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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERNAL DIALECTICAL CONTRADICTIONS IN SOYINKA'S NOVELS: ACQUISITIVE PHYSICAL APPETITES AND THE QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL VALUES.

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Abstract

All things contain within themselves internal dialectical contradictions, which are the primary cause of motion, change, and development in the world. Dialectical contradiction is not about simple opposites or negation. For formal approaches, the core message of dialectical contradiction constitutes the opposition between the objects involved in a directly associated context. For purposes of this study, the contradictions in the societies depicted in Soyinka's two novels shall be the primary sources of illustrative data. Of all the dualities that run through Wole Soyinka's literary writings and reflect his shifting balance between the creative and destructive sides of life, one of the most instructive sets of contraries is the alternation of materialism and idealism. These two drives figure prominently in both the comic and tragic sides of Soyinka's artistic vision in the novels, *Season of Anomy* and *The Interpreters*. They reflect the sometimes contradictory energies that drive his writing: the human needs to enjoy life to its fullest as well as to transcend it to a higher stage. This study argues that Soyinka uses these conflicting drives to celebrate and satirise the human appetites for love, power, money and glory by depicting the growth of appetite as either a vice or a virtue. The physical appetites are usually associated with egotism, while the spiritual drive is connected to self-sacrifice, social commitment and artistic creativity. The continuous flux between these two forces of appetite and sacrifice produces the dramatic tension in Soyinka's works.

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Introduction:-

While it is important to note that the definitions of the words 'idealism' and 'materialism' go beyond what has been insinuated in the abstract, this study confines itself to the same for purposes of in-depth analysis. Looking at the two terms in their broad stretches and aiming to come up with an exhaustive discussion is an exercise in futility. In fact, this study proceeds from the ideological assumption that Soyinka's works lean on the metaphysical. Human nature seems to be at war with its own conflicting needs both to fulfil and transcend the individual self, to dominate the community and to serve it through sacrifice. While there are only a few key characters created of pure self-sacrifice, there are many whose proclivities for total appetite and self-interest cannot be gainsaid. But perhaps most interesting of all are the characters interested in both materialism and idealism. This study seeks to demonstrate that the two novels identified as sources of primary data represent the said divides in societies that they reflect. Within the societies mirrored in the two works, there is a group that

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aligns itself to the craze for physical appetites and another that is inclined to pure self-sacrifice, devotion to fight for human values. Whereas few stand for ideals, an enormous chunk of them are materialists. These are the contradictions that inform the antithetical directions of the two novels selected for this study.

African literature, most times, elevates the pre-literate African world, the traditional society and in so doing, assigns it the canonical universalities. This pre-colonial world personifies the socially acceptable philosophical, moral and aesthetic standards that then form the benchmark for social re-orientation. In this regard, it is against this traditional idealist life that modern African experience must be vigorously evaluated to accentuate the critical discrepancy between the elements of western culture and civilisation, and the African values. This is the critical bedrock that the thread of this study issues from. Contemporary African societies are dismembered to reflect the disparity between Western civilisation and pre-colonial experience in which case the latter is canonised. The transformation that is sought for in African literature is one that advocates for a return to the traditional. The 'Tarzanised' world embodies all the elements of physical appetites while the un-tarzanised personifies the spiritual. This is the main thrust of the arguments in this study. That Soyinka crystallises and incrusts African ideal in his works, and specifically the novels in question is the critical burden of this study.

This study proceeds from the argument that Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomy* are intensely religious novels, both in their preoccupation with moral issues and the strong impact of their ritual undertones; the religiosity depicted in the novels is one that slightly deviates from the naked sense of the word. It is a display of faith in a number of faiths. The imagination that conceived it is nurtured by the same moral outrage that occasioned the October poems of *Idanre and Other Poems* and a number of the elegies in *A Shuttle in the Crypt*. Inarguably, one does not have to venture far into *The Interpreters* or *Season of Anomy* to encounter passages with a note of pathos and moral indignation similar to what we find in the two versified anthologies mentioned above. Soyinka's moral imagination became even more sensitive, more outraged after his experiences in prison. The pronouncement that Soyinka makes in his autobiographical work, *The Man Died* attests to his predilection for idealism. In this text, he candidly observes: 'For me, justice is the first condition of humanity' (96). This declaration reads like an ethical manifesto.

Chidi Amuta, in *The Ideological Content of Soyinka's Writings*, argues that Soyinka's works, though heavily mythical and ritualistic, issue from an ideological stance. The credibility of his arguments is attested to by Macebuh, who believes 'Soyinka is, first and foremost, a mythopoeist, his imagination is, in a quite fundamental sense, a mythic imagination' (79). This argument is traceable to Biodun Jeyifo, who considers Soyinka as a writer synonymous with 'an abiding penchant for mythology, metaphysics and mysticism' (Biodun 4). Amuta departs from Soyinka's attempts to delink his writings from specific ideological leanings. He acknowledges Soyinka's penchant for social justice and his subsequent resentment of oppressive tendencies. Inherent in Chidi's observation is the conflict that defines the hallmark of Soyinka's creativity: the antagonism between the oppressors and idealists (herein identified as progressive elements). His ritualistic re-enactment of myth lends credence to his historical consciousness. Aside from recognising affinity for social justice, Chidi indirectly admits the possibility of assigning a Marxist reading to Soyinka's works. Below is a representation of the substance of his arguments:

At the level of social action and thought, Soyinka could conveniently be regarded as a progressive idealist in the sense that his involvement in and utterances on specific social problems indicate a fervent pre-occupation with social justice and an aversion to oppressive institutions. As a literary artist, however, much of his significant writings display an unrelenting obsession with myth and its complex re-enactment through ritual. Consequently, while his consciousness is ultimately historical, his imagination and idiom of creative expression derive from a fundamentally mythic source and a religious sentiment (Amuta 43).

The binary oppositions in *The Interpreters* are symbolically represented by the past ideals of the Creektown and the physical appetites of the Tarzanised world. In a deliberate effort to shun the condemnation of African literature to a state of perpetual regression, Soyinka advocates for the interweaving of traditional ideals with modern African experience. To universalise the ideals, contemporary intellection is inevitable. This is why the 'return-to-sender' motif is usually predominant in his works. In *The Interpreters*, a number of British-educated intellectuals, characters that are exposed to western civilisation, return to their native country and are eager to steer her to a new phase of social orientation.

The Interpreters, Wole Soyinka's first novel, has its setting in the period immediately after the declaration of self-rule in Nigeria. The infiltration of western values has created a social turbulence. There are two sets of conflicting cultures, to wit, traditional value systems and modern aspects ushered in by the Tarzans (the colonial regime). There is a strong indication in the novel that there is a basic reluctance on the part of Western-educated intellectuals and their African protégés to concede a certain measure of motion or dynamism to the African world and its value systems. From the onset of *The Interpreters*, Soyinka's maiden attempt to experiment with this form, materialism is traced to neo-colonial tendencies and the obsession of African elites who cannot liberate themselves from colonial mindsets. It is, in this sense, analogous to the period immediately after the declaration of self-rule.

The novel has a fretful beginning. Sagoe's speech, at a first glance, hardly displays any form of consistency and its meaning is only deciphered when we read it with the hindsight of greater knowledge. Egbo makes a few desultory and uninventive remarks that seem like poor and vapid jokes. Dehinwa's relationship to Sagoe is merely intimated and Bandle's extraordinarily skeletal remarks give very little significance. The start of the novel lacks real vitality amidst the climactic chaos. What is established is that the group of friends is at a night-club ('try our Club Cambana Cubicles'). There is a sudden downpour that has not significantly interrupted the group in any significant way since no one in it seems to be doing much save for Sekoni and Bandle. Dehinwa's move to protect her hair points to this colonised mindset. Bandle pushes the tables and chairs out of the rain.

