immediately disorganized as soon as one of the components that make up that style is removed.

Boulton further buttresses the point about prescriptiveness and descriptiveness as regards style:

> Outside parody and the weakly imitative no two people are likely to hit upon precisely the same method of achieving special effects by special means. An individual style may, however, range from extreme simplicity and directness to the most elaborately decorated style.28

Thus, even if a style is 'gaudy', the fact that it is distinctive and designed to achieve a particular purpose ensures that it pleases 'true critics'.

Discussion of style will inevitably lead us into an analysis of sentence structure and clauses and phrases advocated by Halliday and Muir and called the scale and category rank. Because of itsobvious limitations, our

stylistic theory goes beyond it to embrace nuances, coinages and mythopoesis in a work of art. Though the analyses of Muir and Halliday of the phrases and clauses seem clear cut, it creates a minor problem. First, the predicate phrase for instance may split not directly into words but rather into further phrases of which one will be verb phrase, the other, adverbial, adjectival or noun phrase. An example will suffice: 'The old man will buy a book in the market.' 'Will buy a book in the market' is supposed to be the predicate phrase which, contrary to many grammatical theories, does not consist of words but other phrases: 'will buy' (verbal phrase), 'a book' (noun phrase), 'in the market' (adverbial phrase) and 'the market' (noun phrase). Systemic linguists respond by calling such deviant cases 'rankshifts', but the problem is real because a phrase is supposed to consist of words.

Moreover, we may have a sentence consisting of a clause which consists of one phrase and which is made up of one word and one morpheme; for instance the imperative sentence: 'Run!' To say that the word is both a phrase and a clause creates a problem for the traditional definitions of phrases and clauses as groups of words. This study therefore recognizes this limitation that is likely to arise from a purely systemic linguistic analysis of style to the detriment of the expressive and the symbolic aspects of the text. The research therefore utilizes it only to complement, and make more comprehensive, the meaning and mythopoesis of Soyinka's literature.

Emmanuel Ngara posits that in African literature 'matters of linguistic format are inseparable from the content' and that 'the style of a serious writer cannot be divorced from his ideological concerns.'[29] The first part of the assertion seems simple and straightforward enough in so far as it affirms the role of language as a vehicle for the communication of a writer's thoughts; but the second part is only acceptable to the extent that it only restates the first part. This is because of the connotations which the word 'ideology' has attracted to itself in African literature lately. These connotations include the sympathy for either capitalism on the one hand, or socialism or communism on the other. This interpretation of ideology has tended to interfere with the essence of true art. To accept the presence of ideology in that sense as the only determinant of serious literature is perhaps to legislate away the freedom of, and the right to satisfy the creative urge within the artist.

Though it is desirable sometimes to go out of the text in order to properly situate the work in context, it is nevertheless the text that is and should be the focus. The text is the product the direct experience of which is required for an adequate criticism. This means that analysis of language may sometimes be exclusive of analysis of content. Criticism of language in a work may or may not involve criticism of the story. The success of the language does not depend on whether or not the story is credible. Linguistic

format may then sometimes be separable from content. Now whether that is desirable as a mode of criticism or not is another matter entirely.

Matters of style are not legislatable; they involve the 'fluid operations of the creative spirit' which ought not to be subordinated to other concerns. The relationship between form and content is both mutually inclusive and mutually exclusive, and that between style and extra-textual concerns is expressed by Hasan as follows:

> If a text can be seen as a bridge between the verbal symbolic system and the culture, this is because of the relationship between text and social context: text is 'in language' as well as 'in culture'.30

Put this way, the mutually agreed cohabitation between the text and context is preserved. This promises to be a more adequate perspective from which to view the question of style in African literature in general and Wole Soyinka's prose in particular.

Writing about the language of The Interpreters, Soyinka's first novel, Obi Maduakor observes that it is frequently mystical and charged:

> A mystical aura hangs over language in general in the entire novel, which can be accounted for by the fact that the interpreters and even the narrator himself (the implied author) speak under possession.31

This means that at some point in the novel, the characters, some of them, and indeed the author lose conscious control of some of their utterances. If at some point in a work of art,

a character or even the implied author loses this control, it follows then that the resulting language is not a conscious piece of craftsmanship since craftsmsnship is a conscious endeavour. However we know that the subtle organization and imagery of the novel point to a consciousness of craftsmanship. It is this consciousness of craftsmanship which paradoxically enhances the possessed nature of the language of novel. Maduakor's view however is largely complimentary for it agrees with Soyinka's assessment of language and myth already dealt with in this work.

Eustace Palmer's opinion about The Interpreters differs markedly from Maduakor's as his well known statement concerning Soyinka's linguistic predilection illustrates. He asserts:

> Verbal dexterity and linguistic sophistication almost become ends in themselves. Soyinka rejoices in his power over words but this power is not always related to meaning... The dominant impression left by The Interpreters is one of a tedious formlessness.[32]

This criticism overlooks the plethora of images of creation in the novel and the fact of experimentation that one comes across in that novel. This criticism also seems to ignore the themes of struggle: the struggle to create (Kola's sketches, Sekoni's power station and Joe Golder's singing), and the struggle within the individual to understand and interpret himself and society (the interpreters). All these hold the novel together. To describe it as leaving an impression of 'tedious formlessness' is to lose sight of the

images of bridges, domes and sacrifice which portray transition and continuity.

A similar opinion to Palmer's is expressed by James Olney but Olney's opinion is audience-centred:

> While it might not be quite true to say that [The Interpreters] offers no problem to a Western reader, yet I think it would be accurate to remark that technically and structurally it is more at home among Western than among African novels and would probably puzzle an African reader more than it would a Western reader. It was not for nothing that Joyce's name was frequently invoked by reviewers of The Interpreters.33

Olney refers to the novel's subtle structure; but it possibly cannot be that in traditional African society the story-teller does not vary the sequence of the events in the story. If that were the case, then the audience would be bored with the monotonous chronology. The Interpreters came as a novel that ushered in a decisive break with the literary tendency of being preoccupied with the past whereas the present was left unattended to. With its insightful examination of the present but drawing on its relationship with a relevant, not anachronistic, past, the novel helped to chart the new course of African writing. It is therefore not a merely Western novel.

Bruce King writes hortatively about the same novel. He is of the opinion that the novel is a well-conceived whole despite the appearance of discontinuity which it may give off. According to him:

> Imagery of bridges and domes recurs throughout the book because they represent continuity and wholeness in contrast to apparent fragmentation and chaos. Similarly the narration gives the appearance of chaos but is linked by images, associations, and what is essentially a straightforward time of about two months. The many flashbacks (sometimes memories within memories) give an appearance of discontinuity, build bridges between past and present. 34

Juxtaposed with this opinion, Palmer's opinion is an example of an invalid statement in which a tiresome and exclusive search for a particular meaning has been unsuccessful thereby giving rise to overstatement. Such an approach as Palmer's proceeds from the basis that the writer perhaps writes to satisfy the critic. The inevitable result is that the criticism based on such a premise misses precisely those images and devices that cohere to create Soyinka's corpus of meaning.

Bernth Lindfors attributes Soyinka's love of words to his Yoruba origin.[35] Much of Soyinka's mythopoesis and cosmology have been developed from the Yoruba tradition; Soyinka has acknowledged this himself throughout his critical volume, Myth, Literature and the African World, but to adopt a tribalist approach based on a generalised and an untested hypothesis (All Yorubas love words;all Yoruba writers love words; Soyinka is a Yoruba and a writer, therefore he loves words) about a writer's idiosyncracies is to deny his work objective scrutiny.

Criticisms such as Palmer's and Lindfor's arise as a result of the critical habit of always going outside the text even though the point at issue can be explained adequately within

the text.

Niyi Osundare carries out a stylistic criticism of The Interpreters and Season of Anomy and argues as follows:

> In a rather belletrist vein, Okpewho argues that Soyinka has never pretended that a novel like Season of Anomy is suitable for secondary school children; but we are not told whether the same reasoning explains why university graduates in English find Soyinka's novels virtually impenetrable.36

Soyinka's diction is occasionally inaccessible on account of its riddling quality. It may not be the language of the motor-station or secondary school children. And neither are his works meant to be read casually. A world struggling with disease, illiteracy, exploitation and hunger cannot afford not be alert. It is however an equivocation to cite university graduates in English (especially in Nigeria) as representative of the proper level of linguistic competence which can guarantee adequate appreciation of Soyinka's literature. If Nigerian graduates in English find Soyinka's works unintelligible or impenetrable, then, perhaps, they are intellectually and linguistically wanting.

Emmanuel Ngara, writing about Season of Anomy describes i as 'stylistically difficult' yet goes on to say that it is 'not only a very accomplished novel, it also marks a significant turning point in Soyinka's profession as a writer.'[37] This is contradictory. A work that is 'stylistically difficult' is likely to defy analysis or comprehension, or both. It would therefore not be susceptible to that kind of judgement which is contained in the second part of Ngara's

statement.

Speaking of the same novel, Bruce King points out:

> While Season of Anomy is based on events in post-independence Nigeria, it has similarities to neo-nationalist writing of the period. Westernisation and independence have created a modern state with close links between government and giant industrial interests. The wealth of the rulers is based on exploiting the workers and, through advertising, creating a market for a nutritionally worthless beverage.38

This opinion shows that Soyinka's power over words are often related to meaning contrary to certain opinions. King is right in his observation because many of the repressive and fiendish characters or archetypes in the novel are easily recognizable as characters in the Nigerian post independence drama as will be seen in the study. It is this particular preoccupation with, and an insightful re-evaluation of contemporary events that make Season of Anomy an exceedingly relevant novel. Such opinions as King's show Soyinka as a truly committed artist on the side of justice. But there is perhaps a weakness in this position because the opinion is formed solely on the basis of extra-textual considerations to the exclusion of other aesthetic aspects in the text such as language and so it is inadequate.

Maduakor comments that Ake, the story of Soyinka's childhood, 'cannot be said to possess value to the same degree that Camara Laye's autobiography, The African Child, does.' He expatiates:

> That autobiography is recognized as an archetypal specimen of African childhood as a whole. Laye's

> parents are invested with universal qualities. His mother is the totality of African womanhood in miniature... The initiation ceremonies in Laye's novel [sic] are no longer personal experiences but experiences that must initiate every true African to a state of manhood. Soyinka's Ake does not possess this universal appeal.39

In one breath, Maduakor says that Laye's parents are archetypal Africans and in the same he says they possess universal appeal. There seems to be a contradition here because in the study in question Maduakor goes on to tell us that Soyinka's parents are educated and so not confined to a particular environment, whereas Laye's parents are typically African. Africanism cannot be synonymous with universalism. Soyinka's parents who are more cosmopolitan in outlook should be universal instead. And by extension, Soyinka's Ake, since it is peopled with a more varied stock of characters and heterogeneous imagery, should be more of a universal autobiography than Laye's whose characters are recognizable as typically African.

Again, it could be said that Soyinka and Laye belong to two completely different schools of literary thought; the satirist realist and the romantic negritudinist approaches to African affairs. Laye's autobiography is meant to highlight and eulogize the African past in spite of its (Africa) numerous imperfections, and to lament a 'lost utopia' glossing over its unsavoury aspects. Soyinka's Ake strives to, on the other hand, realistically paint the process of growing up in real Africa with its plethora of cruelties, double standards and interludes of kindness and love. The outlook of the two authors are thus different each from the other.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie criticises what she sees as male chauvinism in Soyinka's portrayal of the Egba Women's movement in Ake as lacking in organizational capacity because it was necessary for Reverend J. J. Ransome-Kuti to frequently prompt them:

> Perhaps the greatest historical disservice Soyinka does the Women's Movement is to portray it as an unplanned, impulsive, gut reaction to contemporary maladministration... One significance of the Soyinka version of the Women's Movement in Abeokuta is the revelation that the roots of his male-chauvinist rendering of society and human endeavours are long and deep.40

Leslie's conclusion is invalid. This is because she herself concedes in the same article that she had spoken with Olikoye Ransome-Kuti, the present Minister of Health, who is a character in Ake, and he had corroborated Soyinka's story. Soyinka's story, it is true, may have been influenced and slightly altered by the intervening period between the events and the actual writing. Perhaps those are what he remembers happended. But it really cannot be said that the impression that narrative leaves of the organization of the Women's Movement is one of a leaderless and impulsive group.

Mrs. Ransome-Kuti, popularly called 'Beere' in the book, on the contrary, comes out in Soyinka's story clearly as strong, dynamic and capable leader of the organisation, whose speeches and wit were unrivalled by even the menfolk of the time. This comes out during the Women's siege of the Alake's palace during which Beere is reported to have squared off verbally with the colonial District Officer and

talked him to the ground. The District Officer had insolently ordered Mrs. Kuti to restrain her colleagues from disturbing the peace and she found this objectionable:

> 'Excuse me, were you talking to me?'
> 'Yes of course I am. *SHUT UP YOUR WOMEN!*'
> In the sudden silence which fell over the shocked women, Mrs. Kuti made the response which flew around Abeokuta for weeks afterwards, as the 'grammar' which hammered the ill-starred District Officer into submission: 'You may have been born, you were not bred. Could you speak to your mother like that?' (p. 211 Ake)

Surely, only an exceedingly courageous — not gutless and impulsive — head of a women's organization would have dared to speak to a white district officer in that manner in English and at that time. The description of the intelligent manner in which the women's grievances were presented when the Alake appeared negates Ogundipe-Leslie's assertion. In contrast to the women, it is indeed the men as represented by the Ogboni, who are utterly disgraced by the women, that are portrayed as confused and impulsive.The charge of male chauvinism therefore cannot stand. Ogundipe-Leslie's and Maduakor's charges against Soyinka's autobiography, Ake, seem to overlook the important point that the autobiography like any other artistic work bears the distinctive imprint of the author since he is the focus of the book. Indeed Olney points out that 'any autobiography is in one sense a psychological and philosophical imitation of the writer's personality.'[41] Thus Soyinka is not expected to shed his personality and take up another's.

Writing about The Man Died, Maduakor says that 'Soyinka was too close to his material to successfully distil the experience into imaginative literature.'[42] As in the case of Ake, Maduakor compares this political autobiography to a similar work, Equiano's Travels, and comes to the conclusion that they 'suffer from the artistic weakness common to works composed in the heat of emotion.' But we know that as an action-oriented political autobiography, any attempt to consciously blunt its style would have resulted in the book's being unable to fulfil its social purpose which was and still is to outrage its readers. The book is one literature that is designed to secure a spontaneous condemnation of certain elements in the power configuration of our society. The tone and style are appropriate and its essence is the heat with which it is conceived.

As Maduakor himself admits later, 'Soyinka feels that he is a lone combatant [which indeed he was] in the fierce struggle for justice, and must return many deadly shots for every bullet fired by the enemy.' Moreover after having been abandoned by other intellectuals, who developed cold feet, Soyinka retreated into an aggressively and essentially individual style. The style is justified by its purpose. The Man Died is designed to shock its reader out of any sense of complacency, by its blunt and unedifying language and imagery. Its style is that of 'brutal realism'.

Olney writes'that to say that The Man Died is a bitter and disillusioned book would be both over-obvious and understated.'[43] Most of this animadversion is true. We are

probably sure of the book's bitterness but not quite sure of the disillusionment. The book cannot be said to be really disillusioned because in it,Soyinka clearly articulates the alternatives to the spiral of injustice, violence, lethargy and brutal savaging of the Nigerian national psyche of the time. Even though his attempts are temporally thwarted, in prison he mentally and physically fights on. The book believes that only the individual can make the society better. The pretensions of power must be constantly exposed. This is the way advocated by Soyinka. The book is perhaps the answer to the disillusionment encountered in The Interpreters.

This research seeks to fill existing literary gaps. It strives to avoid a major pitfall in the criticism of Soyinka's works. Olaniyan describes this pitfall as follows:

> Often, however, the charges of impenetrability are made with an obvious lack of critical rigour and with too much of hearsay. The emerging fresh mind simply falls victim of this uncritical phobia and joins the lengthening queue of the witting and unwitting apostles of 'Soyinka's obscurantism.'44

Many of the literature examined here ignore the purpose for which Soyinka's works are written. Some embark on a tedious search for only meanings which usually ensure that Soyinka's style is frequently unappreciated and depreciated. As a result of this, an abundance of untested generalizations on obscurityin his works replace sound critical methods based primarily on the relationship between the aesthetic qualities of a work and its purpose. Most of the writings are lacking in the sense that they give less than adequate attention to

the text itself, especially to the aesthetic aspects. They instead play up the significance of extra-textual criticism. And when attention is focused on the text as in the case of the linguistic critic, the text is seen as an end in itself. Little attempt is made to selectively situate the work in context. The two extreme positions are incomplete. A mode of criticism is required which selectively harmonizes the literary observations of the linguist with the linguistic intuition of the literary critic in order to avoid the pitfalls of existing modes of criticism.

The research hopes to be adequately rigorous in the criticism of Soyinka's works in order to ultimately arrive at a more robust and a more comprehensive critical stylistic theory of literature.

Notes

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3. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in Towards African Literary Independence, p. 54.

4. Phanuel Egejuru, Towards African Literary Independence, p. 153.

5. Emmanuel Ngara, Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel, (London: Heinemann, 1982) p. 7.

6. Leopold Senghor, in Towards African Literary Independence, p. 34.

7. Adrian Roscoe, Uhuru's Fire (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 2.

8. Marjorie Boulton, The Anatomy of Prose (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) p. 21.

9. Roscoe, Mother is Gold (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971) p. 29.

10. Edgar Wright, 'Critical Procedures and the Evaluation of African Literature' in Wright, ed, The Critical Evaluation of African Literature (London: Heinemann, 1973) p. 16

11. Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (London: Cambridge Press, 1976)p. 147.

12. Ngugi, Homecoming (London: Heinemann Books, 1972) p. 16.

13. See Phanuel Egejuru, Towards African Literary Independence

14. Donatus Nwoga, in African Literature Today, No 10.

15. Chinweizu et al 'Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature' in Transition 48 1975 p. 32.

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17. Ngara, p. 29.

18. Wole Soyinka, The Critic and Society (University of Ife Inaugural Lecture Series 49, 1982) p. 9.

19. Wole Soyinka, The Critic and Society. p. 8.

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22. Richard Ohman in George L. Dillon, Language Processing and the Reading of Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978)

23. Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, trans, A Lavers, and C. Smith (London: Cape, 1967) pp. 82-83.

24. J. M. Murry, The Problem of Style, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) p. 3.

25. See G. Leech and M. Short, Style in Fiction (New York: Longman Group, 1981) p. 18.

26. Boulton, p. 28.

27. See Boulton, p. 125.

28. Boulton, p. 85.

29. Emmanuel Ngara, p. 29.

30. Ruqaiya Hasan, 'Text in the Systemic-Functional Model' in Dressler, ed, Current Trends in Text Linguistics (Berlin: Walter de Gonyter, 1978) p. 229.

31. Obi Maduakor, Wole Soyinka (New York and London: Garland Inc, 1986) p. 100.

32. Eustace Palmer, An Introduction to the African Novel (London: Heinemann, 1972) p. xiv.

33. James Olney, Tell Me Africa (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) p. 291.

34. Bruce King, The New English Literatures (London: Macmillan, 1980) pp. 88-89.

35. Bernth Lindfors, 'Characteristics of Yoruba and Ibo Prose Styles in English' in Folklore in Nigerian Literature, (New York: Africana, 1973) pp. 153-175.

36. Niyi Osundare, 'Words of Iron, Sentences of Thunder: Soyinka's Prose Style' in African Literature Today No 13 (1983) p. 36.

37. Ngara, p. 115.

38. King, p. 96.

39. Maduakor, p. 161.

40. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, 'Review of Wole Soyinka's Ake' in African Literature Today No 14 (1984) pp. 145-146.

41. Olney, p. 52.

42. Maduakor, p. 167.

43. Olney, p. 294.

44. Tejumola Olaniyan, 'Wole Soyinka's Novels' in Ogunbiyi, ed, Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the Present Vol. 2 (Lagos: Guardian Books, 1988) p. 101.

CHAPTER THREE

Fictional Works: The Interpreters and Season of Anomy

3.10 Theme and Vision

The publication of The Interpreters *(1965) and Season of Anomy **(1973) effectively confirmed Soyinka's already burgeoning reputation as a versatile writer. Soyinka thus became something of a colossus astride the three main literary genres — poetry, drama and prose — after having already had to his credit a string of successes with play after play and volume after volume of poetry.

The Interpreters (TI), because of its complex and subtle organization, is described as a modernist novel and the first by a West African writer.[1] It is a novel in which Soyinka employs satire to ridicule characters that are essentially archetypal representations of the various strata of post independence Nigeria. These include the 'snobbish' intelligentsia represented by Sagoe, the journalist; Kola, the artist; Egbo, the fiery aristocrat; Sekoni, engineer; Bandele, Dr. Ayo Faseyi and Prof. Oguazor, university lecturers. These characters seek to identify and interpret their existence and their society but end up really interpreting nothing.

Soyinka also satirizes the common people like the Lagos crowd which dissipates enormous energy pursuing, with the intent to lynch, a petty thief when there are countless white-collar rogues left untouched. The clergy — the religious sector — also comes under fire. Clerics such as

* Published by Fontana Paperback, London 1986
** Published by Rex Collings London, 1973. All page references are to these editions.

Lazarus and Noah, and indeed their cohorts are portrayed as being unable to discriminate between genuine spiritualism and materialism, and between fact and fiction.

The ruling elite, made up of such corrupt corporation board members and judges as Chief Winsala and Sir Derinola are portrayed as grotesque buffoons without the least ideas on how to change society for the better. Unlike the interpreters, who are fully aware of the causes of the general social malaise but can do nothing about it because they alienate themselves from society and are as a result more guilty, the ruling elite -- Chief Winsala, Sir Derinola — and some of the intelligentsia — Prof. Oguazor and Dr. Faseyi — are unaware of, and want no better world.

Paradoxically therefore, the interpreters are more guilty because they allow initial setbacks to dampen their enthusiasm; whereas the likes of Winsala and Derinola, who know nothing of the decay to which they contribute, are seen as social embarrassments. The Interpreters is an exercise in cynicism for each of the interpreters' attempts at social advancement is frustrated at every turn by the powers that be and by bureaucracy. For instance the genial and stammering Sekoni, a qualified engineer, complains of underutilization of his talents and skills in an office where he signs vouchers and bicycle allowances and draws up leave rosters. This is the reaction he gets to his complaints:

> 'You realize, Mr. Sekoni, that you are out of order.'
> 'I realize, Mmmmmister Ch-chairman, that I c-c-annot continue to be signing vouchers and lletters and b-b-bicycle allowances.'

> 'Is he mad?'
> 'Omo tani?'
> 'Why do we employ these too-knows?'
> 'No, no, no' and the chairman soothed them. 'He obviously needs a transfer. He's one of the keen ones.' (p.26)

And so Sekoni is transferred to Ijioha, an out-of-the-way station, in order to dampen his enthusiasm, but he builds a small experimental power station. Rather than fund such a creative venture and encourage Sekoni's commitment, the chairman employs the services of an expatriate whose term of reference is solely to declare it 'unsafe for operation' (p.26) and thus deprive the community of a most useful facility.

In a parallel situation, Sagoe attempts to find employment with the Independent Viewpoint, a newspaper house. During the interview, he suddenly changes his mind about wanting the employment. His decision stems from the general miasma of the filth-ridden environment. However, the board members, rather insensitively, attempt to cajole bribes out of him. Chief Winsala, accompanied by the retired judge, Sir Derinola, tracks him down to his hotel residence. Whilst there, he demands for a bribe in return for an employment which Sagoe, unknown to them, no longer wants.

Sagoe's disillusionment has the effect of making him retire instead into vapid and frivolous utterances and pastimes such as his ubiquitous philosophy of voidancy — an elevation to centre-stage of the banal concept of emptying the bowels of their waste matter.

The moral depravity of the Prof. Oguazors and the

social pretensions of the Dr. Faseyis of this world (he is upset because his expatriate wife, Monica, in our opinion the only admirable character in the novel, insists on being herself by refusing to don gloves to a party in Nigeria) are portrayed by Soyinka in a modernist impressionistic manner. This is seen in the frequent withholding of information particularly where the supply of such would oversimplify and weaken the literary quality of the novel. Leech and Short have, in their book, Style in Fiction, defended this right to withhold information:

> When a writer creates a fiction, he has to make decisions on such matters as how much information to give, what kind of information to give, and in what order to present the information... On the one hand he might omit information in order to leave to the reader the task of guessing, inferring, or imagining... on the other hand, he might include circumstantial information on the natural environment, the behaviour of the onlookers, the dress of the principal characters.2

Marjorie Boulton writes in a similar vein when she says:

> The first and most necessary and unbreakable convention of every art is that the artist chooses those aspects of the subject he wishes to treat in detail, ignores or almost ignores everything else, and suits the details of the treatment to the chosen matters.3

There is therefore a sense in which the withholding of information is not only a virtue but the very hallmark of accomplishment.

The narrative structure of the novel is not linear. A select number of incidents involving the major characters are highlighted in no particular order. This results, with the aid of flashbacks, in a constant shuttling back and forth as

the story shifts focus ' arbitrarily from the present preoccupations of the major characters to their past, back to the present and to the future.'[4] The narrative structure closely resembles the way we come to appreciate the lives of the characters. The reader finishes the novel and then comes with the benefit of hindsight to understand better a hitherto unclear past detail about a particular character.

The language and structure of The Interpreters irk some critics who see them as another instance of Soyinka's self-glorification in his word power. Eustace Palmer for instance observes:

> Verbal dexterity and linguistic sophistication almost becomes end in themselves. Soyinka rejoices in his power over words but this power is not always related to meaning... Then there is the problem of the novel's structure. It is surely extravagant praise to describe The Interpreters as 'a well conceived whole'... The dominant impression left by The Interpreters is one of a tedious formlessness.[5]

Such criticism tends to ignore the fine points of style, the variations of which are the legitimate bedrock of stylistic idiosyncracy. There is, of course, the fact that Soyinka is essentially a poet and so there is a carry over of his poetic sensibilities into his prose works. Maduakor suggests that 'where Soyinka has over indulged his power over words, it is with the deliberate intention of achieving a poetic resonance or seeking to express in words a mystical and sometimes surrealistic experience which is difficult to articulate.' He goes on to say:

> The charge of 'formlessness' recalls the early unfavourable reactions to Joyce's experiments.

> In the case of The Interpreters such critics ignore the network of criss-crossing themes, allusions and images that hold the work together.6

Indeed the whole of the novel is held together as we have already observed by the theme of the struggle to create or make better. This is exemplified in Kola's paintings and Sekoni's would be seminal power station.

A different vein of criticism against Soyinka which relates to The Interpreters is what critics see as the author's lack of vision and commitment. Ngugi for instance is of the view that Soyinka's characters usually founder when confronted with challenges and so lack the ability to accomplish something. They are, he says, crippled by inertia and are unable to precipitate redemptive social action:

> Although Soyinka exposes his society in breadth, the picture he draws is static, for he fails to see the present in the historical perspective of conflict and struggle. It is not enough for the African artist, standing aloof, to view society and highlight its weakness. He must try to go beyond this, to seek out the sources, the causes and the trends of a revolutionary struggle which has already destroyed the traditional power-map drawn up by the colonialist nations.7

Ngugi's is an example of the criticisms against what is perceived as the absence of ideological and revolutionary ideals in Soyinka's works by Marxist intellectuals. Soyinka's reply is that he prefers social vision to ideology which he claims inhibits and imposes upon the free operations of the creative spirit. Works of literature, he says, are 'essentially fluid operations of the creative mind upon social and

natural phenomena.'[8]

It was perhaps to further concretize this answer and to reinforce his interpretation of social vision that Soyinka came out with his second novel, Season of Anomy (SOA). The novel marks a significant turning point in Soyinka's career as a writer and a social critic. It has been described as an explicitly Marxist novel. Of Marxism and literature, Ernst Fischer says:

> Socialist art and literature as whole imply the artist's or writer's fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world.9

In Season of Anomy, Soyinka identifies with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world of Aiyero. Like The Interpreters, Season of Anomy treats the dialectics of crisis, social change and the method of bringing these about. It is an expression of the 'affirmative humane response' to chaos and blind social forces. The blurb describes the society in Season of Anomy as having become 'far grimmer' than that in the first novel; only the word 'anomy' in all its arcaneness can match the ruthlessness of the social order as portrayed in the novel.

Soyinka utilizes allegory in this novel. The particular gory events that attended what Northern Nigerians saw as the selective killings of the January, 1966 coup d'etat are expanded and employed to make symbolic statements. That is, that the result or penalty of the failure to initiate positive counter action in the face of hooliganism and

lawlessness is the annihilation of the collective psyche and morality of a people. It is necessary to refer to The Man Died, Soyinka's prison autobiography, for a clearer understanding of SOA. This is because the inspiration to write the novel obviously came from the events recounted in the prison notes.

As a result of the heavy northern casualty figure in that coup, the enraged northerners retaliated by carrying out a well planned genocide against the Ibos whom they perceived as the architects of the killings. Soyinka condemned the genocide and undertook a tour of the North to assess for himself the extent of the carnage, and the possibility of organizing a 'Third Force' to counter the forces of anarchy and disintegration. He was arrested and detained for this and other war-time activities.[10]

In Season of Anomy, the socialist ideals of Aiyero, a forgotten commune, is pitted against the corrupt and exploitative tendencies of the Cartel -- a conglomerate of numerous fronting companies the most notorious being the Cocoa Corporation. The Cartel is propped up by three powerful figures. They are Chief Batoki (probably Akintola), Chief Biga (probably Chief Okpala) and the all-powerful Zaki Amuri (Sardauna?) of Cross-river. This triumvirate is backed up by the gun, the Commandant-in-Chief (Ironsi?). Under their tyrannous rule, the workers who generate all the income are denied the benefits accruing from their toil. They are given

cocoa-flavoured sawdust in place of cocoa. Those who dare to question this and other unwholesome practices are branded agitators and eliminated.

Ofeyi, the Cocoa Corporation's promotions man, visits Aiyero and is inspired by its honest, if exotic, socialist ideals. He conceives of a scheme to permeate the whole country with Aiyero's example. The principles behind the scheme are summed up thus:

> The goals were clear enough, the dream a new concept of labouring hands across artificial frontiers, the concrete, affective presence of Aiyero throughout the land, undermining the Cartel's superstructure of robbery, indignities and murder, ending the new phase of slavery.(p.27)

In addition to creating for the Cartel a renewed awareness in the people for cocoa and its products, Ofeyi now creates, through his satirical and derisive slogans and songs, a far more dangerous kind of awareness in the exploited masses. They now rise up against their oppressors — the Cartel quads.

The Cartel in turn is incensed into brutish action in which whole families and communities are maimed or slaughtered. Ofeyi, the social reformer and philosopher, and Demakin (the Dentist) an advocate of violence against the Cartel undertake a tour of what may be seen as a modern day Wasteland to see for themselves the extent of the pogrom.

Here Soyinka examines the dialectics of two methods of change. The one peaceful but inadequate; and other violent but also inadequate. He concludes that they complement each

other:

> Just the same, the sowing of any idea these days can no longer take place without accepting the need to protect the young seedling, even by violent means. (p.23)

In a moving dialogue between Ofeyi and the Dentist, the latter confesses his lack of vision beyond the violence he intends to initiate against the members of the Cartel:

> '...But we must also set up a pattern of killing, the more difficult one. Select the real kingpins and eliminate them ...'
> 'And afterwards,' Ofeyi demanded. 'What do you envisage?'
> 'Envisage?' His tone rose in protest. 'Why do you want me to envisage anything? Is that my field? I thought it was yours.'
> 'Surely, when you — eliminate, you have in mind something to follow, something to replace what you eliminate. Otherwise your action is negative and futile,'
> The Dentist sighed. 'Why do you people, you intellectuals or whatever you call yourselves impose on us burdens to which we lay no claim. I am trained in the art of killing. I utilize this acquisition on behalf of my society ... Don't ask me what I envisage. Beyond the elimination of men I know to be destructively evil, 1 envisage nothing. What happens after is up to people like you.' (pp.111-112)

This conversation perhaps explains Soyinka's position on the sometimes blind and impracticable revolutionary rhetoric of some marxists who are content to mouth a few half-digested radical rhetoric when in actual fact they are bereft of any ideas on how to bring about sanity after the successful overthrow of the bourgeoisie. There are however some who

prefer the Dentists of this world to the Ofeyis. Olaniyan implies this when he says: 'What we are trying to bring out is that in the inevitable new society of the future, only Demakin and his likes are worthy of being leaders, of being the Custodians of the Grain.'[11]

Ofeyi's idea eventually merges with that of the Dentist, and together at the end of the novel, they storm Temoko prison, where Ofeyi's girl, Iriyise, is held by the Cartel, freeing her and other captives. The search for Iriyise, which terminates in Temoko recalls the classical myth of a similar search and struggle by Orpheus for his dead wife, Eurydice, in Hades. The similarity in the names: Ofeyi (Orpheus), Iriyise (Eurydice) and Suberu (Cerberus) is deliberate. It is intended to remind the reader of the creativity and struggle that form the basis of this search as in that one. Iriyise is not just a woman in the novel but a revolutionary, and this concept is couched in a powerful statement in the novel:

> But we must acknowledge the fact — pimps, whores, thieves, and a thousand other felons are the familiar vanguard of the army of change. When the moment arrives a woman like Iriyise bec omes for them a Chantal, a Deborah, torch and standard-bearer, super mistress of universal insurgence. To abandon such a potential weapon in any struggle is to admit to a lack of foresight. Or imagination. (p. 219)

Season of Anomy is an accomplished treatment of allegory as a sustained metaphor, for as Leech and Short say, 'only in allegory does a fiction have a consistently symbolic character.'[12] Unlike The Interpreters, Season of Anomy evinces a more articulate and definitive vision, and according to

Olaniyan, the attitudes of the characters to life are more matured than those in The Interpreters.[13]

3.20 Prose Texture

Soyinka's prose does sometimes give the impression of 'impenetrability'. It is a mirror of his vast vocabulary and a compulsion for the arcane and the very rare. Olaniyan sees this as resulting in a situation whereby 'the reader shuttles interminably between the text and the dictionary, with its accompanying loss of concentration'[14]

Admittedly Soyinka's prose sometimes presents problems to the average and unassuming reader. These problems arise in the main from the author's desire to establish, as it were, the shortest possible cut through grammar to meaning. In the process, he repairs to his cornucopia of condensed, private or esoteric imagery and fleshes out a panoply — 'conundrum'is really the word — of highly elliptical lexico-syntactic units.

However, clear understanding of the novels' extensive but compressed imagery and diction can be achieved by an understanding of the author's vision. Biodun Jeyifo rightly sums this up as follows:

> The idiosyncratic and often solitary expression of Soyinka's sociopolitical commitment find something of an analogue in the assertive aesthetic individualism of both his conception of the function of literature in African society at the present time and the actual paradigms of commitment discoverable in the protagonists of his major works in the quintessentially Soyinkan imaginative universe in which they are made to act.15

This simply means that the major characters (heroes) in Soyinka's works usually reflect Soyinka's stylistic and

thematic tendencies. Jeyifo also goes on to suggest that the chief sources of 'confusion' are the 'pantheon of gods, deities, and supernatural beings and archetypal characters who people his work in recurring fashion coupled with the elaborate internal often hermetic language which yields a seemingly inexhaustible panoply of poetic symbols and conceptions.'[16]

3.20.1 Lexical Features

Both The Interpreters (TI) and Season of Anomy (SOA) contain admixtures of simple and complex, formal and colloquial, and descriptive and associative words. This means that the novels cannot be neatly compartmentalized into the terrain of 'difficulty' and 'obscurity'. It is therefore necessary to specify portion by portion and in a systematic way the exact nature of the difficulty. Let us consider two descriptive passages which deal with a similar theme from both novels:

[1.1] Mud-dark stilts, and above them, whites and greys on smooth walls, and over these a hundred nests of thatch roofing. Dry-docked canoes in bright contrasts beneath plank flooring, relics of the days when fishes over whom hunting rights were fought fed on the disputants. (TI p.8)

[1.2] Camwood vistas and chalk. Walls in bark-gritty daubings of camwood, chalked doors and doorsteps, wide swathes of chalk below the camwood against beaten clayey earth. Rushes of red barley in the fences, chalk belts on massive tree trunks, posts, bamboo piers and the store houses of the water front. The lagoon dissolved its daily tribute of

camwood. (SOA p.8)

The two passages bring out the poet in Soyinka. They however manifest a minimal occurrence of complex words if, as suggested by Leech and Short, word complexity should be measured by counting the morphemes, or syllables (in the case of words of foreign or classical origin such as 'signification' where determining the number of morphemes can be a problem).[17] However this suggestion is problematic in that certain words such as 'shokolokogbangoshay', even though made up of one morpheme, are complex.

The two texts describe seaside surroundings with a medley of compound and simple words, the succession of which creates a poetic resonance. In [1.1], Egbo, together with his friends, undertakes a pilgrimmage to a spot by the river where his parents were supposed to have drowned. And in [1.2], the author describes a scene near the lagoon where the dead Custodian of the Grain lies in state.

These two passages illustrate an element in Soyinka's mythopoeic trinity — water, death and ritual sacrifice. Such words and phrases as 'mud-dark stilts', 'dry-docked canoes', 'hard shadows','camwood vistas', 'bark-gritty daubings','beaten clayey earth', 'chalk belts' and 'bamboo piers' enhance the poetry of the passages. They bestow a certain ethereal and chthonic colouring to the scenes. The point being made here is that their special resonance of poetry contributes to the distinctively urbane and

idiosyncratic nature of Soyinka's prose.

Sacrificial and ceremonial objects are cited just before the passage from SOA: 'red chieftain caps', 'flaunting cockatoo feathers', 'coral riches', 'ivory bangles', 'iron emblems', 'wooden gongs', 'fired clay throats', 'hide timbre' and 'metalic percussions'. These objects intensify the image of sacrifice. Soyinka purposely individuates the words and phrases in order to call attention to their indispensability in ritual, rather than subordinate them to sentences.

In both texts, there are mainly bound morphemes of plurality [-s]: 'stilt(s)', 'white(s)', 'grey(s)', 'wall(s)', 'nest(s)', 'canoe(s)', 'contrast(s)', 'relic(s)', 'day(s)', 'fish(es)', 'right(s)' and 'disputant(s)' (TI); 'vista(s)', 'wall(s)', 'daubing(s)', 'door(s)', 'doorstep(s)', 'swathe(s)', 'rush(es)', 'fence(s)', 'belt(s)', 'trunk(s)', 'post(s)', 'pier(s)', 'store house(s)' (SOA); and gerundive morphemes [-ing]: 'roof(ing)', 'floor(ing)' and 'hunt(ing)' (TI); 'flaunt(ing)' and 'ly(ing)' (SOA). There is also participial (verb/adjective) morphemes [-ed/-en]: 'dock(ed)' (TI); 'fire(d)', 'chalk(ed)' and 'beat(en)' (SOA). These are bound morphemes because they do not constitute meaningful words on their own. They are stylistically significant on the phonological level where the sibilant phoneme /s/ becomes unusually prominent if read aloud, and they also attest to the short and crispy nature of the words.

There are two hyphenated compound elements functioning mostly as modifiers in both texts:

'Mud-dark' (noun-headed adjectival compound)

'Dry-docked' (adjective-headed participial compound)
(TI)

'Fired-clay' (participial-headed adjectival compound)

'Bark-gritty' (noun-headed adjectival compound)
(SOA)

The visual images created by Soyinka here are important. The reader can imagine easily the wet environments described. His eyes rove up and down with the descriptive phrases — up and down the stilts, daubings of camwood, clayey earth, walls and thatch roofings. These are natural seaside and ritual collocations though there are some not so natural seaside collocations such as 'nests' and 'hunting rights' which belong to the domain of terrestrial, rather than marine activity.

The phrase,'camwood vistas and chalk,' is significant. Soyinka means by it ritual drawings, markings and paintings on the walls and trees of the scenery; but why does he use the word 'vistas'? The word means a comprehensive mental view of a distant time or a lengthy series of events or a view of a long narrow avenue of trees, buildings and so on. Camwood itself is a type of dye extracted from a leguminous tree. Soyinka could have said: 'Camwood and chalk markings'. The reason that he does not is that he seeks to de-emphasize the substantive nature of the descriptions by placing the impressions firmly in Ofeyi's perspective. It is therefore

really Ofeyi's vista of camwood and chalk, an expression that is potentially longer had it been so phrased. In the scene in [1.1], the perspective is equally that of Egbo.

The lexical features of the two texts can be summarised as follows:

— complex vocabulary
\+ riverside and ritual register
\+ descriptive visual mode
— idioms and figures of speech

The above summary of stylistic features debunk the generalised charges of complexity.

For the casual reader — mental alertness is crucial to the appreciation of Soyinka's works — the passage where Soyinka describes the love-making between Egbo and Simi in The Interpreters may appear virtually impenetrable:

> [1.3]... And a lone pod strode the baobab on the tapering thigh, leaf-shorn, and high mists swirl him, hazesplitting storms, but the stalk stayed him... ... parting low mists in a dark canoe [sic]... in darkness let me lie, in darkness cry... (p.59,TI)

The closest coital collocation in this passage is the lexical item 'thigh'. The text is replete with the imagery of sowing and germination, and it is generally impressionistic. The desire to avoid prurience, which is what an unnecessarily graphic representation would have amounted to, is the overriding concern here. Comprehension, for the reader who is not alert, may be slowed down.

Let us compare this passage to its counterpart in Season of Anomy in which the author describes the love-making between

Ofeyi and Iriyise just before her departure for the Cross-river promotions tour:

> [1.4] He pressed her backwards onto the bed by the wrists and pressed her down with his weight. Even as his body touched her he felt her vibrant skin expectant... Malaria, fever and sweat he took her. Their mingled sweat soaked the sheets and she clawed as he sank into her. Then she lay quiet. (p.69,SOA)

Here in text [1.4], there are a few copulative collocations and metaphors -- 'expectant', 'took her','sank into her' -- and it is lacking in that poetic resonance of which text [1.3] is redolent. This is because in Season of Anomy, unlike in the first novel, there is an urgency to the tasks of creating, dialectically, an awareness in the masses for cocoa products, and the source of their (the masses) oppression. The two lovers are also a moving force in these tasks.

Passage [1.3] is steeped in metaphors. The 'lone pod' refers to Egbo's penis as it covers and thrusts (strode) the baobab (Simi's trunk/vagina). Simi's nakedness is described as 'leafshorn'. Egbo's extremely pleasurable sensations are described as 'highmists' swirling (engulfing) him, also 'haze-splitting storms' refers to the same sensations. The stalk (Simi's vagina) stayed (delayed, controlled) him. Simi's vagina is also described as a 'dark cave'. These metaphors achieve two aims. First is, as we have already said, to avoid prurience. Second, is to show how closely related the act of the love-making is to sowing. Sowing seeds, be it revolutionary or literal seeds, is a constant

theme in Soyinka's works.

The strong suggestions of seminalism are wrought with the lexical items 'pod', 'baobab', 'leaf' which illustrate Soyinka's concern for regeneration and vegetation. The statement, 'Malaria, fever and sweat he took her' is significantly compressed in the Soyinkan style. The author means that Ofeyi makes love to Iriyise despite the malaria, fever and perspiration she experiences; but the absence of a comma between 'sweat' and 'he' has rendered the statement ambiguous — who has the malaria, Iriyise or Ofeyi? We know that it is Iriyise because one of the members of the promotions orchestra had mentioned in passing that she was ill.

In text [1.3] there are two neologisms involving hyphenated compound words:

leaf-shorn, haze-splitting } noun-headed participial compound

Soyinka, the irrepressible wordsmith is assaulted on all sides by ideas whose intensity can only be arrested by his penchant for reductionism. Both passages can be summarised as follows:

Passage [1.3]	Passage [1.4]
+ complex vocabulary	— complex vocabulary
— coital register	+ coital register
+ impressionism	— impressionism
+ sowing register	

Sometimes the prose is a potpourri of light-hearted and fast moving narrative and dialogue:

[1.5] And to Ijioha Sekoni went, 'where you may work with your hands until your back blisters' and Sekoni built a small experimental power station. And the chairman chuckled and said, 'I knew he was our man. Get me the expat expert.' Hot from his last lucrative 'evaluation' came the expatriate expert. Expatriate, therefore impartial.

Consitute yourself into a one-man commission of enquiry and probe the construction of our power station at Ijioha...

'Is it unsafe for operation?' and he winked, a truly expert expat, expert's wink.

'That's the safest idea. You put it in technical language.' (p.26,TI)

[1.6] The chairman shut his eyes and crossed his hands over his paunch. The secretary complemented this gesture of long suffering by raising an eyebrow and slackening his own mouth. He had been worsted in the preliminary skirmishes — the Trouble-shooter had come into the boardroom on his own to view the arrangements and insisted on the Chairman's personal chair for himself, and right at the centre of the mahogany table — 'where I can look this dangerous character in the eye.' The Secretary had stammered that this was the Chairman's private chair. And place. Only to encounter the cool stare of the functionaire. 'I am not here as an observer but to conduct a serious enquiry.'(p.51,SOA)

In [1.5] Sekoni is deployed to Ijioha because he has complained of underutilization of his talents in the office. The transfer is designed to dampen his enthusiasm. In [1.6], the Cartel has sent its Trouble-shooter to conduct an enquiry into the allegations of subversive activities on the part of Ofeyi. The special features of the passages consist of the

absence of direct speech cuing devices — credit tag — Osundare calls it 'illocutionary narrative cue', 'he said', or its equivalents. This results in a style in which the direct speeches of the participants are firmly integrated into the narrative: 'And to Ijioha Sekoni went' is swiftly followed by the reason (in the very words of the Chairman) for this transfer: 'where you may work with your hands until your bark blisters.'