It is Egbo whose thoughts are crystallised by the rains. He broods over the water that drips into his beer as result of the downpour. In utter disgust, he throws away the 'polluted' beer. A close observation of the utterances and actions of the characters enables one to discern the consistency with which they are developed. At the very beginning, therefore, the brief glimpses give inklings of the kinds of people the interpreters are. Sagoe's preoccupation with verbal jugglery, use of flamboyant speech to cover up his inadequacies and the lack of will to act can be seen from the very beginning. Bandle, significantly, moves the tables and chairs out of the rain, suggesting at once his ability to think of others, an aspect of him that one observes with mounting respect as the novel progresses. Egbo's edginess and moodiness is suggested by his reaction to the 'pollution' of his beer. There is hardly enough to establish all this in the introductory section without the benefit of retrospection. This becomes an important part of Soyinka's technique in *The Interpreters*.

The characters forage in their past for the significance of present events, and take their present knowledge back to their interpretation of past events. The reader is forced into the same pattern, as first one character and then another launches off abruptly into a nostalgic reminiscence. Again, it is Egbo whose rummage stands out. His obsession with the past and its effect on the present is shown by the jump in time that he makes, from the filling 'pool' by their 'Club Cambana Cubicle' to the journey through the creeks that the friends had made to his ancestral land. His obsession with ancestry is indicative of his yearning for lost ideals.

As the interpreters return to the secluded lagoon villages, they express their fear of intrusion and ill motives. Their conversations are characterised by suspicions and uncertainty about the future. This is what generates the nervous atmosphere that Soyinka develops at the beginning. Egbo understands too well the dignity of his roots and admits that he is drawn to it, 'drawn to it as a dream of isolation, smelling its archaic menace and the violent undertows, unable to deny its dark vitality' (Interpreters 12). Despite the fact that the villages are isolated, the dignity of their roots attracts its young men back to it. It is detached from the glare of modern cities like Lagos, yet this does not stop its young men from returning, 'waiting on some mythical omniscience of [their] generation.' The approach that Soyinka accords his inquiry is bipartisan and dynamic; his mode of inquiry gives the implication of his belief that an interest in the past should not be perceived as a mere satisfaction of a vain hedonism, but as a window for the exploration of the complex interdependence of present and past. In fact, this approach simplifies the complexity of the relationships that Soyinka interrogates in *The Interpreters*. Out of the night-club scene we are transported abruptly to the journey the interpreters had made to see Egbo's ancestral Creektown. Soyinka's deliberate attempts to shift scenes, either through the use of flashback or time-switch, serve to demonstrate his quest for an integrationist view of social orientation.

Egbo returns to the creek-town to put to test his response to the invitation from the elders that he should succeed his grandfather as their leader. To some extent, and a great one for that matter, the invitation tempts him because, as the narrator puts it, 'he knew and despised the age which sought to mutilate his beginnings' (Interpreters 2). At the same time, he recognises that dissatisfaction with the present does not make the hand of past times less heavy with its demands. The evocative language describing Egbo's immersion in his past has an entirely different quality

to that of the opening, far richer in imagery and without the jerky edginess of the night-club scene. Egbo perceives the creek-town as 'an interlude from reality' and this perception points to the antithetical relationship that exists between the past and his age.

It would appear that the past has apparently ceased to matter to the interpreters, except in the degree to which it can be utilised to advance individual aims. That is part of its unreality, and part of its attraction. For Egbo, the creek-town gives the impression of an escape from 'real life,' a return to a simpler and more wholesome existence. This is largely an intellectual conception and a complicated at that since none of interpreters, save for Egbo, is in a position to consider the choice in any practical sense. To Egbo, the illusion of unreality is difficult to maintain, since to him the creek-town represents the need to make a decision between a return to it and his life in the city. What complicates Soyinka's portraiture even further is that Egbo too participates in the illusion of unreality, even encourages it, for while he remains at that self-deluding distance from the creek-town he can continue to see it as the archetypal community, content with its silence and its ancient serenity. The appearance of a man on the bank 'breaks the crust of time,' making it impossible for Egbo to continue the illusion. The timeless dream-world is supplanted with specific images of his own childhood, dislocating the longing for a return to roots into a fear of the demands that the past and its survivors would make on him. In the end, he feels the pull of the past as the pull of death: 'He acknowledged it finally, this was a place of death. And admitted too that he was drawn to it, drawn to it as a dream of isolation, smelling its archaic menace and the violent undertows, unable to deny its dark vitality' (Interpreters 12).

Egbo's ambivalence about the past and its relation to the present reflects Soyinka's slight departure from the conception of idealism in romanticised 'blackness,' one that is exuded literary artists that that subscribe to philosophy of negritude. The shifts in time allow us to contrast the view of a past event by offering a new vantage point on the present. The aimless brooding during the night-club scene enables us to discern more succinctly Egbo's attraction to the 'dream of isolation.' There is no real likelihood that a return to roots will be sufficient for Egbo. He feels the narrowness of the demands of the past too keenly to risk his freedom for the satisfaction of 'a dream of isolation.' For with the shattering of the illusion of unreality comes also the acknowledgement that the image of the community as living in calmness and contentment was another figment of his imagination. It emerges that the creek-town depends on the 'vital smuggling routes' which it controls, and to which it owes its prosperity.

In *The Interpreters*, Soyinka's conceptualisation of human values, it would appear, is not the monopoly of the past. The flashback from the night-club to the creek has allowed Soyinka to expose the inadequacies of Egbo's present by probing the potential of his past action, while at the same time allowing Egbo to question the assumption on which the perception of that potential is based. Soyinka, in his comment in the article, 'The Writer in the African State,' observes that there is need for the African literary artist to unleash himself from the fascination of the past. This comment appears unfair to Soyinka himself for his characters exhibit an unusual enthrallment with the past. Though he is averse to obsession with the past, he uses it to explain the future. Characters' preoccupation with the past is a motif in most of his works. The ideals he advocates for in *The Interpreters*, just like one would later notice in *Season of Anomy*, are informed by traditional values. The 'Creektown' ideal, the one that Egbo yearns for from the past, is sheltered from Western influences.

A similar use of time-switch is used to reveal Sekoni as a character. He fits the description of Soyinka's paragon of idealism. In the development of Sekoni's character, Soyinka appears to be suggesting that universal human values are a combination of patches from different epochs as well as societies. The present can no longer be ignored in the conceptualisation of ideals. When we first meet him, he is offering a different interpretation of the past from the negative one held by Egbo. Egbo demands to know, a little provocatively, why the dead should not be forgotten if they 'are not strong enough to be ever-present in our being' (Interpreters 9). Unlike Egbo, Sekoni is the least articulate of the interpreters, and yet it is he who stands for the social ideals that Soyinka advocates for. As such, he is given the most idealistic messages. The Alhaji, or at times the Sheikh, the wise and learned man, is barely able to define himself through a terrible stutter, but he stands out as the most revolutionary character in the novel. Soyinka does not spare the reader from the unusually prolonged stutters: 'Ththat is why wwe must acc-cept the universal d-d-dome, b-b-because ththere is no d-d-direction. The b-b-bridge is the d-d-dome of rreligion and b-b-bridges d-d-don't jjust g-g-go from hhere to ththere; a bridge also faces backwards' (Interpreters 9).

The protest Sekoni is struggling to make comprises, at one level, a demand for continuity, for connections. Where Egbo sees the past as parasitic on the present, Sekoni sees it more idealistically, as unified with the present and the

future. In a place of a parasitic relationship, Sekoni sees a symbiotic one. The unifying force is 'religion' or faith. Portrayed as the prophet of continuity, Sekoni is remarkably incoherent, and his conception of what the 'b-b-bridge' is, remains an intensely felt experience that never quite achieves precision. Therefore, according to Soyinka, it would appear that it is the ability of an individual to identify the bridge between the present and the past that would enable them to discern what the future holds for humanity.