And in Season of Anomy, the Trouble-shooter has usurped the chairman's seat and this is followed immediately by the reason in his words: 'where I can look this dangerous character in the eye.' But Soyinka does not link this speech with the speaker in the conventional way. Save for the quotation marks enclosing it, the statement could well be regarded as part of the narrative. The second reason for the Trouble-shooter's action is rendered in like manner: 'I am not here as an observer but to conduct a serious enquiry'; so that we are left to figure out, with the aid of the quotation marks and the change in point of view from third person to first person nominative pronoun, 'I', that the statement must be the reaction to the Secretary's remonstrance.

The jocularity lies in Soyinka's homophonic assonance: 'Expat expert, expatriate expert, expatriate therefore impartial'. This obviously refers to the prevailing practice of employing expatriates even when indigenous experts could be found, ostensibly for their impartiality.

The capitalization of the generic common nouns which

designate the characters' offices in Season of Anomy is also stylistically significant. Examples are:

Trouble-shooter:	The person mandated by the Cartel to smooth out troubles and settle disputes.
Co-ordinator:	Ofeyi, charged by the Cartel with the responsibility of co-ordinating an awareness campaign for cocoa and its products.
Chairman:	The head of the Cocoa Corporation, one of the numerous fronts for the Cartel's ubiquitous illegal activities.
Cartel:	The conglomerate of political and economic exploiters whose interests are threatened by the resurgence of awareness in the erstwhile docile populace.
Secretary:	The man who takes the minutes of the board meetings of the Corporation and sees to the seating arrangements but now rendered redundant by the prepossessing Trouble-shooter.

The capitalization of these common names is in consonance with the allegorical technique. The functionaries are to be seen as archetypes of the main actors in any dialectics of struggle and social change. They are representative of all other overzealous trouble-shooters, revolutionary co-ordinators impotent chairmen, ruthless and oppressive cartels and complaisant secretaries the world over.

Soyinka creates sarcastic puns in both texts. This involves the play on the word 'safe' in 'Is it unsafe for operation?' and 'that's the safest idea' (TI). This is also

found in the word 'order' before the Trouble-shooter begins the enquiry in text [1.6]: 'The meeting was called to order... "If only it were as easy to call our Co-ordinator to order, ha ha?"'

The dominant imageries in both novels are those of germination, creativity, search and struggle. This is seen in the sketches of Kola, the technological breakthrough of Sekoni, the similarity between the names of the characters in SOA and those in the cassical myth of Orpheus' search and also in the novel's chapter headings. The images of sowing are:

> ... Just the same, the sowing of any idea these days can no longer take place without... (p.23,SOA)
>
> You speak of sowing a new idea. But surely you have also heard the saying -- sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind...
> The storm was sown by the Cartel. (p.24,SOA)
>
> And Batoki sowed a forest of bayonets... (p.139,SOA)

The theme of germination is perhaps most explicit in the love-making between Egbo and Simi in The Interpreters, which has already been discussed. It is also evident in the chapter divisions and titles in Season of Anomy. The first chapter discusses how the scheme to create an awareness in the people is formed in Ofeyi's mind and how dialectically, Ofeyi is also the instrument by which new exploitative schemes are developed by the Cartel (selling cocoa-flavoured sawdust to them). It is titled'Seminal'.

In chapter two, 'Buds', Ofeyi's activities begin to cause the Cartel increasing disquiet. The Cartel arranges an

enquiry; Ofeyi escapes after having defended the interests of the workers. He comes across a poster he had earlier made which read: WAKE UP WITH THE COCOA COMPLEXION, and deletes the last four words leaving in its place a subversive message: WAKE UP. The confrontation between the forces of oppression and exploitation on the one hand, and the forces of freedom and justice on the other is growing — it is 'budding'.

The next chapter, 'Tentacles', relates how the idea begins to have offshoots as the men of Aiyero now spread it to different parts of the country particularly Cross-river. The Cartel has now identified its tormentors and has now mapped out a plan of retaliation — mass extermination of all 'aliens' in Cross-river. Zaki Amuri declares: 'I want a clean sweep of Cross-river.'

'Harvest', the fourth chapter examines the results of these antithetical actions. The carnage organized by the Cartel is now in full swing. The Shage Dam, symbol of 'new affinities, working class kinships as opposed to the tribal,' is destroyed (p.170). Iriyise is captured by Amuri's men. Sunday worshippers are massacred in a church. The growing lawlessness leads Ofeyi into a prolonged search not only for his captive mistress but also for a meaning to the whole madness.

In freeing the captives at the end of the novel, both Ofeyi and the Dentist have become 'Spores' (the title of the last chapter). 'Each seed,' according to Ngara, 'has developed to bear fruit, a single cell that has the capacity to grow and multiply.'[18]

Soyinka's predilection for impressionistic poeticisms rather than graphic description comes out in two more passages in both novels:

[1.7] The rains of May become in July slit arteries of the sacrificial bull, a million bleeding punctures of the sky-bull hidden in convulsive cloud humps, black, overfed for this one event, nourished on horizon tops of endless choice grazing, distant beyond giraffe reach. Some competition there is below, as bridges yield right of way to lorries packed to the running board, and the wet tar spins mirages of unspeed-limits to heroic cars and their cargoes find a haven below the precipice. The blood of earth-dwellers mingles with blanched streams of the mocking bull, and flows into currents eternally below earth. The Dome cracked above Sekoni's short-sighted head one messy night. Too late he saw the insanity of a lorry parked right in his path, a swerve turned into a skid and cruel arabesque of tyres. A futile heap of metal, and Sekoni's body lay surprised across the open door, showers of laminated glass around him, his beard one fastness of blood and wet earth.

(p.155,TI)

[1.8] The guilds approached, danced, retreated, leaving sinuous waves between the corpse and fourteen noble bulls penned above the alcove ... They were proud-horned, rich-humped, their brilliant ivory torsos rippled in the sun. Among them leapt the acrobats, in violent cart-wheels, the female stilt-dancers bestrode them writhing suggestively above the humps, stooping low till their raffia skirts just covered the humps, only to twist away and leap over the herd looking back with mock rebuke at the large watery eyes. The swirl of loincloths daubed ochre, chalk and indigo turned the pen fluid, as if the enclosure were one vast churn of milk ... Ahime moved with feline balance, his hand poured back the

> drapes ... His knife-hand moved once, slashed deep and drew across the throat ... Suddenly the white afternoon was showered in a crimson fountain, rising higher and higher, pumping ever upwards to a sun-scorched sky.
> (pp. 14-16, SOA)

What Soyinka is saying in [1.7] is that Sekoni died in an accident because he did not see in time a lorry parked in his path. His death is a sacrifice. In text [1.8] we are presented with the scene of sacrifice during the funeral ceremony of the late Custodian of the Grain performed by Ahime.

In text [1.7] the theme of sacrifice is represented by the rain, the bull and Sekoni's death. The similarity existing among the 'slit arteries', 'bleeding punctures' of the bull (during the ritual), the rain and Sekoni's blood, which all fall to earth, is exploited by Soyinka. The bull is 'black and overfed' for the ritual; the pregnant black clouds preceding the rains recall the image of the hump of an overfed bull. Both the water from the rain and the blood from the sacrificial bull all fall to earth and engender regeneration — a crucial objective of the ritual.

In text [1.8] the sacrificial noble bulls are described as 'proud-horned' and 'rich-humped'. The 'million bleeding punctures' we saw in text [1.7] is now replaced by the 'climax of bright red sluices' in text [1.8]. In the former passage, the sacrifice mixes with the rain but in the latter the sky is 'sun scorched'. Sekoni's fatal accident and the death of the Custodian of the Grain are important landmarks in the ritual described in both texts.

The descriptions in both passages are however impressionistic

because nowhere in either of the two passages is the word 'death' used. Sekoni's blood is offered as a sacrifice to the 'maddening frustrations of a dangerously inefficient society.'[19] Simple ideas are mystified and taken to a cosmic level so that Sekoni does not just die but: 'The Dome cracked above [his] shortsighted head one messy night.' Sekoni, while alive, was in the habit of referring to life as the Dome of continuity and existence; his demise therefore implies that his has cracked.

The gymnastic poise of the ballet art, 'arabesque', is recalled to describe the skidding of the tyres of Sekoni's car. The diction in [1.8] is similar in that the ritualistic events — 'The taut skin parted ...', 'the white afternoon was showered in a crimson fountain','...His white vestments bloomed suddenly with small red petals ...' — are narrated as though they happened of their own accord. The blood of the bulls is referred to as 'vents of rich elixir'. It is a cure for all maladies and protection for the people of Aiyero.

We are not contradicting ourselves when we say that the language in the passages are impressionistic. Soyinka chooses words not only with consideration for meaning but also their sound and rhythm. The two passages are thus to be appreciated also for their rhythm. And rhythm is an essential feature of literature. Wellek and Warren agree when they write that meaning is sometimes subordinated to sound:

> Every work of literary art is, first of all, a series of sounds out of which arises the meaning. In some literary works, this stratum of sounds is minimized in its importance; and it becomes, so to speak, diaphanous, as in most novels. But even there the phonetic stratum is a necessary precondition of the

meaning.[20]

And in a spirited defence of rhythm in prose,they list its advantages:

> It forces us into a fuller awareness of the text, it underscores, it ties together, it builds up gradations, suggests parallelisms; it organizes speech, and organization is art.21

The merits of rhythmic prose may be a moot point, however, it cannot be regarded as obscurity if proper approaches to understanding the work are adopted.

In passage [1.7] the cracking of the Dome on Sekoni's head represents a temporary setback if, as Bruce King suggests,the Dome and bridges represent continuity and wholeness in contrast to apparent fragmentation and chaos.[22]

The lexis in both novels is morphologically non-complex, though semantically, a distinction could be made between the prosaic on the formal, rhythmic and poetic on the one hand, and the/other. The following compounds are found in both passages: 'sky-bull', 'unspeed-limits', 'earthdwellers', 'short sighted' (The Interpreters); 'proud-horned', 'rich-humped', 'stilt-dancers' and 'sluice-gate' (Season of Anomy). All the expressions are Soyinka's coinages and, apart from'shortsighted', 'proud-horned' and 'rich-humped', which are participial adjectival compounds, the rest are nominal compounds.

3.20.2 Grammatical Features

A distinction is made here between Soyinka's narrative and the dialogue or direct speeches of his characters. This is because while the narrative is mostly formal, the dialogue naturally is informal in many cases.

i. Narrative

The key to understanding Soyinka's syntax is to appreciate his desire to economize. Like James Joyce and Henry James, Soyinka often does away with certain conventions of writing such as punctuations and co-ordination. In other cases he writes largely orthographic sentences — sentences whose only hallmarks are the capital letters and fullstops at the beginning and end respectively. Third — and this is what critics see as obscurity and difficulty — is his penchant for riddles.

The word 'riddle' is chosen with much care. It should not be confused with obscurity, difficulty . Collins English Dictionary defines a riddle as a 'question , puzzle, or verse so phrased that ingenuity is required for elucidation of the answer or meaning.' The operative word is 'ingenuity'. This means that some effort is required on the part of the reader, not just the author, to unravel the conundrum.

Soyinka's sentences are usually lexically overloaded but semantically impressionistic. According to Osundare, the 'typical Soyinka sentence reminds one of a dry pod whose seeds are so closely packed that they cannot shake or move about.'[23] Osundare is right and we should add that the seeds sometimes get so closely packed that they explode themselves into meaning. Let us consider the following instances:

[1.9] A quaint anomaly, had long governed and policed itself,
was so singly-knit that it obtained a tax assessment

> for the whole populace and paid it before the departure of the pith-helmeted assessor, in cash, held all property in common, literally, to the last scrap of thread on the clothing of each citizen — such an anachronism gave much patronising amusement to the cosmopolitan sentiment of a profit-hungry society. A definitive guffaw from the radical centres of debate headed by Ilosa dismissed Aiyero as the prime example of unscientific communalism, primitive and embarrassingly sentimental... the tourists swamped Aiyero, then the sociologists armed with erudite irrelevances.
>
> (p.2,SOA)

[1.10] And Kola, who tried to see it all, who tried to clarify the pieces within the accommodating habit of time, felt much later, in a well-ordered and tranquil moment, that it was a moment of frustration, that what was lacking that night was the power to shake out events one by one, to space them in intervening standstills of the period of creation.

(p.246,TI)

[1.11] Garage touts, tycoons, secretive civil servants, diplomats and shopkeepers... Doormen, newsvendors, thugs, market women, street pedlars, colonels, smugglers, catechists, highway robbers and students shook their heads and said there was dirty business about.

(pp.61-62,SOA)

[1.12] With Iriyise unbound, unearthed, salvaged, transformed and fresh created, a grand design for the Cocoa campaign had crystalized in the flash of their first encounter, leapt from his hot brain entire. Goddess, Princess, Chrysalis of the Cocoa Grain, around her burgeoned a thousand schemes and devices, a panoply of adulation and Svengalian transformations, ending her immaturity and self-prostitutions. (pp.94-95,SOA)

The text in [1.9] is the opening paragraph of Season of

Anomy and it sums up the cause and course of the conflict in the novel. The text introduces the socialist ideals of Aiyero but does so in a language that relies more on rhythm and sound than declamation.

Words and phrases which are crucial to the understanding of the riddle in the passage include 'quaint anomaly', 'governed', 'policed', 'gave much patronising amusement', 'definitive guffaw', 'radical centres of debate', 'cocoa bix' and 'cocoa wix'. The passage cites features of Aiyero's socialism as including the capacity to care for her citizens and govern herself well by ensuring egalitarianism. The socialist commune is however sandwiched in a country where there is a general bourgeois cynicism and exploitation. As a result, Aiyero's example is dismissed as 'unscientific' and 'primitive'.

The phrase 'a quaint anomaly' contains two words which mean roughly the same thing — 'unusual'; 'attratively unusual'; 'odd', 'peculiar'; 'attractive in an old fashioned manner'; and they refer to the oasis of Aiyero's communalism in a desert of capitalist exploitative tendencies. Aiyero is rewarded with only scorn (definitive guffaw) from the rest of the country for her ideals.

The grammatical structure of the passage has however been cited as reason for obscurity. Emmanuel Ngara for instance criticizes Soyinka for withholding information. The text is made up of a few long and unwieldy sentences the first of which: 'A quaint anomaly...society', consists of a subject:

'a quaint anomaly', which is separated unusually from the numerous predicators which govern it, by a comma. The predicators themselves are separated from one another by commas and, in some cases, co-ordinated by the conjuctions/ linkers, 'that' and 'and' or the dash.

The sentence can be systematically analysed thus:

Subject — modifier: A (determiner)
- modifier: quaint (adjective)
- headword: anomaly (substantive)

Predicator — auxiliar: had
- adjunct: long
- lexical: governed

linker: and

Predicator: policed

Complement: itself

Predicator — auxiliar: was
- adjunct: so
- lexical: singly-knit

linker: that

Subject: it

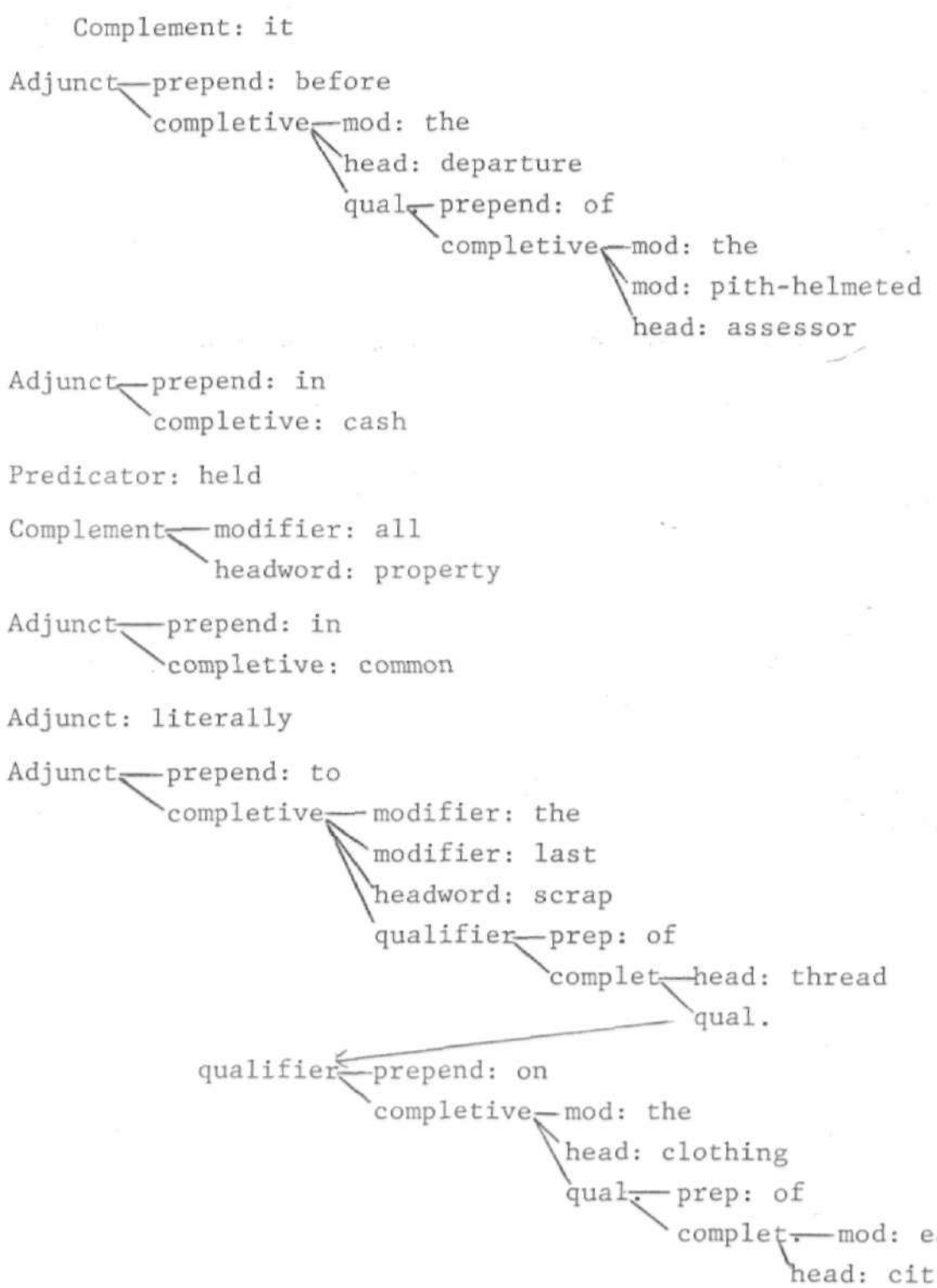
Predicator: obtained

Complement — modifier: a
- modifier: tax
- headword: assessment

Adjunct — prepend: for
- completive — modifier: the
  - modifier: whole
  - headword: populace

linker: and

Predicator: paid



The main part of the sentence is separated from the last part by a dash indicating either an afterthought or that the statement following it should not be taken literally: 'Such

an anachronism... society'. The structure here is SPCC.

These are broken down as follows:

Subject — modifier: Such
- modifier: an
- headword: anachronism

Predicator: gave

Complement — modifier: much
- modifier: patronising
- headword: amusement

Complement — prepend: to
- completive — mod: the
  - mod: cosmopolitan
  - head: sentiment
  - qual — prep: of
    - comp — mod: a
      - mod: profit-hungry
      - head: society

This type of analysis enables us to see that Soyinka overrelies on predicators and modifiers; that is, the 'word', and descriptive phrases. The placing of the polysyllabic words such as 'anachronism', 'patronising', 'amusement', 'cosmopolitan sentiment' and 'profit-hungry' at the prominent positions in the nominal phrases — modifier, headword — enhances a rhythmical cadence. It produces almost a musical rhythm to the lines.

The multiple predicators contain numerous words which, as Osundare puts it, 'seem to throng Soyinka's consciousness.' The separation of the original subject, 'a quaint anomaly', from its predicators by a comma is, as we have said, very unusual indeed. It has been questioned for instance by Ngara

who observes: 'It is not only the unusual word or expression that is the source of obscurity here, but also the structure of some of the sentences and the author's withdrawal of information when required... what is this "quaint anomaly"? Why a comma after "anomaly"?'[24] Ngara does not answer his questions and so we suggest that the answer lies in the phrase 'a quaint anomaly'. The author obviously desires the reader to pause and contemplate the phrase for a moment. Such an unusual juxtaposition of two pleonastic words can be properly drawn attention to by means of the unusual comma.

The insertion of the comma is especially significant because the phrase in question really represents the non-Aiyero citizens' opinions about her socialist system. It is the intention of Soyinka therefore to intensify the semantic implications of the phrase by the insertion of a comma between it and its predicators. Closer reading of the text would now reveal the significance of such words as 'anachronism' (unusual, outdated), 'cosmopolitan sentiment' (capitalist disposition), 'definitive guffaw' (scornful raucous laughter), 'cocoa bix' and 'cocoa wix' (cocoa trade and the exploitation resulting from fraudulently foisting cocoa flavoured sawdust on the unsuspecting populace).

As to the observation of withdrawal of information, extra effort is required of the reader to unravel Soyinka's, as any other accomplished writer's, meaning. If all the information were supplied then we would have prosaisms rather than literature. The reader should try to infer and synthesize

A similar cascade of ideas is noticed in texts [1.10], [1.11] and [1.12]. The first of these discusses the interpreters' attempts at making meaning of their existence. Here we are seeing the events as Kola interprets or attempts to interpret them in the theatre where they are. The theatre itself is representative of the world theatre at which the interpreters view events in a detached manner.

The passage is made up of one sentence with numerous intervening non-restrictive relative clauses functioning appositively with the subject of the sentence,'Kola'. Here is the structure:

Subject: Kola, who tried to see it all, who tried to clarify the pieces within the accommodating habit of time

Predicator: felt

Adjunct: much later, in a well ordered and tranquil moment

linker: that

Subject (rankshifted clause): What was lacking that night (S P C A)

Predicator: was

Complement: the power to shake out events (non-finite clause/phrase)

Adjunct: one by one

Predicator: to space

Complement: them

Adjunct: in intervening standstills of the period of creation

Passages [1.11] and [1.12] continue this poetic overloading and individuation. In the former, fifteen noun phrases, 'Garage touts... students' form the subject of the

verbs, 'shook' and 'said', whereas in the latter text, there is a frontal adjunct -- a non-finite passive clause, 'With Iriyise... created', containing five passive verbs which are in most cases pleonastic. Surely the words, 'unbound', 'unearthed', 'salvaged' and the words, 'transformed' and 'fresh created' are semantic equivalents in the context of their use. The use of the adjective 'entire' as though it were an adverb recalls the poetic nature of the text. The statement could have been '... leapt from his hot brain entirely'. The numerous epithets, 'goddess', 'princess' also help to intensify this poetic resonance.

Note also that neither of the two descriptive texts [1.1] and [1.2] contains a finite verb. They are just phrases piled up on one another to enhance the visual images. This piling up of phrases and clauses is continued in passages [1.3], [1.7] and [1.8], and it is done in most cases without co-ordinating elements such as linkers or relative pronouns. This device is known as parataxis. And there is an instance of oxymoron in the phrase, 'erudite irrelevancies' in the text that opens Season of Anomy, [1.9].

A close examination of texts [1.11] and [1.12] would reveal a preference for noun phrases. The former has the structure, S P C P C.

Subject: Garage touts... students

Predicator: shook

Complement: their heads

linker: and

Predicator: said

Complement (rankshifted clause)—Sub: there
Pred: was
Comp: dirty business
Adju: about

The latter has the structure, A S P A P A for the first sentence:

Adjunct (non-finite clause): With Iriyise... created
Subject: a grand design for the Cocoa campaign
Predicator: had crystalized)
) Parataxis
Adjunct: in the flash... encounter)
Predicator: leapt)
Adjunct: from his hot brain entire)

Thus far it would be seen that there is a preponderance of rankshifted noun clauses and phrases, lightly co-ordinated words and phrases, and non-finite clauses in Soyinka's narrative. There is therefore a preference for visual and content words to function words. This may account for the exaggerated cliches about the difficulty of the works.

ii. Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the semantic relations that produce a text. Halliday defines it thus:

> ... where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text.25

Presupposition by a word, phrase or sentence of something that has gone before is called 'anaphoric cohesion': 'He paused for breath, and Kola stood up... way. "No no" Egbo cried. "He hasn't finished." "The recital will be if we don't hurry."' (p.122,TI) To determine what 'the recital will be', there is the need to go back to the preceding sentences to retrieve the ellipted reference of 'be' which is the word, 'finished', which would in turn look back to Sekoni's preceding argument.

Sometimes the presupposed element comes after its presupposing item. This is 'cataphoric reference':'Monica Faseyi was always in disgrace...Nigeria' (p.38,TI). The referent of the word 'disgrace' (the specific acts that constitute the disgrace) cannot be found in any preceding statements or events; rather it is to be found (after a few sentences immediately following the presupposing element, 'disgrace') in the whole catalogue of events as shown in the discourse between Ayo Faseyi and his wife spanning two pages (pp.38-39).

Ellipsis occurs in these texts when certain items are omitted either because their referent has already appeared, will appear or is taken for granted. Soyinka employs much ellipses when confronted with what he would rather not say — the love-making between Egbo and Simi is punctuated by numerous ellipsis dots -- and when he expects the reader to puzzle out a riddle. An example is when Ofeyi is challenged by Pa Ahime to find out the meaning of 'the Custodian of the Grain':'"No, the Custodian of the Grain is..." Then the old

man broke into a roguish laugh.' (p.4,SOA)

If we insert the word 'with' between 'him' and 'his flabby ...', and the words 'were caused by' between 'downwards' and 'huge', we shall get a full passive unellipted sentence in the following passage:

> But his guardian was awaiting him, his flabby paunch over-flowing downwards huge rolls of soft amala over a leather rim. (p.15,TI)

Obviously, the cohesion in Soyinka's works is achieved by means of the same desire to economize and produce an ellipted, forceful style. The reader is required to store up even seemingly minor detail and to reconnect later after numerous intervening digressions.

iii. Devices

Soyinka's literary devices while being particularly ingenious do take one aback. The reader's sensibilities are violently coerced into comprehending comparisons that are seemingly far-fetched. Here are some examples:

[1.13] The beer reversed direction and Lasunwon's nostrils were twin nozzles of a fireman's hose. (p.13,TI)

[1.14] Bandele fitted himself, wall-gecko, into a corner. (p.14,TI)

[1.15] The skyline has lost a tooth from its long rotted gums. (p.14,TI)

[1.16] The umbilical cord, no matter how far it stretched, never did snap. (p.3,SOA)

[1.17] ...Eyes that seemed permanently hooded, until they burst out with a sun's after-rain intensity and clarity. (p.3,SOA)

[1.18] She saw nothing of the leaking armpits of the umbrella centrepiece. (p.22,TI)

[1.19] It seemed ludicrous as he looked into the eyes and thought of fresh liver on a butcher's slab.(p.51,TI)

[1.20] A slow gathering buzz of a swarm of greenbottles disturbed on some rotting fruit. (p.91,TI)

[1.21] There was a stampede of elephants on the stairs. (p.136,TI)

[1.22] A tornado now erupted from the bed... (p.70,SOA)

[1.23] Bandele's light mockery was red pepper to the raw in Lasunwon. (p.163,TI)

[1.24] Rising to his feet a locomotive ran briefly round the rails which someone had placed in his skull... (p.308,SOA)

[1.25] Kola risen, a quivering rain-drop on the roof-edge, and then, collapsed into his seat, his face buried in his hands. (p.164,TI)

[1.26] And Bandele held himself unyielding, like the staff of Ogboni, rigid in single casting. (p.246,TI)

Most of these comparisons are either metaphors or similes made to act like metaphors by the ellipsis of the comparative preposition, 'like' or the linker, 'as'. This is especially so in [1.14], [1.15], [1.20], [1.22], [1.23], [1.24] and [1.25]. They are all potentially longer expressions that have been abridged considerably to save time and space. But as Osundare points out the omission of the comparative cues, 'as' or 'like' in some of the sentences especially [1.14] gives some of the expressions an appositive quality so that it now looks as though 'wall-gecko' is in apposition to 'himself'. Soyinka could have said: 'Bandele fitted himself <u>like</u> a wall

gecko into a corner', but that, as far as Soyinka is concerned, would be too ordinary and would consume more space.

In many of the comparisons, the equation is 'X is Y' rather than 'X is like/as Y'. In [1.13], Soyinka captures vividly and imaginatively the picture created by Lasunwon's upraised nostrils as he (Soyinka) compares it to a fireman's hose. The reversal of the direction of the beer means the drinking as different from pouring it into the glass.

The comparison in [1.15], apart from its associations with the mouth cavity, the dome of the earth, the dental structures, also makes a very powerful statement. It sums up one of the main themes of the novel -- decay -- in one sentence. As a result of the torrential downpour, a house collapses. This is also because its foundations were not firm in the first place, and this is seen by the ebullient Egbo as the loss of just one more rotten tooth by the skyline. This means that the social effects of the general decay, insincerity and cynicism are just beginning to be felt. This unusual but imaginative imagery is a distinctively interesting aspect of Soyinka's prose.

The use of the umbilical cord as metaphor of the relationship between Aiyero and her citizens abroad in [1.16] is significant. It spells out the ideal relationship between the individual and his community in Africa. No matter how far the young men of Aiyero wandered in search of gold, they always came back or sent home a substantial part of their income.

In [1.20], the author refers to the gathering of the waiters at the Hotel Excelsior during an embarrassing scene involving Chief Wínsala and one of the waiters. The use of the phrase, 'green-bottles', achieves two aims. It calls to mind the noisy buzzing of the remonstrating waiters who have been disturbed (just like greenflies) from their duties (filth). At the same time it suggests a general prevalence of real green bottles probably of alcoholic beverages.

Some of the comparisons are hyperboles — deliberately exaggerated for effect — but they are also susceptible of misleading interpretations. Texts [1.21] and [1.22] describe the rush up the stairs by Peter, the German, who would rather be an American, and Iriyise's bid to vent her anger on the flippant Aristo, respectively. The impression is created however in the former that there were actually elephants on the stairs. Similarly, Iriyise, in the latter text, may have erupted like a tornado but a tornado definitely did not erupt from the bed. Such comparisons contribute to the direct and forceful nature of Soyinka's style.

Some critics quarrel with this use of imagery. Maduakor for instance says that the comparison in [1.25] in which Soyinka describes Kola's angry reaction to Lasunwon's irreverent remarks about the late Sekoni as 'a quivering raindrop on the roof edge,' strikes a 'forced analogy' and is thus 'an overlaboured comparison.'[26] However, anyone who has watched a raindrop from the point when it is slightly more than an 'atom' to when it becomes elongated and at the

point of disengagement will appreciate the ingenuity of comparing it to Kola's temperament. Kola has been considerably infuriated by Lasunwon's remarks that only the very thin point of elasticity which holds the raindrop to the roof edge also prevents him, possibly, from some sort of violence.

The hyperbole in [1.24] in which Soyinka speaks of a locomotive running around Ofeyi's head almost eclipses the real meaning which is that Ofeyi felt a severe headache.

Soyinka's perspicacious mind leads him into avoiding cliche'd expressions for exotic statements and the result is lines which are rhythmical and euphonious. This predilection for rhythm as we have seen before makes him express commonplace ideas in the most unusual but freshest of ways. Thus, Egbo's school teacher did not just cane him but 'wore out canes on him.' (p.15, The Interpreters)

During the unveiling of the fish pond in the house of the Cocoa Corporation Chairman, when marrionettes of the ruthless Cartel quads are released into the air to psychologically intimidate the guests, their hardihood,according to Soyinka, is strained by alcohol which softened the 'protective carapace of scepticism.' (p.48,SOA)

The conflict in Ofeyi's mind about the morality of murdering the ruthless members of the Cartel is described thus:

> ...that one has taken a decision on behalf of the guiltless inmates of overcrowded prisons, of innocents disembowelled on the point of stakes...degraded by a totalitarian maul, brained by leprous accretions... (p.136,SOA)

Further down Chief Batoki is to be assassinated not merely because he has committed crimes but because he has 'sowed a forest of bayonets in the sun.' (p.139,SOA). Earlier the silence that attends Iriyise's neighbourhood after workers have gone to the office is variously described as 'the White Collar silence', 'a winnowing of synthetic impurities', 'a period of exorcism', and the neighbourhood itself is'a den of iniquitous ecstasy'. (p.67,SOA)

The intellectual lethargy and lack of imagination on the part of university students is the 'vapid excrescences of national juvenalia.' (p.204,TI). The word 'juvenalia' is obviously a coinage because the closest words to it are 'juvenal', 'juvenescence','juvenescent','juvenile','juvenilia' and 'juvenility' (source: Collins English Dictionary); all referring to the concept of youthfulness and immaturity. The university administrators themselves are, as a result of their inconsistencies, possessed of the 'apoplexies of turgid disciplinarians.' (p.205,TI). When male students ridicule female students by means of graffiti for having rejected their love advances, theirs is the 'wit of diarrhoeic brains.' (p.205,TI).

Tarzan — the symbol of colonial perception of Africa — performs astride a trumpet advance and the flap ears of 'pachydermous faithfulness' (p.168,SOA). The phrase, another neologism from 'pachydermatous', refers to any of the thick-skinned animals found in Africa such as the elephant, hippopotamus or rhinoceros.

Other examples of rhythmic phrases are:'esoteric hinterland', 'putrescent tumour', 'inhuman banquet', 'urban

tumescence', 'sunset apotheosis', 'ash shrouded catacombs of the future' (pp.175,176,274 SOA); 'unspeed-limits', 'unimaginative imagination', 'brooding matriachs', 'mammoth rolls', 'petrification of divine droppings', 'phallus of unorigin' (pp.25,155,163,226 TI).

In these as in other instances, it is usually the poet in Soyinka that takes over. In some of such instances as on the whole of page 226 of The Interpreters, the cascade of ideas is indicated by the absence of punctuation marks. Soyinka instead relies on an abundance of the co-ordinating linkers, 'and', to express continuity.

Soyinka alludes to the Bible. We see this in the names of some of the characters such as 'Noah', 'Barrabas', 'Lazarus', 'Deborah', 'Herod's desperation for infanticide'; the traffic policeman who fails to intervene to save Barrabas from the mob is 'Pontius Pilate'washing his hands in the stream of traffic'; When Ofeyi searches for his girl and cannot find her corpse among the victims of the pogrom, we have a rhetorical 'why seek ye the living among the dead.' Soyinka also makes allusion to Eliotist modernist symbolism: 'It's a dead place Ofe, where is all that fog come from?' More examples include:

> ...From a charred, barkless height, a kite rose from its watch-tower and circled the sky, gaining the rarer regions on invisible windstreams...a network of canyons and ridges writhed into a sunset-gory horizon ...(pp.172-175, SOA).

There is also allusion to Egyptian and classical myth: 'Anubis', 'Excalibur', 'equestrian' .

The cosmopolitan nature of Soyinka's stock of imagery comes out particularly clearly in Season of Anomy in the speech of the Brigadier while unveiling the Chairman's fish-pond:

> He was a resplendent figure the Brigadier, groomed it seemed from a nineteenth-century Venetian court... the glory of the Italian marble was revealed... contemplation of a Florentine moment...noble plinth... enchanted lake...Excalibur...noble steed...St.George and the dragon. (p.44,SOA)

The sarcastic overtones here are unmistakable. The passage tells, by means of the un-African imagery contained therein, how alienated from, and out of touch with their communities the Cartel hounds are in their taste, morality and language.

iv Dialogue

Soyinka is understandably selective in the way he satirizes the speeches of his characters. Characters like Chief Winsala, Sir Derinola, and Prof. Oguazor (meral terpitude instead of moral turpitude) in The Interpreters, and Chief Batoki in Season of Anomy, who are ignorant of how they contribute to the general social malaise, are the butt of constant ridicule.

However, those characters like the interpreters, whose only offence is their snobbish aloofness and inertia, are portrayed as vacuous characters, and the quest protagonists and revolutionaries such as Ofeyi and Demakin are described with sympathy. The vacuity of the interpreters is Sagoe's special forte. This is evident in his ubiquitous philosophy of voidancy. It contributes little or nothing to the course of the novel. The opening statement of the novel,The Inter-

preters, comes from Sagoe and it determines to a large extent the interpreters' predilections: 'Metal on concrete jars my drink lobes'. (p.5) Apart from the fact that the phrase, 'drink lobes' refers to a psychological rather than physiological organ (the unpleasant effect which the screeching from iron tables on the floor has on him as it passes through his ear lobes to his guts, where the drink is supposed to be lodged), the use of the words 'metal' and 'concrete' is significant. They agree with the steel inherent in the novel's prose. We can extrapolate on the words thus:

Lexical item	Stylistic description
Metal (Ogun)	vocabulary: 'words of iron'
Concrete (Obatala)	syntax: 'sentences of thunder'

Just as metal is an indispensable item in the making of concrete formations, so also are the items of vocabulary selected to build syntactic formations. The words also recall the paradoxical 'Ogunnian' and 'Obatalaic' attributes of destructiveness and creativity. Eldred Jones thinks of the 'drink lobes' as 'poetic rather than physiological organs.'[27]

Maduakor observes rightly that the expression fulfils its function which is to 'jolt the reader into a compulsory attentiveness,' and then to keep him on the alert all the time. He explains further:

> When he (Sagoe) is at the saturation point, alcohol transports him into a transcendent world much like the experience felt by religious mystics in moments of ecstasy. The sound of metal on concrete recalls him unwillingly to earth.28

The statement belongs in the realm of Soyinka's metaphysics. It has the simple structure: S P C

Subject (noun phrase)—headword: metal (substantive)
qualifier—prep: on (preposition)
completive: concrete (noun)

Predicator: jars

Complement (noun phrase)—modifier: my (possessive determiner)
modifier:drink (nominal adjective)
headword: lobes (substantive)

The credit tag predicator, 'said', is omitted when Soyinka follows this speech with: 'This was Sagoe'instead of 'Sagoe said' or its equivalent. The concern here is for the short, sharp, pointed and forceful. The interpreters — Egbo, Sagoe, Sekoni, Kola and Bandele — and the author all speak in a possessed and mystical language. Soyinka himself has said that language is 'highly charged, symbolic, mytho-embryonic and words are taken back to their roots, to their original poetic sources when fusion was total and the movement of words is the very passage of music and the dance of images.'[29]

The utterances of Sir Derinola, Chief Winsala and Prof. Oguazor lack intellectual pointedness, Sir Derin wears his 'abetiaja' 'front to back'. Prof. Oguazor in an outlandishly affected manner always speaks of'meral terpitude' (moral turpitude) among today's youth. These'compensation members' — Nigerian practice of compensating with board membership appointments, people who have lost elections, missed nominations or are close to the men in the corridors of power — particularly Derin, Winsala and the chairman, constitute the interview panel at the premises of the Independent Viewpoint where Sagoe goes to seek employment.

A few minutes before the interview is to commence, Sagoe changes his mind because of the generally unhealthy environment. The reaction of the board is that Sagoe is imperious. This reaction is framed in what Soyinka sarcastically describes as the greatest statement the honourable retired judge, Sir Derinola, 'the morgue', ever made: 'A degree does not make a graduate'! Much later Chief Winsala calls on Sagoe at his hotel residence and demands bribe by giving the impression that there are many applicants for the job Sagoe has treated with levity. The speech is rendered in broken English:

> Before, degree is something, but now everyone is having degree. Degree is two for penny, so everybody is rushing to fill all vacancy. No more degree passport...Anyway, the thing is this. You yourself know that you are not experienced for this job...Se wa s'omo fun wa?...There are four of us to be seen to. If it was only me...(pp.83-84,TI)

The speech consists of semi-literate constructions realised by a lack of co-ordination between the temporal indicators such as 'before' and 'is'. Whereas the former refers to time past, the latter usually indicates present occurrences; but Winsala makes them all refer to past action. This uneducated construction is supplemented with code-mixed elements such as 'se wa s'omo fun wa?' which are supposed to be significantly less formal than their English equivalent of demanding a bribe. Again, if, as Winsala claims, Sagoe is not qualified for the job, why offer him the job at all in return for the bribe? That is one of the numerous ways in which men like Winsala contribute to the decay. This is also reflected

in their language.

Similar conversations take place between Egbo and the nameless university student in The Interpreters who comes to submit her assignment on the one hand, and that between Ofeyi and the Trouble-shooter in Season of Anomy on the other:

> 'Well, shall we go? I have to get out the car?'
> 'Oh, a drive in a car. Is that supposed to impress me?'
> 'Blast you, girl, and your memorized responses.'
> 'Thank you, wolf, and your spontaneous designing.'
> (pp.130-131, TI)

The wit illustrates Soyinka's knowledge of the social antics of our people.

In Season of Anomy, the confrontation between Ofeyi and the Trouble-shooter comes to a head at the enquiry in their verbal warfare. Ofeyi deftly turns the interrogator to the interrogated:

> Perhaps Mr. Ofeyi, this enquiry will prove even short enough to satisfy you. So let me ask you one question straight away, Are you also — to use your own expression — an agitator?'
> 'No.'
> 'No. Of course not. Nobody ever admits that they are trouble-makers. Let me put it another way then. Are you a communist? Or a Marxist? Or do you just call yourself a socialist?'
> 'I have read Marx...'
> The Trouble-shooter snapped, 'So have I Mr. Ofeyi so don't let us beat around the bush.'
> 'If you must know, I disapprove of foisting cocoa-flavoured sawdust on the...' [The chairman interrupted with] 'What was that, young man? Who is foisting what

sawdust on whom?'
'Cocoa-wix and cocoa-bix. Not to mention cocoadine which does not fulfil a single one of the hundred benefits it is supposed to confer on human health.'
The Trouble-shooter turned down a corner of his lip in his best derisive manner. 'I know that you are supposed to be a genius in promotion ideas Mr. Ofeyi. I have heard some of your songs myself, very catchy tunes indeed. I was not however aware that your talents extended to dietetics or pharmacy.'
'No they don't' Ofeyi admitted. 'But surely you must realize that I have taken the trouble to consult experts on the subject. They conducted the tests and their reports uniformly say...'
The Cartel spokesman banged his fist on the table. 'And I must remind you that we also have our analysts, chosen and approved by the Government Ministry. And we choose to accept their report rather than that of some disgruntled backroom chemist whose qualifications were probably obtained in Moscow!'
There was another pause, then Ofeyi commented, 'You keep saying "we" I notice. May I ask why? I thought this matter only involved a private concern — the Cocoa Corporation. Aren't you here simply as a government — er — moderator in an industrial dispute between employee and employer? Or are there other matters you wish to bring up?' (pp.55-56, SOA)

The conversation here, like that of the board members in The Interpreters, represents a significant treatment of character. Here however, it is solid, intelligent and fast moving, and Ofeyi clearly has the upperhand. Unlike that of the board members in The Interpreters, here,the interlocutors' spoken grammar is impeccable as they try to pick holes in each other's argument.

Let us compare the affected Americanisms of Peter, the German in The Interpreters:

> 'Yeah. Wall, not really. I'm German but I use 'merican passport. Just gonna get m'self a zrink. So soree couldn't come down wi'ze others to Lagos, burra had a date wiz a Minister...Fabulous guy your Minister real feller of a guy. Invired me to spend a week-end at his country residence.' (p.136, TI)

to the genuine, if somewhat tongue-in-cheek, American exchanges between Zaccheus and Ofeyi in Season of Anomy:

> 'I ain't telling. Seems to be about somebody's mother. He's flying man, flying...
> 'Goddamn you man aren't you the one who boasts how tough you are? I thought you liked irate lovers for breakfast'
> 'Woman is different. I don't backchat an angry dame. Not if she is called Iriyise.' (pp.74-80, SOA)

This close representations show Soyinka as having a masterly creative knowledge of human foibles.

Another significant stylistic feature of Soyinka's prose here is the preference for vernacular idioms in expressing certain ideas. In these cases he prefers rather to explain the idioms in a glossary at the end of the novel. Here are some examples:

Agba n't'ara: (humour) respect to an elderly body; literally, 'the body has seen age.' (p.91, TI)

Abetiaja: (Literally, that which resembles a dog's ears) A type of cloth cap with flaps over the ears. (p. 80,TI)

Se wa s'omo fun wa?: (Roguish) will you acquit yourself well before your elders by giving us something. (p.84, TI)

Omo tani? (Disdain, amazement) Whose son does he think he is?
(p.26,TI)

Aiye ti wa rō: Ours is an easy world. (p.8,SOA)
Mo bi yi na: Whose luck for my womb. (p.184,SOA)

The wit and humour are in the original expressions and would be lost if any translation is attempted.