Aware of the central role he plays in the concretisation of the utopian ideals, Soyinka treats the character of Sekoni with considerable sensitivity. It is in this context that one would understand why he gets enraged when his friends make fun of the native woman. Lasunwon, in his attempt to emphasise the fact that he cannot go to bed with the native woman, says: 'She is revoltingly fat that's all. Why, I can almost hear her buttocks squelch, like these oranges in Kola's painting' (Interpreters 25). Deeply horrified by this crude description, Sekoni says 'she is the body of religion' and shaking his head with increasing violence, he ejaculates the word 'Profanity' to show his distaste for the ungodly depiction of what ought to be pure. He, unlike Lasunwon who is solely enticed by physical beauty, appreciates the spiritual, so that what supersedes the body attracts him more. He is so sensitive about spirituality that he cannot allow 'a man,' in Sagoe's words, 'have his joke.' The writer deliberately shuns the trite tagging of the man of faith as either a self-deluding fool or as a moral paragon. Be that as it may, Sekoni's predilection for idealism is conceived of as a real potential whose contradictions are embodied in the character's incapacity to speak it with poise. Portrayed as a stammerer, he only stutters. His speech is presented in such a way that the rhythm is interrupted by repetitions, blocks or spasms, or prolongations of sounds.

Sekoni's protest is also an assertion of the necessity to struggle for the connections, and this aspect of his protest finds true and lucid expression in his carving of 'The Wrestler.' Unlike the ejaculations on the 'd-d-dome,' on the continuity of human experience, which remain intense but incoherent and explosive outbursts, 'The Wrestler' depicts man in the archetypal struggle to make sense of his world. With 'The Wrestler' Sekoni has moved beyond any of the other interpreters, beyond the sham of the arrogant satire and the limiting rage of Sagoe and Egbo, beyond the detachment and the tentativeness of Kola and Bandele. Sekoni's discovery that the 'b-b-bridge' is also man's struggle to understand his world, is conceived of after a shattering failure. As such, his discovery is experiential. He avoids the bookish and experimental perspectives that are represented by other interpreters.

His 'experimental Power station,' built with civilising zeal in the remote station where he had been assigned to cool his idealistic heels, is officially condemned as 'junk,' a verdict arrived at through greed and cynicism. At one level, this is bitter satire on another breed of interpreters: the corruption and the lack of vision of the black power-elite combining with the 'expat, expert's' pliability in the service of greed, to destroy the idealistic and sensitive reformer. At another level, Sekoni's failure and subsequent 'discovery' of the necessity to wrestle some sense out of life, contrasts with his naive idealism as a returning engineer:

Sekoni, qualified engineer, had looked over the railings every day of his sea voyage home. And the sea sprays built him bridges and hospitals, and the large trailing furrow became a deafening waterfall denying human will until he gathered it between his fingers, made the water run in the lower channels of his palm, directing it against the primeval giants on the forest banks (Interpreters 26).

Obi Okonkwo, in *No Longer At Ease*, gazes towards Nigeria with a similar burning naivety. Obi is forced into corruption by his own perception of the demands his position in his society make on him. Sekoni is thwarted into madness. His failure is already hinted at in the impractical piety of what he sees as his role in social progress. Soyinka invites us to question Sekoni's plain idealism. The inflated speechifying and the utopian nature of Sekoni's dream make this lucid enough. On the other hand, we are left in no doubt about the importance of his 'discovery.'

The self-expression that comes about with this knowledge makes the carving of 'The Wrestler' an act of 'frenzy and desperation, as if time stood in his way' (Interpreters 100). The 'discovery' indicates his potential in real human terms compared to idealistic fantasies of the returning engineer, a potential he is never able to conceptualise fully. Sekoni, like his friends, is cagey and hardly confronts himself with the implications of his new knowledge. In the end, it is his myopia that engenders his destruction. The 'discovery' had come a little late, to a man who had learned to be afraid of the world:

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 arabesques 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 (Interpreters 155).

Sekoni himself becomes the victim of the technological progress he had sought to bring. A clearer expression of negative impacts of technological advancement is best captured in 'Death in the Dawn.' In this elegy, Soyinka moans the lives of young visionary leaders whose breaths are cut short by 'metallic monsters.' 'Driving to Lagos one morning a white cockerel flew out of the dusk and smashed itself against my windscreen. A mile further I came across a motor accident and freshly dead man in the smash' (Idanre 10). The choice of the word cockerel is deliberate as it speaks of the termination of the vision of a budding leader. Sekoni's dream, just like the cockerel's or the freshly dead man, is not fully realised, yet he is, indubitably, the most positive of the interpreters. His social vision is smashed on the windscreens of leaders whose physical appetites are unbridled. His exploration is active and his life lacks the destructive spite and pointless cynicism of Egbo and Sagoe. Appreciably, his friends mourn him deeply, but without thought of comforting others. In fact, his strength of character influences the lives of other interpreters both explicitly and implicitly. Egbo 'fled to the rocks by the bridge until the funeral was over where unseen he shed his bitter, angry tears' (Interpreters 155). The point that the narrator brings out in this description is that Sekoni's influence on the other interpreters is inescapable; they are capable of making public stunts about a certain measure of boldness to move on but the gravity of Sekoni's death cuts deeper and becomes more prominent in their inner thoughts.

Sagoe's self-indulgent cynicism is seen for what it is as he is 'locked in beer and vomit for a week,' agreeing to be quiet only when Dehinwa read to him from his book on the philosophy of shitting, an indication of the disregard for academics and their scholarly works. Swollen by the craze for physical satisfaction, leaders 'shit' on the academics. Kola worked 'blindly in spasms of grief and unbelieving,' leaving to Bandele 'the agony of consoling Alhaji Sekoni,' the grief-stricken father. Bandele we know little about to begin with. Sekoni's death allows us to compare his response to that of the others. In Part Two of the novel we become aware of Bandele as the one who is becoming critical of the relative callousness of his friends. After the visit to Lazarus' church, he mocks his friends for having thought only of what they could get out of the prophet, and chides them for having made no effort to understand what the man could have wanted out of them. Sagoe, the man with a cynical turn of wit, accuses Bandele of being 'so fuckin' superior,' while Kola expresses Bandele's stance more accurately when he says:

'Damn it, Bandele, what's going on anyway! You have become so insufferably critical and interfering.' It was as if Bandele was a long praying mantis. Visibly he retracted into a hole, feelers trodden on like an incautious ant; and he only said, 'None of you minds much what suffering you cause' (Interpreters 179).

Sekoni's perception of life mirrors that of the 'initiated' Ofeyi; he intimates in Part One of the novel that it is not enough to arrive from abroad with ideals, see them dashed and retire into an arrogant, satirical contempt for society. Ofeyi, too, learns that conceptualisation of human values, the ideals that Aiyero stands for, calls for humility. Bandele, in Part Two, in a more overtly critical way, probes the actions and motives of his friends, drawing attention to their inadequacy. It is no coincidence that Sekoni's 'The Wrestler' 'was unmistakably Bandele,' for not only is Bandele's 'unique figure' appropriate for the depiction of the human struggle to wrestle with life, but in Part Two one recognizes him as symbolically suitable in equal measure. The portraiture of Sekoni and Bandele, especially the sharp contrast in this portraiture, depicts the frailties of the interpreters, and of the stance they have adopted towards their society. It would not be enough to see Soyinka's novel as only an attack on the corruption and crass greed of the old guard, for it is not shown that the new interpreters are able to offer something significantly better. Indeed, the failure of the individual interpreters comes out clearly as a result of the contrast.

It is Sagoe who exposes the consequences of greed, the voracious physical appetites of the plutocrats. Sagoe, whose fanciful verbalizing opens the novel, has no alternative to offer to the rottenness of the neo-Tarzans. His very language denies him the possibility. His wit is satirical, destructive, and we appreciate its full effect in the carnage that occurs at the Oguazor party. The incident sparkles with unrestrained mockery of the stuffed shirts, the hollow men of the new elite: 'A buzz of wit, genteel laughter and character slaughter welcomed them from the drive and they entered the house of death' (Interpreters 139).

There is more to try Sagoe's arrogance than what one encounters at the beginning of the party. He wonders if the brains of his hosts are equally 'petrified,' for the fruit clusters are generously scattered in large bunches and in a range of patterns all over the house. The depiction of Professor Oguazor and his wife, the tone of voice they are given to speak with, their pathetic attempts at ceremony and 'etiquette' make the satire uninhibitedly savage — and enjoyable. The Oguazors and their friends are set up then righteously and hilariously knocked down. The effect, however, is also to give us no possibility of understanding their motivation, of perceiving the qualities that must underlie their crassness. We are led to believe that this is all there is to them. It is interesting that it is Sagoe, the least responsible and the most self-indulgent of the interpreters, who actively wages the war against the Oguazors, hurling the 'petrified' fruit as missiles. Sagoe is unlikely to want to make the effort to understand the Oguazors, as he himself recognizes, since he does not 'have to live with them.' His actions are obviously influenced by this. He scourges the Oguazors as if they were the scapegoats for the 'elite' of his society, but the act remains only marginally symbolic since Sagoe's obvious, personal relish for his task succeeds in the end in emphasizing his contempt for social form rather than leading us to a clearer understanding of the confused elitism of the Oguazors.

The description of the scene is hilarious. The last few thoughts of Pinkshore, the sacrificial expatriate sketched in for ritual slaughter, bring the chapter to an end. It is part of Soyinka's satirical skill that with a few deft lines he can give us a view of the European expatriate's underlying mistrust and fear of Africa, as in a moment of panic his mind grasps wildly at the stereotypes of savagery:

Sagoe flung the lemon. It took Pinkshore full on the mouth, soft, wet from the grass and sudden. His brain spinning instant solutions found mysterious terror — witch-moth, bat-shit, murder, knobkerry, death, Africa at night. . . . (Interpreters 152)

Neither Sagoe nor any of the other interpreters question their right to condemn the Oguazors. It is right, however, that we should question the ends of this chapter. The satirist has a limited objective but is always in danger of mocking what is apparently grotesque rather than pointing to what is morally objectionable. Evidently, recognition of social ideals calls for humility.

One would very easily notice that Soyinka's ends are more than satirical. He invites the reader to explore and question those he has placed in a position to voice a social dissatisfaction. Sagoe's actions, therefore, have to be seen critically. They are an uninhibited expression of his disgust with the Oguazors and their friends, carried out in a kind of voidante frenzy, albeit a moral one, evacuating the anger out of his mind. He is, of course, primarily expressing his contempt, the same kind of feeling that lay behind the Book of Enlightenment. In that, he mocks academic earnestness by writing a 'thesis on shit.' At the same time, these extreme forms of expression establish his status as a wit. He deflects Dehinwa from seriously scrutinizing him by constant references to this status, emphasizing his eccentricity and his 'irrepressible' humour. The Book is evidence of Sagoe's predilection for the gesture that satisfies his sense of justice and does not commit him further.

The eruption at the Oguazors' is another example, as is the article on Sekoni which he knew would not be accepted but would allow him to feel a righteous anger. He joins the train of 'the boot coffin mourners' 'automatically,' out of a feeling of sympathy for their ridiculous show. In his sympathy he is unable to resist taking one of the wreaths from Sir Derinola's train and putting it on the 'poor' coffin, but he cannot stay to speak to the grateful mourners. He tells himself that he is fleeing from them for fear that he might be tempted to use them in his newspaper column. One cannot help feeling that he feels himself justified in his flight because he has made the gesture of sympathy. His excremental obsessions, like his 'drink lobes' and his 'emotional stomach' are the necessary props for his idiosyncrasy and eccentricity, an unwillingness to be responsible. Seen in such a light, as a gesture of disgust, the Oguazor incident serves both a satirical purpose and is at the same time consistent with Sagoe's character. Motivated by injustice and hypocrisy to act, he remains unresponsive to the demands made of him.

Contrastingly, Egbo cuts the figure of an astonishingly daring person, yet again appears surprisingly weak and uncertain. One sees him exploring his feelings and his thoughts more assiduously than any of the other interpreters in the novel. In his case, the writer employs the flashbacks to display his incessant attempts at understanding his past. His obsession with 'roots' gives one a chance to measure him up against them, and to find him short of the early daring gallantry and curiosity that precedes initiation. He thinks of himself as an apostate, absolutely

neutral. He allows others to make decisions and carry him along 'with the tide.' The character of the 'present' Egbo sharply contrasts with the 'past' Egbo, who had gone to spend the night by the water of the Oshun grove at Oshogbo as a child, and who had found eventually a confinement in the stillness and depth of the quiet water:

I loved life to be still, mysterious. I took my books down there to read, during the holidays. But later, I began to go further, down towards the old suspension bridge where the water ran freely, over rocks and white sand. And there was sunshine. There was depth also in that turbulence, at least I felt down into darkness from an unfettered sky. It was so different from the grove where depth swamped me; at the bridge it was elusive, you had to pierce it, arrowed like a bird. (Interpreters 9)

This tension that exists between the need to feel the unity of experience and environment, and a revulsion from the quiet 'depth' of the grove might be read as a contrast between the silted calm of tradition and the new turbulence, and relative freedom, of a changing world. Conceptualisation of social ideals in a fast-changing society is an uphill task. Egbo's ambivalence is quite patent. His return to the creek-town is a testing out of his desire to return to the quiet 'sources.' His discovery that it was 'a place of death' is a reassertion of his reluctance to lose his freedom, an expression of his discomfort at the thought of being 'absorbed.' For Egbo, apostatising is the only sense of equilibrium, the third space, that he can imbibe and still maintain the tension. It amounts to an unwillingness to commit himself, either to the constraints of custom, or to the indecency of propping up 'the herald-men of the future.' He sees the choices ahead of him as kinds of death, 'merely a question of drowning . . . resolving itself always only into a choice of drowning' (Interpreters 120).

But, he is not quite as unnerved as such neutrality would suggest, rather he is a 'predator on nature,' unwilling to concede to, only able to exploit his circumstances. His 'apostate' lifestyle is both a weakness, it is a giving up of choices, and a strength, it allows the fiction of an impending decision. Held in this tension, he acts out of a personal hedonism, daring himself to deeds of self-assertion and unwilling to be tolerant of weakness. His disgust with Joe Golder makes the point. His use of the dancing woman, for all the gasps of 'the Black Immanent,' is exploitative and intended only to satisfy a jaded lust. His seduction of the unnamed girl, the earnest, independent young student, is another example of his predatory selfishness. He takes the girl to his 'shrine,' apparently with honourable intentions, probes and examines her for his own needs and finds himself lonely and wanting. The 'stronga-head' takes the girl with 'eager hands.' 'The centre pure ran raw red blood, spilling on the toe of the god, and afterwards he washed this for her, protesting shamefacedly, in the river' (Interpreters 134). He agrees not to see the girl again. He discovers later that she had become pregnant and had had to leave the University. In highlighting this ritualistic act, Soyinka is suggesting the tide of physical appetites is so strong that remaining chaste and untainted in the face of materialistic glare is nearly impracticable.

His anger at the mockery of her by Dr Lumoye stirs him to a murdering hate. His eyes have 'the glare of a savage dog' as he approaches the doctor. It is only Bandle's 'interference,' showing up the Oguazors and the doctor for the callous hypocrites that they were, while at the same time reminding Egbo that it was his action, indulged in to satisfy a personal need, that had brought about the 'tragedy,' that prevents the working out of the scene into some violent echo of the Oguazor party. Thus, Bandle, at the end of the novel, confronts the Oguazors with their selective 'morality,' and reminds Egbo that his 'apostate' lifestyle is only a kind of licence to live off the decisions of others without accepting his share of the responsibility. The true 'apostate' hangs not torn between two choices, but has no need of choices. Like Noah, the thief rescued from the mob and groomed by Lazarus into a latter day saviour, the 'apostate' is vacuous, empty rather than tense between two courses as Egbo is.