Yet another distinctive aspect of Soyinka's prose is the unusual hyphenated compounds and neologisms. As has been said before, they are designed to economize expressions and save space. Let us consider the following:

Thigh-high: As high as the thigh. (p.5, TI)
Root-strands: Of a lettuce. (p.7, TI)
Mud-dark: Having the colour of mud. (p.8,TI)
Dry-docked: (Canoes) pulled ashore. (p.8,TI)
Mid-swallow: In the process of swallowing. (p.36,TI)
Bread-crumbs: Crumbs from bread. (p.37,TI)
Sweat-slippery: Slippery because of sweat. (p.117,TI)
Sky-bull: Black clouds resembling a bull. (p.155,TI)
Cloud-burst: Torrential downpour. (p.22,TI)
Earth-bull: Sacrificial bull, counterpart of 'skybull' (p.8,SOA)
Proud-horned, rich-humped: Of the sacrificial bulls (p.14,SOA)
Shit-scared: Very frightened. (p.169, SOA)
Scape-clan: (from 'scapegoat') the clan/community that takes the blame for what others have done.(p.170,SOA)
Anubis-headed: Like the Egyptian deity (p.175,SOA)
Tunesmith: Creator, producer of tunes; from 'blacksmith', 'goldsmith' etc (p.86,SOA)

Osundare suggests that this compression of words and ideas 'entails a frugality that slows down the pace of reading comprehension.'[30]

There are however some imperfections in Soyinka's prose. These are few and far between. They consist of slips which are

neither deliberate nor stylistically significant:

[1.27] The chief's hostility was now unmistakable, 'They don't say it won't work. It will not only work, it will blow up... (p.29,TI)

[1.28] And among the dead Sagoe included the suburban settlements of Ikoyi where both the white remnants and the new black oyinbos lived in colonial vacuity. (p.112,TI)

[1.29] Sagoe said, 'it wasn't even that, I was thinking. What occurred to me was that cutting needn't refer to him at all.' (p.162,TI)

[1.30] Not bad, not bad, even it was only a regional commandant. (p.42,SOA)

[1.31] He paused to place an envelope in the hands of the man, causing him to look back to his Chairman as if to enquire that this trifling diversion might mean. (p.52,SOA)

[1.32] When Zaccheus woke up he asked him who had arranged their itinerary. (p.158,SOA)

In [1.27] Sekoni has come back to test his small experimental power station after the expat expert had written it off as unsafe and unworkable. He encounters the village Head who attempts to prevent him from testing the plant. But Sekoni insists, 'They say it can't work but that is all rubbish.' The chief's retort of 'It will not only work, it will...' is semantically and syntactically incorrect in the circumstances because his statement is supposed to negate Sekoni's while comprehending it within its syntax thus: 'It will (not only) not work, it will blow up...' The omission of the second negative particle 'not' has damaging implications for its

semantic structure. And there is no evidence that the omission is deliberate. The meaning of the statement should be that, in addition to not working, the plant will blow up.

[1.28] is an example of the ambiguity that arises from an oversight in punctuation. The omission of a comma after the word 'dead' has made the statement susceptible of a misleading interpretation, namely that the suburban settlements of Ikoyi are included in the dead Sagoe. If a comma is properly inserted between the words 'dead' and 'Sagoe', then we have a syntactically complex sentence containing a main clause with a frontal adjunct: 'Among ... of Ikoyi', and a rankshifted subordinate adjectival qualifying clause to the complement of the sentence: 'Where both...vacuity'. To illustrate this more clearly, let us examine the structure of the sentence: A S P CASPA:

Adjunct: Among the dead

Subject: Sagoe

Predicator: included

Complement: the suburban... of Ikoyi—> rankshift
RANKSHIFTED CLAUSE (qualifier): Adjunct: where
Subject: both... oyinbos
Predicator: lived
Adjunct: in colonial vacuity.

The omission of the comma has therefore tended to make it possible to include Sagoe in the frontal adjunct.

In [1.29] Lasunwon has just expressed his scepticism over Lazarus' claim of having resurrected from the dead supposed to have been reported in a newspaper cutting. The cutting does not refer specifically to Lazarus. Sagoe's reply to Lasunwon's

doubts should be: 'What occurred to me was that that cutting didn't refer to him at all', and not that it 'needn't refer to him', for that would contradict Sagoe's idea that the absence of a specific reference to Lazarus in the newspaper resurrection story has reinforced his incredulity. Further more there are supposed to be two 'that's, the one functioning as a linker, whereas the other serves as a demonstrative determiner. It is appreciated however that where ambiguity is unlikely to arise, such a 'that' linker is often omitted since, as in the above construction, the verb to be , 'was', already fulfils this copulative function between the subject clause (What... me) and the complement clause (that cutting... at all).

The errors in [1.30] and [1.31] may be due to the printer's devil which has omitted the concessive linker 'if' or 'though' between 'even' and 'it', and replaced the complementary 'what' with a wrong word 'that' respectively. In [1.32] it is difficult to determine the antecedents of the pronouns 'he' and 'him' even after going back a few pages. Who asked whom? Ofeyi or Zaccheus? These errors are significant because they are cacophonous intrusions in an otherwise euphonious prose.

To sum up, the themes of creativity and the struggle for a better society are realised in The Interpreters and Season of Anomy by a prose style that is replete with simple and complex grammatical, lexical and semantic constructions. The prose is heightened by elliptical traditional, modernist and classical mythopoesis; a private and often unusual stock of

imagery; and a plethora of neologisms. On the whole, the two books are lively pieces of writing.

Notes

1. Obi Maduakor, Wole Soyinka, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1986) p.81

2. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, Style in Fiction (New York: Longman Group, 1981) pp.154-155.

3. Marjorie Boulton, The Anatomy of Prose, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980) p.109

4. Maduakor, p.82

5. Eustace Palmer, An Introduction to the African Novel (London: Heinemann, 1972) p.xiv

6. Maduakor, p.83.

7. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Homecoming (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp.65-66.

8. Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 61.

9. Ernst Fischer, The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963) p.108.

10. See Wole Soyinka, The Man Died, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1988)

11. Tejumola Olaniyan, 'Wole Soyinka's Novels' in Ogunbiyi, ed, Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the Present Vol.2 (Lagos: Guardian Books, 1988) p.105.

12. Leech and Short, p. 173.

13. Olaniyan, p.105

14. Olaniyan, p.101

15. Biodun Jeyifo, 'Mythopoesis and Commitment' in Maduakor, Wole Soyinka, p.xi

16. ——. 'Soyinka Demythologized' Notes on a Materialist Reading of A Dance of the Forest and Kongi's Harvest cited by Niyi Osundare A.L.T, (13) p.24

17. Leech and Short, p.80

18. Emmanuel Ngara, Stylistic Criticism, and the African Novel, (London: Heinemann Books, 1982) p.102

19. Niyi Osundare, 'Words of Iron, Sentences of Thunder:

Soyinka's Prose Style' in A.L.T. 13 (New York: Heinemann, 1983) p.26

20. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955) p.159

21. Wellek and Warren, p.167

22. Bruce King, The New English Literatures (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) pp.88-89

23. Osundare, p.32

24. Ngara, p.104

25. M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Has an, Cohesion in English (London: Longman Group, 1976) p.4

26. Maduakor, p.104

27. Eldred Jones, Notes to The Interpreters, p.253

28. Maduakor, p.100

29. Soyinka, Myth and Literature, p.147

30. Osundare, p.29

CHAPTER FOUR

Autobiographical Works: Ake and The Man Died

4.10 Autobiography and Literature

Both The Man Died *(1972) and Ake **(1981) belong to the genre of autobiography. They also serve as reference points from which Soyinka's literary predilections and his untiring crusade against social injustice can be explained. As in the case of style, it is necessary to be clear about the concept of autobiography. To what extent can it be acceptable as literature? To what extent also can the chronicling of the real events of a writer's life affect the works of imagination? Obi Maduakor writes that:

> Both autobiography and fiction originate from the same social matrix; and in a sense, much of African fiction is autobiographical.1

Maduakor goes on to quote from James Olney's study on the 'Autobiographical Imagination in African Writing' in which he (Olney) makes a distinction between artistic autobiographies and political ones for example. Artistic autobiographies, according to Olney, are organized like novels — they do not adhere too closely to a chronological, biographical arrangement. Real life events, he continues, achieve this artistic importance 'if a pattern has been discerned, achieved, and imposed,out of the author's own internal order, by himself, thus acting as an artist.'[2]

The Collins English Dictionary defines autobiography as 'an account of a person's life written or otherwise recorded by that person.' In many cases therefore, it is

* Published by Spectrum Books, Ibadan, 1988
** Published by Rex Collings, London, 1981. All page references are to these editions.

generally recognized that there are certain differences existing between autobiography and fiction in themes, imagery and licence.

Ake chronicles the first eleven years of Soyinka's life. It is a period in which the young Soyinka strives in turns to react to, and reconcile what he sees as the contradictory sense of justice of the adult world. This world, according to the blurb, is 'alternately hostile and secure, cruel and tender.' It is peopled with 'ghommids', educators (Rev. Ransome-Kuti, Essay), missionaries and catechists (Bishop Ajayi Crowther), kings and traders. It is an enchanted world.

But by far the most significant aspect of the work is its portrayal of the early development of Soyinka's non-conformism and sense of justice. In many places in the book, Soyinka clearly expresses his disenchantment with what his infant mind perceives as adult injustice. For instance, his mother, whom he nicknames 'Wild Christian' (She was impatient with 'infidels') narrates to him a story of how Sanya (Soyinka's uncle), his brothers and sisters including Wild Christian had been chased by wood sprites right up to their doorsteps for wandering too far into the domain of the spirits; Rev. Ransome-Kuti, with a bible in his hand, had ordered the 'ghommids' back to their place of abode 'in the name of God!' The young Soyinka's reaction to being told that the erring children received corporal punishment in addition to being made to cut grass

for a week is that 'the fright should have sufficed as punishment.' (p.7)

Again, the bookseller's wife, Mrs. B is tormented by an 'abiku' child, Bukola, who manages to wring concessions from her parents by relapsing all too often into fainting fits. According to Wole Soyinka, 'Mrs. B was too kind a woman to be plagued with such an awkward child.' (p.18)

The search for justice also leads the young Soyinka to rebel against his mother's attempts to show him off before visitors as a precocious child disparaging his sister, Tinu in the process: 'I was puzzled that no one else appeared to share my deep sense of injustice.'(p.81) And when his father jokingly threatens to cut off the bookseller's hand with a cutlass for alluding to the Scriptures when he (the bookseller) says that neither his left hand nor his right hand has offended him: 'Today is a Sunday, God's own day. Imagine you are standing before him. You are his servant, a respected sidesman in his church at St. Peters. You insist that Christ's injunctions are meant to be taken literally. All right, God is now asking you, has your right hand ever offended thee? Yes or no,' this is the young Soyinka's reaction to his father's statement:

> It was the sort of language which frightened me even more than the violence about to be visited on the bookseller. My father had the habit of speaking as if he was on first-name terms with

> God. Why should he suggest that God would come into our front-room just to prosecute the book-seller! (p.21)

For the young Soyinka therefore, 'there was neither justice nor logic in the world of grown ups.' (p.104) His conclusion is based on the contradictions he perceives as inherent in adult thinking. At the end of the book however, before he turns eleven, the author enlists in that world of grown ups and contributes to the fight against injustice. The event is the Egba Women's uprising organised by Mrs. Ransome-Kuti, popularly known as 'Beere', Wild Christian and a few other enlightened Egba women to fight against taxation, exploitation and other forms of injustice visited on the women. Soyinka was an integral part of this struggle, and his role is explained thus:

> I could not be sure whether the women would regard me as a 'man', or that, if they did, they would at least recall their 'young teacher', courier extra-ordinary, scout and general factotum. (p.213)

The point being made here is that Soyinka's present non-conformism, his understanding of the perspectives of struggle, his striving for self awareness and participation therein formed and developed themselves quite early. It is litle surprise therefore that they have been carried over into, and ruled his entire adult and creative life. Soyinka's understanding of the concept of struggle stands in sharp contrast to so called revolutionary theorists. Unlike these 'radicals', who compete with one another to see who can quote most of Fanon or Marx, Soyinka — this view is shared by this

thesis — has rather seen it as man's continuous exertion of strength, energy, and force so as to escape from something confining; it is an individual's or community's effort to make society better even at the risk of short term inconveniences and injuries. For Soyinka, few people can be regarded as true revolutionaries unless they take part physically in this battle. (See The Man Died)

Soyinka's Ake is an artistic autobiography because it reveals the origin of his mythopoesis, and because it is not, strictly speaking, a chronological autobiography. T. S. Eliot observes in a related discussion that a writer's artistic preoccupation is usually determined to a larger extent by real life events rather than his studies.

> Only a part of an author's imagery comes from his reading. It comes from the whole of his sensitive life since early childhood.3

Thus it is that Ake and The Man Died contain a number of real life events which are later fictionalised in The Interpreters and Season of Anomy respectively. We read in Ake that the village elders insist that young Soyinka prostrate before them like every Yoruba child, to which he, having just come out of a Sunday church service, replies: 'If I don't prostrate myself to God, why should I prostrate to you? You are just a man like my father aren't you.'(p. 128)

This incident is observable in the character of Egbo in The Interpreters, who insisted on greeting his guardian standing in spite of the numerous threats and corporal punishment:

> 'When you greet your elders,' the merchant said, 'you prostrate yourself.' 'You mean, lie flat on my belly?' 'On your belly, you son of the devil.' And Egbo would correct him gently, 'My father was a reverend pastor and he never taught me to prostrate... If I only kneel to God why should I prostrate to you?' (p.15, The Interpreters)

Also, Egbo's love for groves and secluded places where he would commune with nature finds a parallel in the young Soyinka in Ake who, in his penchant for solitude, would often retire to a mountainous rock which he nicknames 'Jonah'. The name comes from a Sunday school teacher's comparison between the size of the whale that swallowed Jonah and the rock:

> On the otherside of the school building, hidden from us was a rock that was smoothed by our feet. It appeared to cover the earth at least from where the junior school room ended, to the cemetery outside the parsonage....That was my rock. My own very private rock... Jonah was my own very secret habit. But the modelling classes never touched the intimate lives Jonah and I lived at weekends, for the school went home while I remained in the parsonage and could walk over to climb up its steep sides and sink through its broad back into deep immobility... Jonah was bare, solitary and private. (p.64)

In The Interpreters, Egbo was discovered at midnight lying at the water's edge in the grove of Oshun, one ear against the ground:

> 'What were you doing there?' they asked. He said he was praying. So they beat him for paganistic leanings. 'All well-trained children pray in

> church,' the woman screamed, 'not in some evil grove of heathens.' (p.15)

Even the comparision in The Interpreters of Bandele's unyielding posture to the staff of Ogboni does derive from the numerous Ogboni presences in Ake.

The Man Died deals with Soyinka's arrest and incarceration during the Nigerian civil war. It is an evocation of Soyinka's unique experience in detention. In the aftermath of the January 15, 1966 coup d'etat in which many Nigerians, particularly northerners, lost their lives, the northerners perceiving a lopsidedness to the killings carried out pogroms against the Ibos. The Ibos perceiving the inability or reluctance of the Federal Government of Nigeria to guarantee their safety in Nigeria, decided to secede from the Federation. The result was a thirty month civil war. Soyinka toured the north and the east to organize a 'Third Force' that would bring some of the original executors of the coup, Alale, Banjo and other radicals together in a move to counter both the north's genocide and the east's secessionist ambitions by campaigning for an arms embargo on both sides. For this and other anti-war statements and activities, the author was arrested and detained incommunicado. But he managed to beat the network of prison security around him, scribble and smuggle out notes and messages. Some of those notes after his release, became The Man Died.

The Man Died became highly controversial on its publication. It was criticised for being too emotional and

sensational to merit literary attention.[4] Expectedly, the gory events of the civil war form the background of the book. It has been variously described as a political autobiography, prison literature, a one-man's response to chaos and blind social forces and a justly intemperate book. And it has been the subject of court litigations and ban. As to its literary quality, Maduakor observes that Soyinka was 'too close to his material to successfully distil the experience into imaginative literature.'[5] It is the opinion of this study that the book is appropriate to the exigencies of the period that produced it. Some of the criticisms against the book tend to ignore the sustained discussion of the metaphysical question of what the proper response to overwhelming state of anarchy and intimidation should be; should the social revolutionary capitulate like Oedipus and gorge out his eyes, or continue to fight on? In The Man Died, Soyinka chooses the latter option.

The reasons for these adverse criticisms however lie in the tone of the work. Soyinka is seriously aggrieved by what he sees as the antics of the Gowon regime and the inertia of the so called intellectuals at the time. These intellectuals, in Soyinka's opinion, either folded their arms and did nothing about the social anomy, ran away or actively collaborated with the government. As a result of this, he exploits the physical deformities of his tormentors and assigns to them, albeit connotatively, repugnant names.

The gaolers in Kaduna prison, where he was later

transfered to, are named 'Polyphemus' (ugly, mythical, one eyed giant), 'Hogroth' ('you pig, you with your concrete mixer throat, regurgitating mortar and slag and dung plaster') and 'Caliban' (after Shakespeare's brutish character in The Tempest.) They are vilified by Soyinka until we no longer see them as human:

> These men are not merely evil... They are the mindlessness of evil made flesh. One should not ever stumble into their hands but seek the power to destroy them. They are pus, bile, original putrescence of Death in living shapes. The surely infect all with whom they come in touch and even from this insulation here I smell a foulness of the mind in the mere tone of their words. (p.228)

Hogroth has nasty habit of chewing colanut and gargling his throat disgustingly:

> I heard his scabby hand dip in the fire-bucket and soon after a slosh of water doing the rounds of his cola-coated mouth. That is when my fingers fly to plug the ears. I know what will follow. Unfailingly, as if all the toads were one and that mighty fulsome toad was wedged in his throat — Hraaaargh! — and splat! — the gob of spittum hitting the wall. This man, this thing has a family. He has wives, he has children, he has more than likely some other family hangers-on who defer to him and call him Baba. (p.133)

There is no respite for Hogroth from the author as he (Soyinka) launches into another salvo of what he himself referred to as a 'hammer' and a 'handgrenade' against Hogroth:

> Four yards away a gob of slime hits the grass verge of the gutter, the end of a blurred arc that begins on ptuh! and ends in splat! The churning in the throat is resumed, preparing the world for another goro-gritty gob. (p.134)

The following is a description of Caliban:

> Caliban, I have never seen. Visually he remains a mystery. But I know he has a leg and a half. Or three. Certainly one leg is twice the length (or the weight) of the other, their uneven thuds are unmistakable as he pounds his nightly round in the hollows of my head. Shuffle, then sledge-hammer. In the dead of night to the shuffle-clump rhythm of his unequal strider wraith of smells passes and repasses. It is the reek of yeast in extreme fermentation, a passage of stink-bugs trapped in a cheap oily scent -- is he so liberal with scent because he must disguise the stench of alcohol? (p.135)

The government doctor who, to his chagrin, examines him at a Lagos clinic is 'an unctuous toad,' and Soyinka later charges:'...the rest, like Mallam D and Tony Enahoro, were poor ignorant fools, tools today as they will always be in the hands of unscrupulous power.' (p.72)

The intellectuals are criticised specifically for supporting Enahoro's extradition from Britain where he had fled to after the coup when they said, 'Coward, let him return home and face the music.' This lack of conviction among the intelligentsia incenses Soyinka and makes him question:

> What exactly is the evaluation we must place on your doctorate dissertations you boneless craniums whose tomes shall undoubtedly assail us titled with variations of 'the Social Anomy of 1966, its roots and consequences in the Nigerian Civil War, etc with special reference to the role of the imperialist commercial interest etc etc' (p.93)

We have quoted at length these passages in order to illustrate the intensity of the author's ire and, deriving from that, the role he carves out for himself as a tireless crusader for social justice; the impression that comes across here is one of a fearless man of action. A man who is deeply involved in the struggle against oppression and the struggle to enlighten the people and incite them into a spontaneous, positive and socially redemptive action against the exploitation and brutality of the ruling elite — this is Soyinka's role in the book.

This crusading role, as we have already seen, began at an early age in Ake. It has been sustained and fashioned in his adult life into a certain social critic role kept alive by a constant quest for meaning, and a thorough understanding of the psychology of power. This is a theme in Season of Anomy.

Soyinka had hoped to employ the 'Third Force' in confronting the Nigerian society of the civil war period. He expresses its aims as being charged with the responsibility to think in 'terms of a common denominator for the people' and the hope that 'the East will pause, ask for a cease-fire and give the Third Force time to proliferate through all the

key places...' (p.178) Soyinka was arrested and detained after this meeting in the east. And since it was in the heat of the emotional trauma accompanying this arrest and internment that the book was conceived, the language, imagery and diction is naturally intense.

Although in Season of Anomy, there is a reasonable aesthetic distance between the 'raw material' and the finished work, The Man Died, with all its explosive and poetic language, is clearly the precursor of the former. Many events and images in The Man Died are fictionalised in Season of Anomy giving Soyinka's prose works a consistency of theme and style. This is a hallmark of only accomplished writers.

Kaduna prison in The Man Died is Temoko in Season of Anomy. Polyphemus in the autobiography is Suberu in the novel. The massacre of 'aliens' in Cross-river in the latter book derives from the slaughter of Ibos in the north in the former; and the struggle in, and tour of Cross-river by Ofeyi and Demakin in the novel, recalls a similar one by Soyinka and his colleagues in the autobiography.

Perhaps Ofeyi's seminal idea of permeating the larger society with Aiyero's life affirming values in Season of Anomy stems from Nzeogu's adventure which forms the basis for the whole of the events narrated in the autobiography. Even the phenomenon of Indo-Pakistani incursion into the Nigerian Railways and Medical department in which the late Sardauna was reported to have imported unqualified Indian

and Pakistani doctors into northern Nigeria, that we see in the autobiography, finds a parallel in Season of Anomy: the all-powerful Zaki Amuri imports unqualified Asian doctors into Cross-river.

Finally, the statement that sums up Soyinka's position on the January 15 killings: 'It was a pity that any killing took place at all, but it is the rare and lucky revolution which manages to avoid blood' (p.149), in the autobiography, becomes in the novel: 'Just the same, the sowing of any idea these days can no longer take place without accepting the need to protect the young seedling, even by violent means.' (p.23, SOA) Thus it can be said that the thin line demarcating autobiography and fiction blur considerably in Soyinka's case. The cross-references and similarities further buttress our earlier argument that Ake and The Man Died are artistic autobiographies. Lalage Bown argues for the non-discrimination between autobiography and fiction in literature when she states:

> No one would contest the central place in literary studies of works of the imagination; but these works may be usefully supplemented by non-fictional prose writings ... Fundamentally, the point is that literature of its nature has no set boundaries.6

Some of the other criticisms against The Man Died were that Soyinka failed to clearly articulate a definite course of action for the radicals to salvage the nation from the throes of chaos and lack of development. Others charged him with elitist, obscure and self-aggrandizing language which tended to confuse rather than educate the people.[7]

Soyinka's most comprehensive reply to all of these initial criticisms can be found in the Preface to the 1988 Spectrum Books edition of The Man Died. To the criticism of not suggesting the way forward, he says:

> When, some twelve years ago, I set out to recapture certain realities of experience in preventive detention, I most certainly made no claims that I was writing a political tract. I did not set out to write the history of Nigeria up to and including the Civil War, nor was I about to set down prescriptions for its political or economic salvation.8

It is our opinion that despite its shortcomings — the book lays no claims to anything magnanimous or overly ambitious — The Man Died is designed to shock and thus elicit outrage. In this it clearly succeeds judging by the spate of comments. Soyinka goes on to charge critics of the book with not having any suggestions to offer for 'an apt language for a truthful representation of the obscenity that provokes certain experiences.'