At the end of the novel, Simi re-approaches Egbo. Simi is the image of sensuous womanhood and it was through her that Egbo had discovered a profane ecstasy of the senses as she had led him through his first act of sex:

For exquisite though it was, it meant pain, and he who had been ready so long and was ready now found that the fight lay in retaining the moment in hanging by the fingertips to a sharp-edged precipice while the blood coursed sweetly down his mouth. And his mind flew over his life, wondering what this meant within what he ever was or would become.... Good God, in darkness let me be . . . (Interpreters 60)

In contrast to those ecstatic moments, Egbo no longer feels a reassurance in Simi's presence. As Simi approaches him he feels only a renewal of the demands of his freedom. His 'disgust' is beginning to turn into a kind of self-hate, the extreme distortion of self-blame. Simi, one realizes, no longer answers his needs. In the calm depths of

her eyes he sees only the stillness that had threatened to 'swamp' him at the Oshun grove in Oshogbo. He now watches her as 'she walked towards him, eyes ocean-clams with her peculiar sadness . . . like a choice of a man drowning he was saying . . . only like a choice of drowning' (Interpreters 251). The novel ends with those words. They leave an echo of Egbo's real fear. He is not an apostate, he is afraid to choose, and that is the 'stronga-head's' greatest weakness.

The Interpreters, as shown in the foregoing discussion, stretches beyond satirizing the materialistic tendencies of the powers that be. Subtle descriptions of the stock character of West African novel - Chief Nanga, Koomson or H. R. H. Brempong - are noticeable in the novel. Characters, especially the elites, whose souls are absorbed by the 'Tarzanised tide' receive more detailed treatment. Chief Winsala is depicted as a wretched drunken man, who can hardly escape the derision and invectives of the waiters so that his well-placed stature only serves to lower his dignity. Sir Derinola hardly evades the writer's wrath. Material possessions that place individuals above others in the society invite indignity and public ridicule. Chief Winsala, Sir Derinola and the Oguazors represent the Tarzanised interpreters, the elite of the western 'establishment,' whose convenient pretence has deprived them the stature of the contemporary idealists. It is little wonder, therefore, that Professor Oguazor admonishes the young pregnant girl for being immoral yet his illegitimate child is the apple of his eye. Such is the two-facedness, the duplicity of the dominant power brokers in the materialistic society. The new interpreters portray these men, men whose age should have demanded respect but whose craze for physical appetites and corruption has made them undeserving of such respect. Sagoe walks away from Winsala with 'the smell of the new order' following him out, 'and he longed for a strong rind of lemon' (Interpreters 85). Suggested in this expression is that allowing oneself to be absorbed by the new order, one that is characterised by desire to satisfy physical appetites, deprives them of spirituality. The smell of new order is intoxicating; without the lemon, the moral fibre that glues the society together is bound die.

Though there are critical inadequacies in the past ideals, very little physical appetite is noticeable in its making. The craze for materialism is associated with the new order. Perhaps this is the reason Soyinka's develops characters who are preoccupied with the past yet he admonishes such preoccupation. Sagoe's condemnation of the new order becomes more sweeping and quite revealing in the conceptualisation of the universal ideals that Soyinka vouches for. The bridge that separates the cemetery from the rest of the city, the dead from the living, also leads to the Ikoyi suburb 'where both the white remnants and the new black onyinbos lived in colonial vacuity' (Interpreters 111). Yet at the same time as one accepts the justice of much of what the new interpreters say, they are conscious of their inadequacies too. The novel interrogates both the past and the present and in its holistic probe, it advocates for recognition of the 'bridge.' Bandle's complaint summarises and indeed crystallises the kernel of Soyinka's philosophy. He portrays Lazarus and his Apostles represent another breed of interpreters whose social perceptions cannot be wished away by other self-proclaimed judges. The implication is that Sagoe, Egbo, Kola and the rest have no reason to assume that they are able to judge their society with any greater conviction than the brought-to-life Lazarus and his followers. Bandle, in this respect, raises a critical point: his reservations are laced with caution against the blind arrogance of assuming that others have accepted their right to pronounce on the community, or that others have no dreams of their own to interpret. He observes: 'Just be careful. When you create your own myth don't carelessly promote another's, and perhaps a more harmful one' (Interpreters 178). Sagoe and the others refuse to take Bandle's objections seriously. Kola will get one more figure for his pantheon (as it turns out he gets two, for both Noah and Lazarus sit for him). Sagoe will have his story, centre spread, but none of them are prepared for the tragedy which their casual meddling helps to bring about, the death of the boy Noah.

Evidently, the interpreters do not consciously participate in the tragedy, but their lack of care for others, their assumption that they have the right to judge but not to be judged, makes them selfishly careless of the boy. In this sense, Lazarus, who cares for the lost and the frail, is a more altruistic and a more sympathetic interpreter of his community and his time. He, in this sense, comes close to the writer's conceptualisation of idealism. The prophet's dreams, however, do not reflect this world. He is therefore blinded to the very frailties that he desperately seeks to redeem his brothers from. The Apostles, and more spectacularly Noah, are moved to piety by the strength of will of their prophet. None of them, however, is able to interpret the dreams that move the man.

Superficially, the novel is 'difficult.' The changes in chronology, the density of language, do pose early problems. But there is no 'chaos' in *The Interpreters*. There is a very distinct structure, both in the sense of chapter construction and in the more dynamic sense of technique and method. The past is used to probe the inadequacies

of the present, and this is the most pronounced and a highly successful technique, particularly in the first part of the novel. Soyinka's artistic strategy not only allows us to explore the characters and their potential, but it is also symbolic of the community's need to place the events of the moment in the context of its traditions or its past. The subtlety of the symbolism is that it recognizes that the past has an ambivalent influence.

While the past sheds light on the potential of the present, it also absorbs the energies of the present to resurrect itself. The traditionally initiated men who are sent overseas to acquire western education are expected to use their knowledge to illuminate the significance of modernity against the age-old traditional values. Correspondingly, they deploy their scholarly energies to revivify the significance of traditional values. It is only then that the past comes to have significance in the self-conception of the community. The role played by Sekoni, just like Olunde, should therefore be conceived of in this context. For Soyinka, it is this symbiotic relationship between the past and the present that formulates the universal ideals that would stand the test of time. But unless the influence of the past is seen in dynamic equilibrium with the need for change in the present, it becomes merely a thing of 'death' rather than a revitalizing force. Egbo understands the dilemma but refuses to accept the challenge.

On the whole, one sees little change in the disposition of the interpreters. One comes to understand them more deeply as they see them responding to circumstances, but one does not follow their development from one personal crisis to another, to the point where self-knowledge confounds them or leaves them serene, as the case may be. Soyinka has chosen an approach, a form, that allows him to explore his characters, and finally to throw some doubt on the easy assumptions that they make about themselves and their community. At the same time, he hints at the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, in connection with both the development of the individual and the self-apprehension of the community. The invitation of Egbo to his ancestral home is an indication that crystallisation of the past ideals calls for recognition of the present. The traditional mores of Creek town are cemented by the revivifying force of the present. It is this mutual co-existence that constitutes the 'universal dome.'

It is evident that Wole Soyinka's novel reflects his shifting balance between the creative and destructive sides of life, one of the most instructive sets of contraries is the alternation of materialism and idealism. These two drives feature quite significantly in both the humorous and dreadful sides of Soyinka's vision in his maiden novel. They reflect the sometimes contradictory energies that drive his writing: the human needs to enjoy life to its fullest as well as to transcend it to a higher stage. Soyinka uses these conflicting drives to celebrate and satirise the human appetites for love, power, money and glory by depicting the growth of appetite as either a vice or a virtue. The physical appetites are usually associated with egotism, while the spiritual drive is connected to self-sacrifice, social commitment and artistic creativity.

Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* sequels *The Interpreters*. Just like *The Interpreters*, it lends itself to Marxist criticism. Undeniably, there are inherent contradictions within the text, providing a good case for the employment of dialectical materialism. The appetite for materialism (symbolised by the neon cities) seems to overshadow the quest for spirituality (Aiyero ideal). Although the society presented in Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* corresponds to that of the civilian-rule era in Nigeria, it goes beyond the politically chaotic epoch to include the period of civil war and the years immediately following it. The title of the novel speaks of a time of anarchy, disarray and muddle. It is an era associated with anomalies of sorts; relationships between men and women, as well as men and natural environment, are characterised by vicious and caustic cycles of antagonism. Though Soyinka's novel reveals a lucid preoccupation with ideological contradictions analogous to those that are explored in Achebe's works, more particularly *A Man of the People*; it displays a more forceful quest into societal values. Additionally, *Season of Anomy* seems to be more frantic in its search for authentic solutions.

In *Season of Anomy*, Soyinka still demonstrates his commitment to idealism and indeed leans heavily towards Marxism. While acknowledging the doubts that other critics have expressed about Soyinka's commitment to Marxism, Ngara, in *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel*, sets out to demonstrate that Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* 'comes very close to a commitment to socialist ideals' (99). Fischer's comments reinforce the contention that the writer may not consider himself committed to socialism but his work can certainly be accorded a socialist interpretation: 'Socialist art and literature as a whole imply the artist's or writer's fundamental agreement with the aims of the working class and the emerging socialist world' (Fischer 108). Ngara argues that in *Season of Anomy*, 'there is a definite antithesis between monopoly capitalism and repression on the one hand and progressive communalism on the other.'

The sub-titles of *Season of Anomy* - 'Seminal', 'Buds,' 'Tentacles,' 'Harvest' and 'Spores' – symbolically capture Soyinka's predilection for a cyclic view of the human life and, macrocosmically, the wider society. The sub-headlines speak of a broad transition from natural germination of a seed to the fruition of the plant that sprouts out of it and then to an unstoppable reproduction. It would appear that Soyinka calls the first section 'Seminal' because the events in the chapters that come under it provide the foundation that strongly influences later events in the story. Metaphorically speaking, at this point in the text, a seed is sown. This seed sprouts, grows and buds. Soon, this spreads to the rest of the society and forms tentacles that are so influential and insurmountable. The season of 'harvest' follows, but this is not the end. Out of the harvest, spores are realised that further spurs the reproduction of the plants. In Pa Ahime's own words, 'The meaning of grain is not merely food but, germination... The waters of Aiyero need to burst their banks. The grain must find new seminal grounds or it will atrophy and die.' The sentiments of Garry Gillard resonate quite accurately with these arguments. He critically observes:

This arrangement has relevance on three levels. The first is on the level of ironic thematic comment, with the enforcement of the implied view that the process of national independence has worked, in fact, in the reverse of a 'natural' order. The second is on the level of the protagonist Ofeyi, sometime head of the government's Cocoa Campaign (itself shown as being a most unnatural enterprise). The third and interconnecting level is that of the communalist centre of Aiyero: the symbolic generator of fruitful values, an island of sanity in the surrounding chaos, and the focal point of Ofeyi's search for definitive values.

In the assessment of the ideological contradictions that are critiqued in *Season of Anomy*, it is imperative to examine Soyinka's outstanding village of Aiyero more closely. The writer uses Aiyero as a paragon of a society that is deeply embedded in unadulterated idealism. There seems to be very high regard for spirituality. The introductory pages of the novel expose this reality. From the onset, the narrator underscores the peculiar nature of Aiyero. It is evidently different from the places that surround it. This explains why it is acerbically regarded as 'the prime example of unscientific communalism, primitive and embarrassingly sentimental' (Season 2). It is because of its obsolete communalism that it posed neither threat nor liability to 'the governments that came and went.' Underlying this mildly sarcastic description of this village is its trueness to the ideals of an ordered society.

Aiyero, a coastal African 'farming and fishing community' whose main income-generating industry is boat-building, is detached from the rest of the country by lagoons. It is only accessible by boat, an indication that it lags behind insofar as technological development is concerned. It still upholds its traditional ways probably because of its isolation, while most of the country, notably the modern city of Ilosa, has given in to foreign influences. It has only recently come to the attention of the public as a curiosity for tourists and sociologists. The National Cocoa Corporation sees it as a new region to be exploited and has sent its promotion group, headed by Ofeyi, the protagonist, to conduct a feasibility study. The portrait of this idyllic village is not any different from the portrait of the 'lagoon villages' (Interpreters 182) which are only accessible by canoes. The use of lagoons to show remoteness and/ or detachment of idyllic societies is a significant motif in Soyinka's novels.

The binary oppositions, communalism and capitalism, form the antithetical directions of the novel. It is important to note that communalism is the subject of mockery in the text, notably because of what modern cities like Ilosa consider as crudity, obsolescence so to speak. The governance system is described as a 'quaint anomaly'; 'it obtained a tax assessment for the whole populace and paid it before the departure of the pitch-helmeted assessor, in cash, held all property in common, literally, to the last scrap of thread on the clothing of each citizen.' This communal ownership and cohesion is an 'anachronism [that] gave much patronising amusement to the cosmopolitan sentiment of a profit-hungry society.' The hallowed status that the writer accords the village cannot be gainsaid. Its marginalisation, isolation from the mainstream society, has enabled entrench traditional value systems that are not only attractive but intriguing. It is, therefore, small wonder that it is the 'unique beneficiary of a three-quarter century of accidental isolation.'

Unmistakably, in the desperate expedition for wealth and power, Aiyero presents the kind of life that radically differs from the rest. Its existence attracts 'definitive guffaws' from the developed societies. It is dismissed by the neo-Tarzans, symbolised by Ilosa, on account of its outmoded governance system. Despite its obsolescent structure of leadership, it is the centre of tourism and what the writer sarcastically calls the 'erudite irrelevancies' of sociologists. Gikandi acknowledges this puzzle in some of the most revealing comments:

In a country dominated by the Cartel, held under terror by the gun and the purse, Aiyero is Utopia: an organic community whose values seem to grow directly from nature, untouched by the creed of Mammonism that afflicts the rest of the landscape. Before its 'discovery' during a census, Aiyero relates to the rest of the country on its terms; external events have never determined the development of the community's political culture in any decisive way, so that her sons go to work in the city (the most glaring and infamous symbol of modernism in the African novel) but still return with their primeval values intact. In Aiyero, then, Soyinka offers us a concrete, communalistic, liberative myth. How such a communal entity can exist in the midst of a modernist world is the riddle Ofeyi tries to unravel (104).

There is a deviant feature in Aiyero which evidently intrigues the leader of the promotions team, Ofeyi: the people of Aiyero always return to the place of their birth. In Soyinka's own words, 'The umbilical cord, no matter how far it stretched, never did snap.' This is typical of Soyinka's works; it is not only his characters that are intrigued by this but also his readers. The return of characters in *The Interpreters* and *Death and the King's Horseman* among other texts is worth noting. It is indeed a trope in Soyinka's oeuvre as the arguments advanced later demonstrate. The rhetorical questions employed in the preliminary pages foreground the premium that the writer places on this subject. As indicated earlier in this study, Soyinka's characters, perhaps like Soyinka himself, are usually desperate for answers. Ofeyi poses this question to Pa Ahime, absolutely the perfect paradigm of the village's folk wisdom, and the substance of this inquiry is presented below:

Why did they always come back? ... What makes your youth come back?... What brings them back, he again and again demanded of Ahime who played the role of Chief Minister to the Custodian of the Grain. What makes them different from the rest of their generation who succumb to other life styles and values? (Season 3).

The response to this question is even more intriguing. 'But the old man would only reply' Ofeyi recalls, 'that is like asking me why we came, why we are still here, why we live. The answer is, I do not know.' Though it would superficially appear that Pa Ahime parries the question, a close scrutiny of the response suggests that this village offers a lifeline for its members and the other societies, like Ilosa, that are exposed to the foreign values of the West. Without saying it explicitly, the old man accedes to the centrality of the value systems in this isolated area to the future generation, the life of the society in its entirety. Simply put, the welfare of contemporary society lies in its return to 'Aiyero.' Perhaps it is imperative to indicate, albeit prematurely, that Aiyero has a bizarre gripping influence for the protagonist, Ofeyi. He finds the question of return so puzzling that he spends a little more time to make preliminary inquiries into the matter as he releases other members of promotions team. The answer is to be found in the positive nature of the place itself. The village is an oasis of ideals that are worthy of obeisance.

The Aiyero ideal is superior to what its people see and experience. It provides something deeper than familial attachment. Therefore, those who travel outside the village would want to be in constant touch with their parent community as long as they are away. This is why their return to the village is inevitable. Their surplus incomes are invested in the coffers of Aiyero. Members of the village feel so attached and upright as 'they live by an idea, their lives are bound up by one idea ... they cannot be corrupted, or swayed' (Season 27). The spiritual values held by the people of Aiyero go beyond the narrow confines of tribal groupings by virtue of its universal validity. It is small wonder then that the ways of this isolated village 'have always been the dream of mankind all the age and among people so far apart' (Season 12). The preliminary remarks in the novel, as will be discussed later on, therefore, show how the Aiyero life is lived in practice.

The Aiyero ideal has been in existence for a long time. Its late discovery by Ofeyi demonstrates that it is a guarded secret. The sons of Aiyero do not believe in propagating the ideal; they regard evangelism as an act of belligerence, a form of violence as it were. Accordingly the task of repackaging the ideal to its perfection and disseminating it across the country is bestowed on Ofeyi, who is a stranger. Ofeyi understands just too well that the 'waters of Aiyero need to burst their banks. The grain must find new seminal grounds or it will atrophy and die' (Season 6). The use of 'waters' as the symbol of the spiritual values held by Aiyero foregrounds the significance attached to the traditional mores. The values have been equated to life itself because water signifies life. The death of the Aiyero ideal is not in the best interests of those who are desirous of social transformation; the Aiyero ideal should not be allowed to die at any cost since it is the embodiment of the best of the African past and recovering the meaning and soul of contemporary life lies in the full-throated championship of the African traditional mores.

Season of Anomy may be summarily described as the story of Ofeyi's search for concrete responses. Ofeyi confesses to Ahime, Aiyero's Chief Minister, 'That is a contradiction which I have yet to resolve within myself... It can prove paralysing in a crisis, and our generation appears to be born into one long crisis' (Season 6). Contrastingly, it is evident that there is no crisis in the traditional village of Aiyero. It seems that in this village, idealistic values are constantly upheld. There is, for instance, a lot of regard for communal living. All its members continually assert their allegiance to the values so that it had become an 'act of faith.' Even the young men who had been 'sent all over the world to experience other mores and values' sent a portion of their earnings to the communal fund. Evidently, these are acts of renewal, confirmation of faith in traditional values. Just like the sending of young men to other places which is emulated from the 'wisdom of its parent body Aiyetomo,' such contributions are reaffirmations by the young generations that they still uphold traditional mores. In a nutshell, their faiths have not been polluted by the Western influences or, as the narrator puts it, 'The neon cities could not lure them away.' Perhaps the best illustrations of invocations of renewal are ornately described in ritualistic killings of Aiyero bulls (Season 16).

Aiyero is indisputably the embodiment, the axiomatic reference point as it were, of social ideals. As such, and significantly so, it proffers a point of comparison. Its inclusion is deliberately done to provide the readers with the model of reference for positive behaviour. This argument finds its backing in a similar phrase employed in the prison literature cited above where Soyinka reckons that 'the soul of the revolutionary dance is in the hands of the flutist' (The Man Died 92). Aiyero is the perfect model; it considers its members as equal human entities whose unity is required to extirpate the social problems engendered by the advent of capitalism in Africa. It represents the socialist order that is best placed to humanise a world dehumanised by the voracious appetites of capitalism. The writer uses it to demonstrate his social vision: utilisation of African values in the articulation of egalitarian imperatives. This, being the gist of the arguments in this chapter, will be further ventilated on in the subsequent paragraphs.

The near apotheosis of greed and avarice in Ilosa, a symbol of post-independent African city whose values are strongly influenced by the West, is the antithesis of Aiyero. It is exposed to all forms of evils engendered by its contact with the outside world. This is unlike Aiyero which, Ofeyi observes, 'seem[s] untouched by where [it has] been, by the plight of the rest of mankind, even of [Ofeyi's] own people.'

Ofeyi can see his goals clearly ahead; he attains his clarity of vision through his interaction with Aiyero. Having resigned from the Corporation (an arm of the exploiting Cartel), his dream is of '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' (Season 27). Evidently, he realises that the realisation of his goals lies in the unity of workers of the world.

The Aiyero 'presence,' the centre of the nation's spiritual and political rearmament; prognosticates the possibility that the dream is set up as a potential reality, an alternative way forward. The projected clash between the old-new ideals of Aiyero and those of the governing Cartel is designed to emphasise certain conflicting issues. A potential for 'good' against an actual 'evil', an affirmative presence against a destructive exploitation, a fruitful reality against a specious mockery - these are the polarities that are presented in *Season of Anomy*.

Soyinka meticulously delineates the competing sets of values, idealism and materialism, and effectively introduces certain supplementary questions that are pertinent to the realisation of Ofeyi's dream. Apparently, the dichotomy between Aiyero and the Cartel sets off a chain of oppositions that proceed from the basic clash of values. While the nature of the Aiyero dream is fairly clear, the method of its enactment is not. There is also the possibility, deliberately canvassed by Soyinka's narrative method, that these ideals can perhaps never be enacted on a grand scale.

Once Aiyero becomes 'a moral thorn in the complacent skin of the national body' (Season 86), the forces of the Cartel are portrayed as moving into a vicious counter-attack. Immediately, the implied question is raised: how, legitimately, can positive ideals of peace and harmony be defended against a destructive power? How to defend the Aiyero people (at the strategic settlement of Shage) from the 'Cross-river whiff of violence, rape and death' (Season 89)? The framing of these questions leads straight into the timeless debate about means and ends. Demakin (the Dentist, and professional revolutionary) asks Ofeyi: 'What did you think it would lead to, the doctrines you began to disseminate through the men of Aiyero?' Ofeyi's answer is a significant one. 'Recovery of

whatever has been seized from society by a handful, re-moulding society itself ...' (Season 117), he says. So the process that Soyinka outlines in *Season of Anomy* is one of recovery and subsequent re-moulding. In the debate between the two figures (the Dentist and Ofeyi), particularly around the question of the use of violence, the author constructs the text's ideological frame of reference. The examination of socio-political alternatives is well under way.

In regard to the personalisation of social contradictions, it is apparent that Ofeyi is Soyinka's mouthpiece: the asker of questions, the searcher for answers. It is Ofeyi who deliberately engages in the constant debate regarding tactics and aims. He it is who is always present at such harrowing moments as the ghastly massacre at Kuntua church (Season 196-201). It is Ofeyi who undergoes a process of self-examination as he searches for his woman (Iriyise), kidnapped by the Cartel. It is clearly for him that the arguments of old Ahime and the militant Demakin are meant. Soyinka uses the figure of Ofeyi, the searcher, to fill in the details of the continuing dream of Aiyero. Ofeyi speaks to Zaccheus, his jazz-playing foil, of creating 'new affinities, working-class kinships as opposed to the tribal' (Season 170).