The whole of the preface is a sustained defence of the intense 'emotivism' and the intemperateness of the language of the book:

> When power is placed in the service of vicious reaction, a language must be called into being which does its best to appropriate such obscenity of power and fling its excesses back in its face. Criticism of such language is simply squeamish or christianly — language being expected to turn the other cheek, not stick up a finger in an obscene, defiant gesture... Language must communicate its illegitimacy in a forceful, uncompromising language of rejection seeking always to make it ridiculous and contemptible, deflating its pretension at the core.9

Without such books as The Man Died, concerned patriots may not be aware of the deviousness and level of diabolical

intrigue that goes on in the corridors of power and ultimately against the people. The necessity of the graphic representation, such as the one in the book, for shaking the people out of their inertia and excessive complaisance and complacency cannot be overstated. Mental and physical alertness are the target of such an uncompromising language.

'Such a language,' Soyinka continues, 'does not pretend to dismantle that structure of power, which can only be a collective endeavour in any case; it does however, contribute to the psychological reconstitution of public attitudes to forms of oppression.' He concludes, 'Language needs to be a part of resistance therapy.'[10]

The above establishes definitively and clarifies the relationship that exists among Soyinka's literature, his language, perception and contribution to the struggle. Criticisms of 'obscurity' and 'elitism' even against the autobiographies — they are exaggerated as usual — illustrate the fact that between the fictions and autobiographies, there is little difference in language in general and prose style in particular. In any case difficult writing has its advantages as Bown suggests in a similar context:

> African literature courses at all levels should include the occasional piece of rather 'difficult' writing. Young men and women need to see that some of their fellow Africans have been able to write subtly or highly technically, have mastered a wide vocabulary and have read enough to be allusive.11

A vast vocabulary, technical diction and an allusive style are the special forte of Wole Soyinka's. Few people perhaps,

read his books and remain the same afterwards.

However, difficult or not, obscure or not, it can be discerned that the themes of quest and struggle for a better understanding and beter society run through all of Soyinka's prose works, be they fiction or autobiography. They are themes given form and shape through language. It is a harsh and unsparing language which deals with an equally harsh and unsparing socio-political phenomenon. It is directed not only at the ruling class but also at the populace. It is indeed the people's language as Soyinka himself says later:

> The language we use in addressing culpable power is, in itself, part of the needful preparatory activity towards this liberation of a popular will... Obviously this language was not simply the language of one 'aggrieved' writer; it is the hidden language of an oppressed populace — the writer does no more than expose it, re-appropriating it for the commencement of the liberation therapy.12

From the foregoing one becomes gradually aware that Soyinka's language is conditioned by his involvement in a continuous struggle for equality and social justice. He strives to contribute his part in what Ngugi had in mind when he wrote:

> The artist in his writings is not outside the battle. By diving into its sources, he can give moral direction and vision to a struggle which, though suffering temporary reaction, is continuous and is changing the face of the twentieth century.13

It is almost a futile exercise to look for major differences in linguistic style between Soyinka's autobiographies and fictional works. His fictional works derive

largely from the events recounted in the two autobiographical works. There is a definite feeling of 'deja vu' in the fictional works if one reads the autobiographies first.

4.20 Prose Texture

The prose in Ake and The Man Died are as elliptical, allusive and as poetic as those in The Interpreters and Season of Anomy. It is frequently evocative and poignant. It is full of persiflage and displays that special capacity to yoke together the most heterogeneous of ideas.

The transparent prose, which some would have expected and which would be accessible with little effort on the part of the reader, as a result of dealing with 'brutal realism,' especially in The Man Died, is decidedly absent in the autobiographies. Instead, what we get is the same subtle organization of materials, the same rhythm and impressionism observable in the novels. But of course, this is to be expected since it is an obvious fact that variations in style are more readily influenced by subject matter than by sub-classifications of genre.

Leech and Short write in the same vein when they say:

> In a medical textbook, the choice between 'clavicle' and 'collarbone' can justly be called a matter of stylistic variation. But if the author replaced 'clavicle' by 'thigh-bone', this would no longer be a matter of stylistic variation, but a matter of fact... There is no reason to treat fictional language in a totally different way... language is used, in fiction, to project a world 'beyond language', in that we use not only our knowledge of language, the meanings of words etc, but also our general knowledge of the real world to furnish it.14

Both Ake and The Man Died therefore, carry the essential

Soyinka imprint that runs through not only all his prose works but the whole corpus of his writings. This common strain is the desire to achieve expression, and then communication, by the shortest cut through a thick undergrowth of words and sentences. This also includes the intensification and piling of seriated and individuated lexical items and unusual collocations. There are however many instances in the autobiographies, particularly Ake, when the prose settles down to a more even and what Maduakor calls a 'less turgid tone.'[15]

4.20.1 Lexical Features

Here, Soyinka's choice of words still reflects a preference for the urbane and the unusual. Much of the descriptions are carried out by means of multiple, individuated words and phrases. In most cases, these contain only verbids (non-finite forms of verbs or non-verbal words which are derived from verbs). In Ake, this occurs mostly when some personal comment or, unique perspective (as in The Man Died) is to be imposed on the description. The following are examples:

[2.1] The coloured maps, pictures and other hangings on the walls, the coloured counters, markers, slates, ink-wells in neat round holes, crayons and drawing-books, a shelf laden with modelled objects — animals, human beings, implements — raffia and basket-work in various stages of completion, even the blackboards, chalk and duster... I had yet to see a more inviting playroom. (p.25, Ake)

[2.2] ... a half, pressed against St. Peter's parsonage wall

> is shared among a variety of stores peddling the products of a global waste industry — fly-brown shawls, combs, mirrors, flaring radio antennae, chrome or foam-and-rubber motor-car decorations, ornamented flasks, drinking-glasses disguised as floral arrangements, oriental table-mats stamped Manchester, clocks, 'gold' jewellery, photo-frames with a backing of white voluptuous bodies... Raquel Welch, Marilyn Monroe, Diana Dors, Jane Russel, Greta Garbo. (p.150,Ake)

[2.3] Earth. Earth. Sit on the floor. Blanket. If only it were not freezing. Pillow then, sit on the pillow to protect your ankles, wrap the blanket around you. Breathe... And again. And again. Roll the words in the mouth. Taste wine-grace, pollen flavour, spirit dust... Greedily. But greedily! Swallow beyond repletion. (pp.186-187,TMD)

[2.4] Cardiograms, blood pressure, blood sample, urine tests, reflexes... on the second last visit to the hospital it rained. The deluge was a strange unreal awakening. I had forgotten wind and flood as denizens of open spaces. (p.289,TMD)

Three of these passages contain value judgements. The items 'inviting' [2.1], 'global waste' [2.2] and 'deluge' [2.4] are embedded within opinionated statements; that is, how Soyinka interprets the sights before him. The passages also resonate with poetry — this is especially so in [2.3] with its short imperative subject-less sentences. It will also be observed that the individuated words and phrases, which we had encountered in the novels, give the passages an almost overloaded quality. And, though there is a considerably less esotericism in the diction, the

assortment of items — decorative pictures of international models and a cosmopolitan assortment of utensils — create a somewhat disorienting effect against the backdrop of the semi-rural environment of 1934 or thereabouts described.

Passage [2.1] describes the attraction that school held for the young Soyinka even at the age of two and a half. He had accompanied Tinu, his sister, to school and insisted on enrolling immediately for the reasons described in the passage.

In text [2.2], the description is of the state of Ake neighbourhood before and now that modernity has come to it. The passages from The Man Died describe Soyinka's introverted experience in detention and an outing to the hospital respectively. As pointed out earlier in chapter three, there is a minimal occurrence of finite verbs and coventionally complete sentences. The emphasis is on visual effects. This is realized by substantival nouns and nominal phrases/groups.

Morphologically, the lexical items are relatively simple except of course such hyphenated compound words as 'drawing-books', 'fly-brown', 'foam-and-rubber', 'motor-car', 'drinking-glasses', 'table-mats' and 'wine-grace', which though semantically simple are nevertheless complex. There is also the uncommon, non-Anglo-saxon word 'denizen' which has however become a common feature of Soyinka's prose. The compounds are not unusual. Unusual compounds will be discussed later.

Of the three ways of writing compound words which are, with hyphens, as one word, or as two words, Soyinka seems to

prefer the first of these. The lexical item, 'denizen' (Anglo-French word), meaning foreign resident person or thing, or inhabitant, belongs to the class of words which includes 'arabesque', 'camwood' and 'anomy', that are now more or less distinctively Soyinka's. One comes across them in many of his works — drama, prose and poetry: Madmen and Specialists, A Shuttle in the Crypt, Idanre, Season of Anomy, Ake and The Man Died. This preference for the uncommon makes Soyinka create such weird morphologizings as 'crescendoing' and 'diminuendoing' (p.231,TMD).

There are mainly bound morphemes of plurality [-s], participial tenses [-ed] and [-ing]: 'map(s)', 'picture(s)', 'decoration(s)', 'comb(s)', 'back(ing)', 'hang(ing)' and 'awake(n)(ing)'. The passage in [2.3] contains statements expressed vocatively; that is, imperative statements in which the subjects are characteristically ellipted and where in some cases a noun or a pronoun is used interjectionally[16]: 'sit on the floor...', 'sit on the pillow...' 'wrap the blanket around you...' 'Breathe...' 'Roll the words...' 'Taste wine-grace... swallow beyond repetition etc.'

The clause structure of the sentences are characteristically PA, PA, PCA, P, PC, PC and PA with an ellipsis of the S clausal element. The structure of the individuated noun phrases are 'fly-brown shawls' (mh); 'Combs', 'mirrors', 'clocks', 'Raquel Welch' etc have the structure, (h); whereas 'flaring radio antennae', 'motor-car decorations', 'ornamented flasks', 'the coloured maps' etc have the structure, (<m>mh).

The special stylistic quality of passage [2.3] is the impression of discourse between more than one participant which Soyinka creates, instead of the interior monologue which it actually is. He avoids more commonplace style while attempting to achieve economy of expression. The short imperative sentences are shortened forms of longer expressions directed at himself: 'I thought about sitting on the pillow, or on the floor... and then thought about wrapping the blanket around me...'

The compounds — 'drawing-books', 'basket-work', 'motor-car', 'drinking glasses', 'table-mats', 'photo-frames', 'wine-grace' — all have a similar morphological make-up classifiable into two sub groups:

1. gerund-headed nominal compound: 'drawing-books' and 'drinking-glasses'.
2. noun-headed nominal compound: 'basket-work', 'motor-car', 'table-mats', 'photo-frames' and 'wine-grace'.

Note: The gerund(verbal noun) belongs to the word class, 'noun'.

A summary of the four passages is as follows:

Passage [2.1]	Passage [2.2]
+ pedagogy register	+ household utensils register
+ descriptive	+ descriptive
− finite predicator	− finite predicator
− complex vocabulary	+ complex vocabulary
+ word complexity(morphology)	+ word complexity (morphology)

Passage [2.3]	Passage [2.4]
+ simulated discourse	+ medical register

− complex vocabulary + word complexity(morph.)	− complex vocabulary + word complexity(morph.)

It is usually said that autobiography, unlike fiction, adheres to the modest and realist representation of events, and that its style is usually devoid to those ornate and decorative aspects we so often find in fiction. This is because the autobiography deals with actual events. However, as earlier noted in this chapter, Soyinka's autobiographies deviate from this strictly chronological order. The events are arranged according to how they bear relevance to the author's present life. The arrangement is also influenced by how Soyinka remembers the events. They are artistic autobiographies. This will be dealt with in the narrative secti

A feature of both autobiographical works is Soyinka's preference for rhythm and ornate phrases. It is also remarkable that the books qua autobiography, do not manifest any radical departure from this style which we had seen in the novels. For instance, in Ake, Soyinka speaks of the parsonage being fenced by a 'tumuli' of rocks (p.2). The bookseller's wife is described as possessing a 'bovine beauty' (p.15), and the comparison of his 'private' rock to the whale that swallowed Jonah -- the comparison reveals the rock to other students -- makes Soyinka experience the 'loss of a replete subsuming presence' (p.64).

The guava tree is described as moist yet filled with a 'crisp vitality, silent yet wisely communicative' (p.65). The guava tree is personified here to show the special role it plays as a sanctuary for his solitary and meditative moments.

164

Later, Soyinka writes of expecting 'a cataclysm of unthinkable proportions' as a result of Folasade's death (p.98). The delightful things to be bought on the way to choir practice in Ibarapa become 'a sumptuous resurrection of flavours' (p.154). The carvings which decorate the Alake's palace are 'luminous eyeballs of petrified ancients' (p.204).

In The Man Died, the rhythmical renderings are occasioned by the frequent excursions into metaphysics by the author. There is a revelation akin to that of Oedipus when it was revealed to him the forces he had had to contend with. But rather than utilize this Joyce-like epiphanies and further confront the gods, Oedipus Rex capitulated and blinded himself. Soyinka is faced with a similar situation in detention in The Man Died. The revelation and metaphysical perceptions about the forces ranged against him come to him in solitary meditation; but unlike Oedipus however, Soyinka does not surrender. Instead, he dares the dragon in its den. The phrasing that gives rise to the title of the book is described as a 'catechumenical pronouncement' (p.13). The decision to embark on a hunger strike is justified because 'the early chirurgeons bled the choleric' (p.41).

Furthermore, the author's trauma in detention is a 'marshmallow of sensations' (p.88) which result from attempts to prevent his taking part in the 'regenerative continuance of the promethean struggle' (p.89). The word, 'promethean', recalls a classical struggle of its kind. There is of course 'protocolic infliction' in the practice of travelling in

siren-blaring motorcades by Heads of state (p.231).

Soyinka is again assaulted from all sides by ideas and vocabulary which resonate with a sledgehammer intensity. The spider's delicately ornamented web with which it traps flies — the regime's elaborate trap for Soyinka — is clean 'geometric filigrees' (p.259), and the guard's breaking of a window glass while attempting to kill a lizard (the unwitting destruction of the system, or part of it, while attempting to destroy Soyinka) is to the author a 'chromatic disintegration' which 'dazzles and deafens, showering down in primal damp fragments of the sun's last rallying percussions' (pp.271-272).

The euphony and poeticisms of the phrases contribute most to the felicity and urbanity of Soyinka's prose. To many critics, they are illustrative of verbal dexterity. Some critics however ascribe this mastery over the language to an innate capacity. Young for instance writes:

> This freedom of intuition over the scales of modern linguistic and cultural experience more than anything else sets Soyinka apart from his contemporaries.

He elaborates but with a qualification thus:

> Significantly, too, his weakness as a writer can be ascribed to the same liberation of response where it lapses into an ensnaring verbal facility and mannered obscurities of expressions.17

It is our opinion that Soyinka in some cases refuses to get bogged down by meaning; his concern in many of these cases is for the felicitous word or phrase. He desires a phrase that is catchy enough to arrest attention. He

replies to such criticisms about obscurity by saying that 'complex subjects sometimes elicit from the writer complex treatments.'[18] In an unpublished reaction to Chinweizu et al, he asserts: 'We must stress the language, stretch it, impact and compact it, fragment and reassemble it with no apology, as required to bear the burden of experience and of experiencing.[19]

The 'mannered obscurities of expression,' some critics tend to forget, are essentially literal and artistic translations of the destructive and belligerently creative attributes of the author's cosmic counterpart, Ogun.

The description of the effect of the rain in Ake recalls its fictional version in The Interpreters when a storm causes the loss of a tooth in the decayed gum of the skyline. It also recalls the downpour which was responsible for Sekoni's death though here in the autobiography, the language is less impressionistic partly because the author is dealing with a child's sensations and partly because of the evocative nature of the ideas described:

[2.5] The flimsier structures of Ake, built of unbaked mud could not stand up to the rains of July and August. The corrugated iron sheets were penetrated by the wind which ripped them off, flung them over other roofs, leaving the rain to find the weakest point in the walls, dissolve the mud and flush out the household. But sometimes the rain acted first; it found the crack in the thin cement coating, soaked it to its foundations, then the house collapsed on its inmates. A wet shivering survivor, a growing pool about his

feet, stood in the front room and told the tale of disaster. (p.98, Ake)

This simple, evocative description continues with the strain of sacrifice which we had seen in the deaths of Sekoni and the Custodian of the Grain in the novels. It is still the ritual sacrifice of people to the inefficiencies of the society. The sacrifices are closely interwoven with that of Sanya's illness in Ake, and also the deaths of Fajuyi, Alale, Nzeogu and Okigbo in The Man Died. Here is a description of the sacrifice to cure Sanya's illness:

[2.6] The children were dispersed in various directions, some to the markets to obtain the agidi, others to begin grinding the beans for the amont of ekuru which was needed to accompany 50 wraps of Agidi...When all was prepared however, the old woman took everything to Sanya's sick room, plus a pot of cold water and cups, locked the door on him and ordered everybody away. (p.11, Ake)

The vocabulary is deliberately kept within a level that communicates a child's recollections. The theme of quest and ritual shortens the expressions in the following passage into a series of rhetorical questions:

[2.7] A private quest? Stuff for the tragic stage and the ritual rounds of passion? A brave quest that diverges from, with never a backward glance at history's tramp of feet along the communal road? Is this then the long-threatened moment for jettisoning, for instance, notions of individual responsibility and the struggle it imposes? (p.88, TMD)

The thaw in the poeticisms in passages [2.5] and [2.6] can of course be appreciated from the fact that, as has

already been stated, the author's infanthood affects the vocabulary. These descriptions, like that of Season of Anomy where Ofeyi makes love to Iriyise, are slightly mellowed by a sense of the immediacy at points — though rare — where Soyinka feels a compelling need to communicate puerile sensations.

In The Man Died, the metaphysical sensibility reaches its peak and contributes to the jerky noun phrases with which the other works are noted: 'a private quest' (mmh), 'stuff for the tragic stage' (hq),'a brave quest that diverges from...'(mmhq). The phrases in [2.5] are: 'The flimsier structures of Ake' (mmhq), 'The corrugated iron sheets' and 'A wet shivering survivor' (mmmh).

This preference for nouns and nominal phrases leads Soyinka to coin aliases and cognomens for some of his characters. His father is 'Essay' — an acronym from his initials of S.A., but also conjuring up the man's elaborate manners which, according to Soyinka, were akin to the elaborate steps required in writing a composition (essay). Mother is 'Wild Christian' for reasons which we have already explained. This style of naming almost reaches epidemic proportions in The Man Died — 'Polyphemus', 'Hogroth', 'Caliban', 'Gorilla'. We had seen 'The Morgue'(Sir Derinola), 'Queen Bee' (Simi) in The Interpreters; and 'The Dentist' (Demakin), 'Iridescent' (Iriyise), 'I.Q.' (Intellectual Quota) in Season of Anomy.

In summary, in Soyinka's choice of words, there is a

preference for poetic and rhythmic words even in the autobiographies. Many of the words are 'aggressive', and some of them display unusual morphology. There is a cadence to the endwords in most of the phrases, and through individualised words and phrases, Soyinka establishes an aesthetic link with meaning and draws attention to certain ideas in themselves.

4.20.2 Grammatical Features

There is a sense in which Ake cannot be regarded entirely as an autobiography. Though the materials are from real life — actual happenings which were not created by the author — the actual arrangement of the story; what events to record and in what order; what details to expunge — all of these require a great deal of imagination from the author. Consequently, many accomplished autobiographies are really works of the imagination. Though they are usually stories about one's life, they can, as Ogundipe-Leslie says, be 'a recreation of oneself in the image one has of oneself'. Ogundipe-Leslie's opinion is instructive:

> For the autobiography, not being a documentary... gives us the memory, which is an edited, selected, and reworked version of facts and events, battered by time, not as they actually happened. Memory fictionalizes.20

This strengthens our argument that there really is no need to treat autobiography — especially on issues related to style — as markedly different from fiction since fiction derives its language from the same events narrated in autobiographies. Related to this is the question of the narrative

170

technique.

i. Narrative

Soyinka selects a number of incidents, and , with the aid of the flashback technique which frequently takes us backward and forward to fill in crucial details, what we get are two artistic autobiographies not particularly chronological.

In Ake for instance, the author looks back at his childhood fortyseven years after and repairs to only those events which shape his childhood into a definite pattern. At the beginning of the narrative, there is a description of the Bishops-Court in the parsonage followed by the statement, 'Bishops -Court is no more.' This statement is followed by a recollection, or an imagination, of the occasion when the young Soyinka had wandered close to Bishop Ajayi Crowther and inquired what he always kept at the end of the silver chain that vanished into his pocket. Bishop Crowther, it is reported, replied: 'Come nearer, I'll show you,' and then proceeded to demonstrate, possibly with contact lens,what was at the end of the chain and of course frightening off Soyinka. The point here is that the Bishop Crowther incident does not belong chronologically to that point in the narrative. It should have come before and not after the statement about modern day Ake.

Again an earlier event which occurred in Ake, the accidental firing of his father's gun into the ceiling, is not recalled until the latter parts of the book when the

family visits Isara, his father's hometown. It is while Soyinka examines the 'bare, smoky mysterious rafters' of the roof and compares it to the ceiling mats in their house in the parsonage which were occasionally ruined by termites that the story of the accidental discharge flashes through his mind.

Most poignant and imaginative perhaps is the story in chapter ten of Sorowanke, the mad woman who inhabits Dayisi's promenade. It begins with the amorous relationship between her and her lover, Yokolu, and her nightly rantings; then the narrative breaks off. In an intervening space of eight pages (pp.150-158) it launches into a description of the features of the Ibarapa market, the exoticisms of Dayisi's promenade, the Centenary Hall, and then finally returns to a portrait of Sorowanke who in the meantime has been impregnated by her lover (pp. 149-160)

The same technique is noticed in the ordering of the episodes in The Man Died. It is a medley of factual events (described by the author as digressions), processes of gradual insulation of the author from the outside world and excursions into metaphysics. It is divided into two major sections. The Lagos and Kaduna episodes. The Lagos section consists mainly of the author's arrest and interrogation by the security branch and his eventual confinement. It also includes the beginning of his private ruminations and attempts to establish contact with the outside world. From Lagos he is moved to Kaduna prisons.

The first digression is a footnote to the Red Cross.

In it, Soyinka urges the Red Cross to be more vigilant in its inspection of the conditions of detainees. The second digression is in chapter fifteen. It ridicules the 'Atrocities Commission' constituted by the Gowon Administration; but most of chapter twelve is fictional since it is made up mostly of original musings.

In the Kaduna sections, some of the digressions function like flashbacks as they fill in required detail. For instance, a chance question by Polyphemus in Kaduna prison about Soyinka's opinion of the January 15 coup triggers off recollections of earlier facts about the pogrom.

Chapter twenty-two narrates what Maduakor has described as having the 'potential for becoming great short stories.'[21] These are episodal narratives of Soyinka's conversation with ghosts. The description of the author's grandfather's ghost as sitting 'gnome-like' and 'chuckling secretively every chunk of his body pulsing with love and strength' while conversing with his grandson recalls the image of the grandfather in Ake whose concern for his grandson led him to make ritual incisions on the latter's ankle for protection.

Next comes the ghost of Okigbo closely followed by that of Fajuyi. The conversation between Soyinka and Fajuyi fills in much historical material about the course of the events in Western Nigeria that led to the civil war. From here, the story shifts to the story of the January 15 coup plotters and Ironsi's stance.

After this, we are taken to the events before the news of the coup reaches Soyinka, his reaction to it and an earlier

173

real life conversation between him and Fajuyi over the fate of the coup plotters, and then the author's tour of the north and then back to Fajuyi. Next is the initial mention of the visit to the east and then back to Fajuyi, his death, and a full narrative of the visit to the east; the discussion he held there with other members of the 'Third Force,' Banjo and Alale. It is after this visit that Soyinka is arrested by the authorities.

With these historical fillers, the narrative settles at frequent intervals to private metaphysical flights where he consolidates his 'insulating capsule' begun in Lagos. This structural breakdown has been necessitated by the need to demonstrate the artistic nature of the autobiographies. The ordering of the events in both autobiographies show that between Soyinka's fictional and autobiographical works, there is an identity of artistry.

ii. Syntax

The syntactic structures in both Ake and The Man Died in the non-dialogue portions still remind one of 'a dry pod whose seeds are so closely packed that they connot shake or move about.' However Ake contains many portions in which the prose is so porous as to be transparent; semantically they are dense and poetic. The desire to jolt the reader into a compulsory attentiveness is still the overriding concern as the following examples show:

[2.8] The sprawling, undulating terrain is all of Ake. More than mere loyalty to the parsonage gave birth to a puzzle and a resentment that God should choose to look down on his own pious station the parsonage compound,

from the profane heights of Itoko. (p.1, Ake)

[2.9] Change was imossible to predict. A tempo, a mood would have settled over the house, over guests, relations, casual visitors, poor rlations, 'cousins', strays — all recognized within a tangible pattern of feeling — and then it would happen! A small event or, more frequently, nothing happened at all, nothing that I could notice much less grasp and — suddenly it all changed! The familiar faces looked and acted differently. (p.93 Ake)

[2.10] The Ogboni slid through Ake like ancient wraiths, silent dark and wise, a tanned pouch of Egba history, of its mysteries, memories and insights or thudded through on warrior's feet, defiant and raucous, broad and compact with unspoken violence. (p.203, Ake)

[2.11] In a moment of enforced calm, I moved out of the echoes of voices in the streets, of voices in the markets, out of whispers in corridors, glances in-gatherings, out of the rain of spittle and contempt, moved out from the target of pointed fingers, the giggle in the dark, out from the wise nods of geriatric consciences, out of the mockery, the assuaged envy and jubilation of the self-deluded. (p.80, TMD)

[2.12] To survive, but to survive in a transmitted form, full of nebulous wisdoms, corrupted and seduced by sagehood homage, carefully insulated from intimacy with the affairs of men, that kind of bribery which Oedipus at first snatched at, blinding himself physically to eradicate in entirety the route to socially redemptive action — this is the preference of all establishment. (p.89, TMD)

The special stylistic features of these passages are that

they reverberate with poetry. Some of the sentences are not as syntactically complex as those of the novels. The riddling quality found particularly in [2.8] and the numerous seriated phrases and sentential structural elements of the other texts ensure that the passages have to be read and reread in order to get at their structural meanings.

Passage [2.8] is the opening paragraph of Ake. It is made up of two sentences the second of which is complex; they are very important as introductory statements and so the reader asks what Soyinka is talking about. At a closer reading, one would discover that it is a description of how the young Soyinka views the terrain of Ake. The author says that his childish mind thought that because of the uneven structure of the terrain of Ake (the Itoko part which did not believe in God was on a hill seeming to merge with the heavens), it seemed as though God chose to look on the parsonage, which was his pious station, from this part of unbelievers. The young Soyinka felt that this was wrong, not merely from his loyalty to the parsonage, but from a standpoint of what he saw as justice. This interpretation is however not explicit; they are expressed as though they were the gospel truth; as though it is the impression of the adult Soyinka rather than infant sensations which they really are. The reason is to make the reader gird up his loins.

Soyinka's description of God's programme of activities on

Sunday is evocative: After the church services on Sundays, God descended, shunned a ride on horseback from the pagan chief's stable and visited the parsonage for tea with the Canon. During the church service itself 'the organ took on a dark, smoky sonority at evening service... adapting its normal sounds to accompany God's own sepulchral responses, with its timbre of the"egungun", to those prayers that were offered to him.' (p.1)

Ogundipe-Leslie is impressed by this description and describes it as being 'so sensitive and moving as to become poetry ... controlled and brief "like match-flare in wind's breath."'[22]

The first sentence:'The sprawling...Ake', contains a stylistically rendered complement, 'all', which is closely linked with the qualifying phrase,'of Ake'. Soyinka could have said: 'The sprawling undulating terrain is all that Ake has/is made up of' in which the phrase,'of Ake', would be replaced by a longer construction — an adjectival dependent clause: 'that Ake has/is made up of'. The structure of the longer sentence would have been S P C thus:

Subject—modifier: The
modifier: sprawling
modifier: undulating
headword: terrain

Predicator: is

Complement—headword: all
qualifier—Rankshifted clause...

... Rankshifted clause—A^b: that
Subject: Ake
Predicator: has/is made up of

But Soyinka's condensed version shows the phrase 'of Ake' as a rankshifted qualifier of the complement; thus his condensed but similar structure would be as follows:

Subject: The sprawling...terrain
Predicator: is
Complement—headword: all
qualifier—prepend: of
completive: Ake

The principal clause of the second sentence, 'More than mere... resentment' is structured thus:

Subject: More than... parsonage
Predicator: gave birth to (phrasal verb)
Complement: a puzzle... resentment.

This is followed by a rankshifted adjectival qualifying clause: 'that God... Itoko' with a linker, 'that', and structured as follows:

Subject: God
Predicator: should choose... down (phased pred.with phrasal verb)
Adjunct: on... compound (appositive)
Adjunct: from the... Itoko

Passages [2.9], [2.11] and [2.12] are similar because they are replete with short, crisp often repetitive structures. The second of these describes the author's moments of sober reflection and angst about his role in the struggle. Like [2.9], it consists of copious noun groups functioning as

subject and governing equally copious noun groups which function as complement, or adjuncts, and often punctuated by the parenthetical interruptor -- the dash:

Subject: A tempo, a mood (individualised)
Predicator: would have settled (auxiliars and lexical verb)
Adjunct: over the house... strays (repetitive)
NON-FINITE CLAUSE:

Subject: all
Predicator: recognized
Adjunct: within a... feeling
} Parenthetical interruptor

Subject: A small event... nothing, nothing (repetitive)
Predicator: happened
Adjunct: at all
RANKSHIFTED CLAUSE: That I could... grasp
linker: That
Subject: I
Predicator: could notice... grasp

The adjunct, 'much less', which splits the complex Predicator, modifies the word, 'grasp'.

Adjunct: and suddenly
Subject: it all
Predicator: changed
Subject: The familiar faces
Predicator: looked... acted
Adjunct: differently

The two passages from The Man Died, [2.11] and [2.12], are perhaps the most poetic. Both passages are made up of a single long sentence each with more or less the same structure as those of [2.9] and [2.10]. Passage [2.11] begins with a frontal adjunct which precedes a subject that is followed by a

predicator and numerous adjunct phrases introduced by the repeated element 'out of'. This device is called 'rhetorical anaphora':

Adjunct: In... calm
Subject: I
Predicator: moved
Adjunct: out... streets, of... markets, out of... gatherings, out... contempt, moved out... dark, out... consciences, out... self-deluded (rhetorical anaphora)

Passage [2.12] is a sentence introduced by two co-ordinated 'to-infinitival, non-finite' clausal constructions followed by a number of predicative phrases which are finally restrated in two clauses the first of which contains a complex rankshift:

Subject: To survive... wisdoms) This is a complex
Predicator: corrupted... seduced) construction replete with
Adjunct: by... homage) passive verbs without a
Adjunct: carefully) single finite verb or
Predicator: insulated) clause functioning really
Adjunct: from... men) as the subject.

COMPLEX CLAUSE:

Subject: that kind of bribery

RANKSHIFT (RELATIVE CLAUSE):
Subject: Oedipus
Adjunct: at first
Predicator: snatched at (phrasal verb)

RESTATED CLAUSE:
Subject: this
Predicator: is
Complement: the preference... establishement.

This analysis has shown that as in his novels, Soyinka's autobiographical syntax shows a preponderance of orthographic sentences in which their only hallmarks are the capital letters and fullstops. He leaves out important points such as conventional co-ordination and placement methods between subject, verb, object and adverb . The passages just examined, syntactically and semantically have Soyinka and his ego as their cynosure. They are, as Leslie aptly puts it, his re-creation of the image he has of himself.

iii. Cohesion

Each of the autobiographies is a cohesive whole. Indeed, all four prose works together have been shown to be one giant cohesive whole. Ake deals with the formative years of the struggle. This struggle pauses at independence to examine the awareness that the individual has of the dialectics of the quest and struggle, in The Interpreters. This quest, which is translated into the individual's affirmative response to blind social forces, is temporally halted in The Man Died; but it is resumed and it reaches a successful, though at a great cost, conclusion producing 'spores' at the end of Season of Anomy.

Instances of intra-textual (passages) cohesion abound in both autobiographies when the author sends the reader scanning backwards (anaphora) or forward (cataphora) for the referent of a particular presupposing lexical item . There are also occasions when Soyinka breaks off expecting the reader to fill in the missing part:

'But the more intimate things have. [changed]... Even Jonah... "You know where the school does its clay modelling? The whale that swallowed Jonah was bigger than that rock"' (p. 63, Ake)

There are instances of both anaphoric and cataphoric reference here: 'The more intimate things have' what? One must go back a few pages to identify what is ellipted here which is the bracketed 'changed'. The mention of Jonah is abrupt and only further reading will illuminate its referent as the rock to which the catechist had compared the whale that swallowed Jonah.

Chapter eleven of Ake begins with the sentence:'All that I observed was that he kept more and more to his room, that he ate less often, and then, mostly in his room and that when he emerged, he appeared to look more keenly at us and shake his head sadly' (p.161). One is forced to ask, to whom do all the 'he's refer? There is no prior hint of any untoward incident. It is only further down that it becomes clear that the third person pronouns refer cataphorically to Essay.

Chapter one of The Man Died is titled with an imcomplete statement which is ellipted: 'A letter to compatriots...', and it is completed semantically by the first equally ellipted sentence of the first paragraph: '... prompted by two items on my table at this moment'. As has been said earlier, it is Soyinka's desire to achieve a forceful style befitting a lone revolutionary. It is also designed to keep

the reader alert all the time. The following is an example of rhetorical anaphora:

> But perhaps it is a dead subject. Better still, perhaps it never happened. Perhaps some fifty thousand Nigerians were not butchered and brutalized, and a population shift of a million and a half people did not take place. Perhaps if the butchery did take place it was not planned, and perhaps the machinery to halt it did not exist. And yet again perhaps the civil war that resulted did not owe part of its origin to the deliberate subversion of the machinery of equity and justice by the historical throw-ups that had taken power. Perhaps this event of genocide had nothing to do at all with the Ibo secession. Finally, perhaps it cannot, it is unthinkable that it will ever happen again. (pp.24-25 TMD)

This anaphora achieves a heightening effect. With each mention of the word 'perhaps,' the tone is raised a notch further. As usual, Soyinka employs ellipsis dots sometimes in place of what he would rather not say: ' I am beginning to fear that the Army itself may not know when it is time to go. If the people once suspect that...' (p.171, TMD). 'As for further hopes, of building anything approaching a socialist state...' (p.177,TMD). 'For unto us a child is born... it was the cry of a new born, that child's' (p.199,TMD). These intra-textual features contribute to a more elaborate inter-textual cohesion among all the prose works.

iv. Devices

We had remarked how the prose in the novels is replete with images of bridges, domes, ritual sacrifice, quest,

struggle and germination. The last three are particularly prominent in The Interpreters and Season of Anomy. There is quest for identity and meaning out of life in the former. There is in the latter, the dialectical conflict between on the one hand, the agents of exploitation and oppression, and those of progress and justice, on the other hand, who struggle to aid the sowing; germination of life-affirming values.

Soyinka is a participant in all of these aspects of the struggle. What we have seen in the autobiographies confirms this. It is in the autobiographies however that the metaphor of struggle — as clearly defined individual efforts to halt the society's dangerous drift towards anarchy — takes on a more explicit authorial corporeal participation. This metaphor is expressed through the essential linguistic imprint unique to the author. This individualist perception of vision in literature is supported by Widdowson. He writes:

> At the heart of literary creation is the struggle to devise patterns of language which will bestow upon the linguistic items concerned just those values which convey the individual writer's personal vision... the code does not provide for the expression of his individual perception and concepts so he has to devise his own patterns of language to give words the value of individual meanings.23

The images in both autobiographies which consist of, as in the case of the novels, unusual comparisons and mystical analogies should be seen in this light. Ake is replete with both flattering images of kindness (catechists, traders, educators), and those of ugliness, cruelty and exploitation (ghommids; corporal punishment; taxation; 'salanga' —

latrine pits — 'faeces flung or expelled directly by squatting adults', and Ogboni, the paradox of strength and exploitation). It is the Ogboni which precipitate the Egba Women's Riot in which the author participates.

The imagery in The Man Died is that of ugliness, deformity, violence and death. These images, according to Maduakor, 'take into account the proximity in real life between ugliness and beauty.'[24] Soyinka says that the images are meant to vividly illustrate the cruelty and brutality that lurk beneath the exterior of the benign and suave leader. It is meant to unmask the thin veneer of urbanity that covers the atavistic machinations of the ruler:

> The gloved, beautiful be-ribboned leader who has just waved so graciously to the people, who has just wiped with a lace handkerchief the drops of champagne from his lips, has just before that moment given the order for the quiet liquidation of a number of innocent trade unionists.25

Soyinka goes on to suggest that a book if necessary should be 'a hammer, a handgrenade which you detonate under a stagnant way of looking at the world.'[26]

Stylistically, the comparisons in the autobiographies are at once ingenious and far-fetched as those in the novels. Some are also misleading and others are exaggerated intentionally to create effect. Here are a few:

[2.13] The basin itself sat in a big hole on the flat shelf... and it always seemed to me... that the view of cockroaches looking up at this big white enamel protrusion, must be quite like the view of the rats which scuppered about in the big dug out latrine whenever any grown-up buttocks filled

the hole in the box above them. (p.59,Ake)

[2.14] I would wake up in the night after a violent struggle with pythons that had tied up all my limbs, suffocating under slimy monsters from a mythical past... (p.84,Ake)

[2.15] He would worry the dead flesh of an argument with hawk-like talons...(p:19, Ake)

[2.16] He was a rugged terrain whch had to be captured, then secured tree by tree, hill by hill, boulder by boulder. (p.114,Ake)

[2.17] I slipped into prison life as one dives into a stream. (p.130, TMD)

[2.18] You with your concrete mixer throat, regurgitating mortar and slag and dung plaster? (p.134,TMD)

[2.19] The snail drawing in its horns, sealing the open end of the shell in hardened saliva. A porcupine rolling into a winter ball of amnesia. (p.139,TMD)

[2.20] Charles Dickens made two successive calls, then that reprobate Boswell. (p.152,TMD)

What we learn from the comparisons in Ake is that Soyinka developed an imaginative mind quite early in life. Strange as it may seem, the association of the bottom of a basin in a shelf with the buttocks of an adult stooling illustrates a certain precocity unknown perhaps to the young Soyinka himself. This general hilarity is a characteristic of Soyinka's prose. The reader in spite of himself cannot but appreciate the tongue-in-cheek.

The comparisons in [2.14], [2.16] and [2.20] are, as in some of those encountered in the novels, somewhat misleading. In the first of these, Soyinka recalls the tug-

of-war, as it were, that the younger children in the house usually went through during sleep." He compares the disarray caused by the sleeping mass of bodies to a struggle with pythons and monsters. But the impression created is that of an actual night time fight with these creatures. This arises because Soyinka avoids cumbersome similes and opts for direct metaphors.

There is a struggle in text [2.16] between some soldiers and a mentally retarded Paa Adatan who has gone berserk. The soldiers try to overpower him. Paa Adatan is not just like 'a rugged terrain' but, according to Soyinka, actually one. The comparison stretches our imagination a bit too far.

While in dete ntion, Soyinka has succeeded in getting the authorities to grant him certain concessions on books. The books he gets to read include Charles Dickens' and Boswell's; though not strictly a comparison, the impression is created in [2.20] that the two authors actually pay Soyinka a visit in prison instead of he (Soyinka) having read their books. The comparisons, as we have noted, help Soyinka to achieve a more direct and forceful style and a striking and dramatic rendering of what would otherwise be prosaic ideas. Passage [2.19] is a description of the author's process of in-gathering in which he attempts to insulate himself entirely from his prison surroundings. Both metaphors are non-finite participial clauses rather than sentences and they are designed to be in consonance with the esoteric nature of the ruminations.

The comparison in [2.18] between the throat that chews 'goro' (colanut) and a concrete mixer is deliberately hyperbolic, for it is intended to dramatize the extent of disgust that Soyinka feels. Comparison [2.15], also a metaphor, refers to the bookseller's penchant for prolonging an argument unnecessarily. Soyinka also makes use of the devices of idioms and puns at the appropriate moments. The proper use of such devices, unlike longwinded use of cliche'd proverbs, is considered a mark of accomplishment in English.[27] After the incident in which Dipo, the author's younger brother has been coaxed into challenging the young Soyinka to a fight and he (Soyinka) has gone in for the kill and almost injures his younger brother, Soyinka imagines that Joseph 'deliberately gave me a wide berth', that is, avoids him. (p.104,Ake)

In The Man Died, Bernadine, a condemned criminal, had 'thrown his gauntlet' by arming himself with a dustbin cover for shield and a lethal cudgel studded with metal points thus refusing to be led away to his punishment. Polyphemus 'picked up the gauntlet' (accepted the challenge) on behalf of the state. (p.208TMD)

The pun in The Man Died lies in the rendering of the episode in which citizens were harassed, beaten and brutalised for not stepping out of the highway quickly enough for the siren-blaring motorcades of public functionaries. On this particular occasion, according to Soyinka, a medical consultant at the University Teaching Hospital, Sagamu was

beaten up for being 'slow to diagnose this particular symptom' (p.232). There is a play on the words 'diagnose' and 'symptom'.

In Ake, Soyinka precedes the story of how he had accidentally pierced the ceiling of the house with his father's gun with the statement: 'I had not planned to, though, I often intently pierced the matting with my expectations.' (p.67) All these devices contribute to the lively and felicitous nature of the prose. The play in the last case is on the word 'pierced'.

v. Dialogue

A common criticism of Soyinka's writings is what some critics see as his poor mode of characterization through the speeches and actions of the characters. For instance Maduakor criticizes Soyinka for 'the neglect of the romantic side of human emotions' and 'unwholesome mode of characterization.' He goes on to cite as examples the shallow treatment Soyinka gives the episode of the death of Folasade, his kid sister, and the lack of illustrations of aspects of Essay's and Wild Christian's characters.[28]

There is some truth in these claims but they lose sight of the fact that at Folasade's death, Soyinka is still too young to understand its full implications. The events are described from the eyes of the young, not adult Soyinka. In spite of the artistic organization of the autobiographies, Soyinka tries to be faithful with facts and so he tries to capture as close as possible a child's reaction to the loss

of a sibling. And in any case the young Soyinka's reaction to this is enough confirmation of his sensitivity to, and sufficient treatment of the tragedy:

> Again I looked at Tinu. I expected her to do or say something, mostly do something, after all she was the elder... suddenly, it all broke up within me. A force from nowhere pressed me against the bed and I howled. As I was picked up I struggled against my father's soothing voice, tears all over me. I was sucked into a place of loss whose cause or definition remained elusive. I did not comprehend it yet, and even through those tears I saw the astonished face of Wild Christian, and heard her voice saying, 'But what does he understand of it? What does he understand?' (pp.97-98)

This description is poignant. It has led Ogundipe-Leslie to conclude that 'the child in Ake is portrayed as sensitive (as in his reaction to his sister's death) and naturally loving of justice.'[29] As to the charge of insufficient illustration of his parents' characters, we have been told repeatedly of how Essay loved elaborate and prolonged arguments with his friends. We have also been told how he would fastidiously adhere to elegance in handwriting, dressing and eating habits, and of how he would always take sides with the young Soyinka in most reports of misdemeanour brought to him by Wild Christian. Soyinka's characters may not be as grandiosely realized as Chinua Achebe's, but it should be noted that whereas Achebe usually deals with a single major character whose character solely affects the course of the novel, Soyinka deals with many characters at any

point in time. Thus it is more difficult to isolate a character from among a number of equal characters.

Furthermore, we are told that Essay was also in the habit of letting the young Soyinka suffer the prolonged psychological trauma of not knowing exactly when or how he would be punished for a grave misconduct. The following description of Essay eating does show character:

> When Essay dissected a piece of yam, weighed it carefully, transferred it to his plate, paused, turned it around, sliced off a piece and returned it to the dish, then commenced the same ritual with the meat and stew, she [Wild Christian] would shake her head and ask, 'Does that extra piece really matter?' Essay merely smiled, proceeded to chew methodically, slicing off each piece of meat, yam, like a geometric exercise, lifting a scoop of stew with the edge of his knife and plastering the slice of yam like a master mason. (pp.14-15, Ake)

Surely these are memorable episodes which engrave both Essay's and Wild Christian's characters on our memories.

As in the novels, the dialogue and speeches are of two types: Those speeches made by characters the author intends to hold up to scorn and the normal speech of those characters to which Soyinka is favourably disposed. We are concerned with the former for which the following examples are illustrative:

> 'It was this way, principal. There was I at the lower perimeter of the fields, principal, with my friends about to engage in a scholastic experiment, Chemistry to be exact, principal relating to the phlogiston theory of spontaneous

> combustion ... a small fire erupted... along came a cockerel whose patination and regal bearing identified it beyond doubt as having emerged from... the private poultry yard of Mrs. herself. The second accused, Bode here, principal said to me, "Iku, there promenades a chicken belonging to principal's Mrs. How did it get here?" To which I replied, principal, "I am as ignorant as you are on the subject matter"... and there being no time like now because action speaks louder than words time and tide waiteth for no man opportunity once lost cannot be regained a stitch in time saves nine, principal, and finally one good turn deserves another so, with these thoughts for our guide, we spread out, closed in on this cock in order to catch it and restore it to the poultry... It was a spirited cockerel... a well nourished, aggressive, independent minded cockerel... That cock flew against the second accused knocking him down — you may like to examine his battle scars, principal... the impetus with which the deceased had launched itself naturally carried it right into the centre of that inferno, where it instantly lost consciousness overpowered by the intense heat...' [Daodu] looked up. 'Case dismissed.' (pp.174-175, Ake)

Two of Soyinka's secondary school mates had been accused of stealing and roasting the principal's fowl. As was the habit of the Rev. J.J. Ransome-Kuti, who always made drama out of every case of discipline, as the principal, he had asked the boys to elaborately prosecute and defend themselves. The result, according to Soyinka, was the rigmarole above.

The hilarity of the speech is a common stylistic feature of the speeches of the more tongue-in-cheek characters

in Soyinka's writings. The speech reminds us invariably of Lakunle in The Lion and the Jewel. The numerous bombastic words and phrases must have contributed to lessening the tension in the principal and bringing about the boys' discharge and acquittal. As a piece of humour, it is rivalled only by its more ridiculous counterpart in The Man Died. The governor of the maximum security prison in Lagos is incensed by the detainees' hunger strike and hectors them with the following blustering:

> Now! I want you all to pay attention. Yes, I am going. To talk seriously to you. That, you must listen and make sure. That, it does not go in at one ear and come out! At other ear. Yes you think that you have come here to make trouble. For me! I am telling you now. That I will. Also make trouble for you. I am a soldier. You know. I fought in Sudan and in Egypt... You can ask the late Ironsi himself. He was with me. I senior him. He will tell you ... I study archaeology. I am not just. A prison governor you know I study in Khartoum. Archaeology. And if I am in university today I can tell you. That I will also lecture in human ecology. Yes. You are enemies of the state. Sabotagists... Gentlemen but if you behave like a hooligans then I will show you that I am a great. Hooligans than yourself... I am a psychologist. I know. Psychology. I study archaeology. (pp.102-103,TMD)

The speech reads almost like a piece of poetry, for only in poetry do we come across the kind of short incomplete sentences interrupted at random by fullstops.

Unlike poetry however, it is a piece of unlettered and incoherent tirade capable of being made by only such grotesque public functionaries whose ignoble role makes the struggle against them even more imperative. It does remind us of Chief Winsala in The Interpreters. Identical end rhymes ensures for the governor a relationship in the meaning of the words 'archaeology', 'ecology' and 'psychology'. The whole of the speech manifests arbitrary fullstops between subject and verb, verb and object, auxiliar and lexical verbs, verb and adjunct, main clause and dependent clause, anywhere. Sometimes between modifier and modified, there is a fullstop. Such characters dialectically contribute to the struggle.

There is a character in Ake called 'Mayself'. He is so nicknamed because of his outlandishly affected way of saying 'myself' when pretending not to have heard an invitation to meal by the Soyinka household anytime he visits them. His speech recalls — indeed must have influenced the drawing of — the character of Prof. Oguazor in The Interpreters with his 'meral terpitude'. Here is Mayself:

> 'Are you ready for some lunch?'
> 'Mayself?... oh er... net reilly But perhaps you are ... '
> 'Would you like some supper?'
> 'Mayself... oh er... net unless...' (p.119,Ake)

Such characters people Soyinka's works in a recurring fashion. Stylistically they bestow on the prose not just

the imprint of a master humorist but also a certain sophistication. Soyinka is able to capture vividly the foibles that we all too often ignore.

In most portions of The Man Died, the dialogue is usually between Soyinka and the security or prison officials. In them, the author almost always has the upper hand. Like the case of Ofeyi against the Trouble-shooter in the author's second novel, Soyinka frequently turns his interrogators into the interrogated.

There is in these autobiographies a compulsion to resort to vernacular elements at crucial points in the narrative and dialogue. This is especially so in the latter. We have seen this phenomenon in the novels. It is a phenomenon known as codemixing and which is natural to even highly educated Yoruba English locutors. But it raises certain questions about Soyinka's intent and audience. Ogundipe-Leslie attempts to provide the answer to some of these questions:

> It seems that Soyinka as a second-language writer is forced to be Janus-faced, as is the fate of any such writer riding two emotional horses, talking to two audiences, talking from two mouths in two or several voices. For the Yoruba reader, these intrusions naturally trigger the pleasure of a recognition of the familar-writing style, social situation and humour. But for foreign reader? One is forced to consider why the Yoruba renderings are deemed necessary.30

It is not so much that Soyinka is a second language writer. Even writers like Thomas Hardy and Mark Twain made use of certain dialect words that would not be intelligible to the non-speakers of that dialect even though they spoke English as

their mother-tongue. Examples of this can be found in The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Hardy and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain.

Though Soyinka's target audience are Yoruba and non-Yoruba, it is not feasible to suggest that the author write in Yoruba and have it translated. That would amount to asking Soyinka to abandon what he is best at, which is writing in English. At any rate not all the codemixed elements are in Yoruba. Some of them are in Hausa as the examples from The Man Died show. Surely Ogundipe-Leslie would not suggest that Soyinka write in Yoruba and Hausa, and then have them translated. Here are some examples in both books:

Sanya wo ni yen?... Bo olō oya mi, odi kitipa kitipa! (Which Sanya? If you aren't moving, get out of my way) (p.7,Ake)

Igbagbo:faith (p.7,Ake)

Atarodo: fresh pepper , a round type. (p.55,Ake)

Iwajuile: front room, house frontage. (p.60,Ake)

Ara oke: someone from the hinterland considered bush. (p.78, Ake)

Egba mio egba mi: save me, save me. (p.99,Ake)

Jarun pa: (humorous) fight, struggle while sleeping. (p.84, Ake)

Yirinka: kneel and touch both elbows on the ground alternately. (p.204,Ake)

Anjonnu:(possibly) witch. (p.90,TMD)

Agbeyinto: (women) those who urinate from the rear. (p.212, Ake)

Iska: (Hausa) harmattan wind. (p.139,TMD)

Goro: (Hausa) cola-nut (p.134,TMD)

The recourse to these vernacular elements add to the humour of the prose. Many of them would clearly lose their jocularity to even the foreign reader, who can recognize the same practice in writers like Hardy, if the translated forms are embedded in the prose. Instead, Soyinka uses footnotes and glossaries to fill in any gaps. Peter Young describes the glossaries as doing something 'to avoid intrusion of information at the wrong moment.'[31]

Thus far it can be seen that the roots of Soyinka's 'belligerent' prose lie in his participation in the struggle against injustice. It also lies in his poetic and mytho-poeic tendencies which have tended to make him display a forceful and direct mode of expression. Soyinka's dissatisfaction with the system and his determination to influence its change is translated into a pungent aesthetic and thematic style. The overriding concern, as has been demonstrated several times in this work, is to show that unlike Oedipus, he is not abdicating his responsibilities as a writer. His works show that the immediacy of the struggle cannot prevent the nurturing of a vibrant lexical and grammatical style.

There is a significant number of neological compound words in these autobiographies. As in the case of those in the novels, many of them are abridged versions of longer expressions:

other-worldly: belonging to other world (space) (p.18, Ake)

earth-aged: as old as the earth (temporal) (p.67,Ake)
out-jutting: to jut out (spatio-dynamic)(p.204,Ake)
indrawing: to draw in (spatio-dynamic)(p.131,TMD)
shuffle-clump: irregular mass of shuffling (dynamic) (p.135,TMD)
sky-soul:heavenly and soulful (stative)(p.135,TMD)
goro-gritty: made coarse by cola (stative)(p.134,TMD)
livable-with: able to be tolerated (stative)(p.176,TMD)

Soyinka's overrriding concern, as it were, is to achieve economy of expression, get it over with and move on.

As in the novels, the prose in the autobiographies suffers from some imperfections. But unlike those in the novels, the slips here -- some of them -- are serious indeed. They are mistakes arising from what Leslie describes as the bane of writers writing in a second language situation. They consist of incorrect grammatical renderings and broken English expressions which are neither deliberate nor stylistically significant. These are some examples:

[2.21] My mouth was watering even as I thought of it. (p.39,Ake)

[2.22] His words however left him in no doubt about how he felt. (p.104,Ake)

[2.23] ... the faces that had emerged one by one from shops, windows, nook and corners after Paa Adatan... (p.114,Ake)

[2.24] Here we have four partners in crime... such was my relief at discovering that we were not to receive twenty-four each but share it between us... (p.172,Ake)

[2.25] ... and their aroso had said yes to a certain movement with the longest winded name any of us had ever heard. (p.200,Ake)

[2.26] Wild Christian replied him. (p.209,Ake)

[2.27] The drill-major sweated in the morning sun, striving

in vain to retain some dignity and cower the women with his authority. (p.220,Ake)

[2.28] Hardly five minutes passed than Mallam D entered the room. (p.64,TMD)

[2.29] It reacted only against things which would normally disgust me... treachery between the prisoners.(p.130, TMD)

[2.30] It made the action of the Grand seer even more hard to bear. (p.244, TMD)

The problems with these expressions are in the underlined words or phrases. The verb 'water' as in [2.21] should be stative and not dynamic/progressive (-ing participle), and so it should have been in the simple past rather than the past progressive thus: 'My mouth watered even as...'

In [2.22], Soyinka refers to the verbal disapprobation of Joseph after he (Soyinka) had overreacted to his younger brother's antics. Joseph's words could not have been directed at himself but at the young Soyinka. The statement should carry the first person accusative pronoun 'me', and not the second person pronoun, like this: 'His words however left me in no doubt...'

The error in [2.23] lies in the broken English expression 'nook and corner', which is nevertheless widespread. The correct expression is 'nook and cranny'. The preposition 'between' is restricted in standard English usage to statements involving only two persons or things. Above that number, 'among' is the preposition to use. But in [2.24] Soyinka 'shares twenty-four strokes "between"', instead of 'among', 'four students.' It is the same mistake that we come across

in [2.29]

The compound adjective 'long-winded' meaning 'long', 'tedious' or 'boring', is morphologically a three syllable word. It is neither correct nor stylistically significant to form its superlative degree by inserting the suffix [-est] between the compound as the author does in [2.25] instead of preceding it with the word 'most'.

The error in [2.26] is perhaps the most serious. It is the only example cited by Ogundipe-Leslie when she speaks of the problems of writers who write in a second language situation. But she does not tell the reader what is wrong with the statement. The error is in Soyinka's improper use of the verb 'reply'. The verb is mainly intransitive (does not take a direct object), but takes only a clause as its object when it is transitive. There are three ways the statement could be correctly rendered:

1. transitive (direct speech)	:Wild Christian replied, '...'	) clause as direct object.
2. transitive (indirect speech)	:Wild Christian replied that...	)
3. intransitive	:Wild Christian replied to his statement:'...'	) indirect object

The verb 'reply' is syntactically similar to the verb 'insist'.

Another serious slip here is the use of the verb 'cower' as though it were a transitive verb in [2.27]. 'Cower' as an intransitive verb means 'to crouch as in fear' or 'to lie in wait'. *It is an action which is not performed on* anything or anyone, rather it is a state that one is in when one is afraid. One can cower before another but not

cower someone.

'Than' is a wrong correlative conjunction/linker to use with the adverb 'hardly' as in [2.28]. The adverbial linker, 'when', is the correlative of such adverbials as 'hardly', 'scarcely' thus: 'Hardly five minutes passed when ...' The linker 'than' is used with the phrase 'no sooner' for example, 'No sooner had he come than...'

Finally in [2.30], the wrong comparative word 'more' is used with a monosyllabic word, 'hard'. The word should be 'harder'. In spite of all these imperfections however, Soyinka's prose is vibrant, but then the level of competence especially in the vastness of vocabulary that the prose displays and its general aura of urbanity ensure that such slips are taken seriously.

Soyinka's autobiographies like the novels show him as both an aesthete and a lone combatant par excellence. The same elliptical style, sound, rhythm and imagery can be discerned here as in the fictional works. As in the novels, careful reading is required in order to identify the autobiographies' thematic and stylistic structure. Dealing with factual events though acknowledged in the style of the prose has neither tamed nor significantly altered the 'words of iron' and 'sentences of thunder.'

Notes

1. Obi Maduakor, Wole Soyinka (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1986) p.160

2. James Olney, An Introduction to African Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) pp.20-21.

3. T. S. Eliot, 'The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism' in Frank Kermode, ed, Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) p.91

4. See the entries in John Agetua, When the Man Died, cited by Maduakor, p. 162.

5. Maduakor, p.167.

6. Lalage Bown, Two Centuries of African English (London: Heinemann, 1973) p.209.

7. John Agetua, When the Man Died see Maduakor.

8. Wole Soyinka, 'Preface' in The Man Died (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1988) p.xii

9. Soyinka, 'Preface' pp. xiii-xiv.

10. Soyinka, 'Preface' p.xiv.

11. Bown, p.212.

12. Soyinka, 'Preface' p.xv-xvi.

13. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Homecoming (London: Heinemann, 1972) p.66.

14. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, Style in Fiction (London: Longman Group, 1981) p.35.

15. Maduakor, p.164.

16. C. T. Onions, Modern English Syntax, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) p.85.

17. Peter Young, 'Tradition, Language and the Reintegration of Identity in West African Literature in English' in Edgar Wright ed. The Critical Evaluation of African Literature (London: Heinemann, 1973) pp.47-48.

18. John Agetua, 'Interview with Wole Soyinka' in Six Nigerian Writers (Benin City: Bendel Newspaper Corp., 1975) p.46.

19. Soyinka's unpublished reply to the Chinweizu criticism of his poetry is cited by Maduakor, p.8.

20. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, 'Review of Wole Soyinka Ake' in African Literature Today (14)(1984). p. 144

21. Maduakor, p.170.

22. Ogundipe-Leslie, p.147.

23. H. G. Widdowson, Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (London: Longman Group, 1975) p.42.

24. Maduakor, p.168.

25. John Agetua, 'Interview with Soyinka', p.37

26. Wole Soyinka in John Agetua, When the Man Died, p.37 cited by Maduakor.

27. See Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, A. S. Hornby.

28. Maduakor, p.166

29. Ogundipe-Leslie, p.144.

30. Ogundipe-Leslie, p.147.

31. Peter Young, p.46.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores Soyinka's use of language in his prose works. It demonstrates through a sustained and comprehensive stylistic analysis of his themes, imagery, wards, phrases and sentences that Soyinka's aesthetic and linguistic predilections are appropriate to his thematic concerns. It also demonstrates that criticisms of obscurity and difficulty against his prose works are either exaggerations or overgeneralisations.

The study demonstrates that to understand Soyinka's tendencies, the proper stylistic approach ought to be adopted. Because criticisms of obscurity and difficulty have been arrived at through inadequate techniques, preconceived and prescriptive rather than descriptive methods, the charges of obscurity and difficulty, it has been found out, are overstated. We have seen that a stylistic theory which treats language exclusively is as unacceptable as that which focuses solely on meanings and issues raised in a work of art. A stylistic critical approach which relies too heavily on the contextual relevance of the work is as incomplete as that which preoccupies itself exclusively with the text even when selected contextual information would be of great value.

A comprehensive stylistic theory, we have seen, includes an analysis of the themes, imagery and sentential structures of the works. In dealing with Soyinka's prose works therefore, there should be a synthesis of the linguist's and the literary

critic's observations. When this is done, it will transpire that contrary to many charges of lack of commitment and literary vision, Soyinka is a committed artist, freedom fighter and social reformer. His unique style leads him to fashion out literature with mythopoeic, multivalent and dense syntactic structures.

This study has demonstrated that the themes of struggle and creativity run through the four prose works. Ake is important for revealing the source of Soyinka's iconoclasm and also for revealing the source of his literary imagery and the mythic characters that abound in his works such as ghommids, Ogboni, hillsides, mountains, rivers and deities. The reader who encounters Ake after the fictional, poetical and dramatical works will go back to them with the benefit of an enhanced hindsight. The feeling is one of deja vu.

The Man Died continues with this theme of struggle. Here Soyinka is the main participant. In it, the author's non-conformist disposition reaches a climax. He becomes more aggressively pursuant of social justice. The struggle for him as the main character of the book takes on a more corporeal form. Both in practice (his tour of northern and eastern Nigeria during the civil war) and in theory (process of soul-searching and ingathering in detention), Soyinka is a lone combatant in this continuous battle against injustice. He has been through all the adverse experiences that all writers as true gadflies of the society have been through. The Man Died is also important because it

reveals the source of most of the imagery and events in Season of Anomy.

The Interpreters as a book of complex imagery and subtle organization deals with the post independence awareness of the struggle. Soyinka shows through the six interpreters' struggle to understand themselves and their society that the social reformer can not hope to change society if he is alienated from it. That is, that snobbery and aloofness only lead to emptiness.

In Season of Anomy, the theme of struggle is developed substantially. It reaches a significant and successful conclusion. It produces spores at the end of the novel. It proceeds through an evaluation of the theoretical and practical approaches to liberation struggles, and concludes that both are two sides of the same coin.

Soyinka's themes are given voice and form through language. This is one of the most significant stylistic components of his writings. This component has given rise to numerous adverse criticisms. This study has demonstrated that rather than write a convoluted, formless and indulgent language, Soyinka, like his patron god, Ogun, performs under possession. He uses a language that is 'highly charged, symbolic and mytho-embryonic.'

Soyinka's attitude to language is experimental. He writes poetic, rather than declamatory language. As a result, as Maduakor observes, moods and rhythms are suggested through images and symbols rather than elaborate tales. The narrative

of many of the works, particularly The Interpreters, is elliptical and dense. They can thus be seen as neo-modernist works. The language is, as he himself says, 'a densely packed matrix of reference.'

The experiment in language is complemented by Soyinka's mythopoeic tendencies. He resorts to myth in order to explain away certain elements of ritual and sacrifice in his works. Language is a crucial element in Soyinka's world of ritual. A major technique has been to draw parallels between the world view of the Yorubas through the use of certain Yoruba idioms and in some cases,Hausa words to show some similarities. The intention is to show this identity existing among seemingly disparate traditions. It also underscores the relationship between the past and the present in the 'intervening standstills of the period of creation.' There is also a parallel, through this system of mythology, between the real and unreal world. This use of myth and dense language, known as his metaphysics and mythopoesis, critics see as constituting obscurity.

Issues of political and moral philosophy which Soyinka discusses while in detention in The Man Died against the background of the mental trauma attest to the author's socio-political commitment. In prison the trauma of the incarceration further whets his fighting spirit.

It is clear by now that the proper stylistic method does not consist merely in 'the narration of plots and discussion of themes and characters to the detriment of other

aesthetic aspects' of literature. It is also not concerned solely with transient slogans such as 'Down with imperialism! Down with capitalism and exploitation etc!' Its concern includes what Crystal and Davy refer to as the 'occasional linguistic idiosyncracies which characterise an individual's uniqueness' and the relationship between his language and content. Our discussion of Soyinka's point of view and readability shows a profoundly wrought out style in the four prose works.

Our analysis of Soyinka's style has included, among others an examination of word structure, choice and combination. It has gone beyond the discussion of issues raised in order to take in questions of form such as phrases, clauses, sentences and punctuation. They are examined comparatively with other styles or with what is considered the norm. It is almost futile to conclude that a particular work is difficult and obscure without taking the pains to show what simple writing is. There is no reason to take it for granted that everybody has similar notions of 'simplicity'.

However, it is true that Soyinka does not write for junior college students or the half-educated who may not be able to use either the language or the dictionary well. Soyinka, the study concedes, is occasionally inaccessible. His works more often than not require that the reader possess a certain ingenuity necessary for unravelling some of the riddles that he frames. It becomes necessary then to specify the portion, the phrase or the sentence that contains

the riddles. It is these riddles that the casual reader sees as difficulty.

Thus it is that Soyinka's 'seemingly inexhaustible panoply of poetic symbols and conceptions' receive insufficient attention from critics. The key to Soyinka's corpus of meaning is close reading. It is also an early recognition and acceptance by the reader of the uniqueness and relevance of his technical style, vast vocabulary and heterogeneous imagery. Such a style is useful to the student of African literature who desires a wider vocabulary.

This study shows that linguistically, Soyinka does not choose words with regard to their meanings alone but also with regard to their rhythm and sound. This consideration, as we have seen, determines the choice of phrases and other unusual comparisons with which the thesis has already dealt.

The consideration for sound and rhythm is noticeable also in the involved passages and even in the vernacular intrusions in the works. In such instances as these, a search for meaning as such is likely to be unsuccessful. The reader or critic should endeavour to go beyond the discussion of themes and issues. Rhythmic prose is, as we have already demonstrated, a hallmark of accomplishment. Soyinka's prose is enjoyed also on the basis of its rhythm and sound. For an enduring meaning, Soyinka's prose should be read and reread. The reader can come back to an involved portion of a work with the benefit of this hindsight. This is particularly necessary for a novel like The Interpreters whose intermittent

forward and backward narrative structure closely resembles and derives from the characters' constant excursions into their pasts in order to understand their present and future.

Another aspect of Soyinka's style which we have seen is the technique of withholding information. He is naturally selective about the amount of detail he provides his readers. He leaves to the reader the task of guessing and filling in required information. This increases the mystery, suspense and excitement. This technique also enhances the literary quality of the works.

It has also been demonstrated that a feature of Soyinka's style is the capacity to yoke together the most heterogeneous of ideas. Close reading of the works would cause the seemingly far-fetched images, comparisons and condensation to cohere with the equally seemingly inscrutable ideas. These heterogeneous images are a significant component of his style. This 'selective eclecticism' as he calls it, but which to Chinweizu et al is just so much 'a plethora of imported imagery' ensures that traditionally African ritual objects such as 'palms', 'raffia', 'chalk', 'camwood', 'bamboo' and 'calabash' share the same pages with modern images of creativity and development such as 'bridges', 'electricity', 'typewriter', 'railways', 'jeeps' and 'books'. They bestow on his works a universal appeal since they prop up issues which are recognizable by, and germane to, both traditional Africa and people elsewhere in the world.

Soyinka's prose displays a stylistic and thematic unity.

The themes of the four prose works are relevant to not just Africa's, but universal socio-political setting. These themes are expressed through a linguistic tendency that is lively and multivalent. His diction, grammar and imagery with their elliptical and dense structures reflect his wide reading. His grammar and diction are evocative and poetic; and his forceful and iconoclastic prose style is appropriate to his social reformer's role, whereas his imagery is often cosmopolitan, sometimes far-fetched but always apt. Charges of his obscurity and non-commitment are therefore not well-founded. As a result, they need to be reviewed.

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