Shortly after, the two friends stand and gaze at the floating, bloated corpses on the lake, vivid evidence of the Cartel's determination to prevent the building of new kinships of the sort that Ofeyi has in mind. When Ofeyi reaches Temoko prison, it is through his progress into the various areas - from the outer area of the self-imprisoned, to the Lepers yard, then past the Death Cells, and finally into the Lunatic yard - that Soyinka creates his complex parallel of national incarceration and absurdity. Starting from his statement to Ahime that the Aiyero 'grain must find new seminal grounds' (Season 6), Ofeyi becomes the main traveller along the text's fictional road. It is a road that leads to that pointed confrontation with the absurd when men, women and children, trying to escape from the murderers, begin to break into the Federal prison.

Out of the many characters in *Season of Anomy*, all of them filling out minor facets of the text's total process of personalisation, initiation as it were; Demakin, the Dentist, fulfils a significant role. Ofeyi meets him during his travels abroad, seemingly by accident. However it transpires that Demakin is one of the Aiyero men himself. He appears to represent the militant, urban-guerilla thrust of the revolutionary movement. Demakin, more than any of the other figures, clarifies the characterisation of Ofeyi (and his ideas) by a process of reflection. By presenting the Dentist as a determined, no-nonsense figure and having Ofeyi react to his various opinions, Soyinka is able to chart the progress of Ofeyi's movement along the Aiyero road. As that progress also represents the possibility (or otherwise) of the Aiyero ideals being realised, Demakin has a significant role to play. Ofeyi sees the Dentist as a 'self-effacing priest of violence ... whose single-mindedness had resuscitated his own wavering commitment' (Season 22).

Ofeyi's later comments on the Dentist's 'unassailable logic of extraction before infection' (Season 92) and listens while Demakin contends that the spreading of ideals by the intellectuals is not, by itself, sufficient. According to the Dentist, 'Rich black earth or rich blackguards - you can only shoot one' (Season 96). Demakin strives for the creation of a situation in which the Aiyero ideas can take root. Envisaging what will happen after this is Ofeyi's responsibility. While Ofeyi is, as the Dentist puts it, occupied with 'seminal rounds of the distant ideal' (Season 118), Demakin is concerned with channelling what he sees as the unavoidable violence, directing aggression towards the necessary targets. By means of this continuing dialogue, the text brings under scrutiny the potential coalition of the radicalised intellectual reformer and the practical revolutionary. The narrative thrust of *Season of Anomy* enforces the view that such a coalition is a necessary one.

The writer contrasts Ofeyi's role to those of the others during a key meeting with Ahime and Demakin at Cross-River. Ofeyi is shown wondering about the link between his work for Aiyero and his search for Iriyise. He realises that there is a connection and begins to sense that 'the search would immerse me in the meaning of the event, lead me to a new understanding of history' (Season 218). Demakin, for his part, is concerned with the projection of Iriyise as a 'super-mistress of universal insurgence' (Season 219). When the plan for a trek of the Aiyero people is suggested, Ahime views it as a cleansing act that will 'purify our present polluted humanity and cure our survivors of the dangers of self-pity' (Season 218). Demakin is determined that the trek should mark the route for a successful return. Evidently, instead of joining this tactical regrouping, Ofeyi continues with his search for the girl. It is important, in regard to the socio-political implications of these shifting attitudes, that Ofeyi is also put behind bars and, despite the fact that his search is successful and that he actually finds his Iriyise, it is the Dentist, the man

of action, who rescues him. In a practical sense, it is Demakin who makes possible the continued presence of the Aiyero dream. This lends credence to Soyinka's admission of the necessity of some form of violence.

The end of Soyinka's novel only gives a ray of hope, an indication for non-violent evangelism to take root in a society that is characterised by insatiable desires for material gains; a lot of time is needed. The narrator observes that as the men leave the walls of Temoko prison, '[i]n the forests, life began to stir' (Season 320). It is a concluding line that is informed with a sense of guarded optimism. The Aiyero ideas have not taken root but they have not been discarded. Pitted against the destructive forces of the dominating Cartel, the dream of Aiyero has remained intact. The coalition of militant revolutionary and intellectual idealist has been cemented and shown to be potentially effective. The text clearly suggests that the season of anomy in Nigeria (and elsewhere in the contemporary African society) is a transitory one. The values of Aiyero provide the basis for a fruitful way forward. Soyinka's creation of the Aiyero alternative thus allows him to suggest a partial resolution of the contradictions that are presented within the novel. It is a resolution that includes the use of necessary violence to protect the communalist vision of rebirth. A return to sources and then a positive counter-attack: that, implies Soyinka, is a way to end the season of anomy.

Landscape sustains more successfully the burden imposed on it by the allegorical technique; it operates primarily on a functional basis. As noted before, the condition of the land reflects the moral character of the people who inhabit it. Aiyero's ceremony of renewal is replaced in Cross-river by a deadly ritual whose libations paint a 'testament of damnation on earth' (Season 141). In Cross-river earth is smeared with human brains and with the entrails of female wombs. The enormity of the crime committed on land and life is suggested by an allusion to the biblical apocalypse: '... this is the fifth face of the Apocalypse ... the plague of rabid dogs.'

Within such a physical and spiritual wasteland, the Aiyero idea maintains a precarious existence as a glimmer of light shining in the pitch-coated darkness. The underground church at the Tabernacle of Hope is a refuge for those who live in fear. The priest's 'path-finding form' (Season 271) is truly the Way. Religion is the final hope of salvation for those who live in the darkness of terror. It is at the Tabernacle that Taiila fulfills herself as a messenger of love and peace. Her humanity is aroused by the condition of the dead and the dying. Her place is ultimately with situations of suffering, and not with the revolutionary spirit that questions and challenges.

By employing myth and allegory as his mediums for exploring the quest motif in *Season of Anomy*, Soyinka, like Armah, Laye and Tutuola, pulls out of the corpus of the African novel. His works seem to contravene the structural components that define the African novel. Soyinka does not play in this literary league alone; these techniques are evident in Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and *Osiris Rising*, Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and Laye in *The Radiance of the King*, but his technique is more intricate and more convoluted than Tutuola's and Laye's. The use of myth enables him to achieve some distance between himself and his subject while it manipulates, in the words of Eliot, 'the parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity' (178). Meteoric rise to fame and prosperity, Soyinka reveals, cannot be predicated on material possessions but the spiritual values that define an individual. It is therefore not surprising that he ridicules the craze for material gains. He places a lot of premium on an individual's recognition of spiritual values and condemns exclusive predilection of pride and prosperity on mere satisfaction of individual's physical needs and necessities. While the individual or society that insists on being identified purely on idealist standpoints is doomed to public scorn, open condemnation and alienation; hope lies in the ability of such individuals or societies to hold on to such ideals even in the face of ignominious adversity.

Conclusion:-

The opposites that Soyinka presents in the novel, the voracious physical appetites and the quest for spiritual values, are representative of the social contradictions that informed the political revolt against the sitting regime. This does not, however, suggest that the experiences captured in the text are exclusively reflective of Nigeria's socio-political and economic scene. As it is mentioned elsewhere in this paper, Nigeria is a microcosm of the wider African continent. The resolution that Soyinka projects and the nature of historical events can be seen as a testimony of Soyinka's preference for idealist presentation. To the extent that any possible resolution is suggested, it would appear that Soyinka's novel is based on the liberal humanist ideals of personal honesty and individual integrity. Soyinka's novel gives the clearest indication that these values will be sufficient to shelter the Nigerian people from the rain of physical appetite on the horizon. Through these contradictions, Soyinka clearly draws the future lines of battle. This is what makes it significantly different from other realist presentations.

The binary oppositions, as demonstrated in this thesis, are not exclusive to *The Interpreters*. Indeed, in both *Season of Anomy* and *The Interpreters*, there is a strong indication that idealism, high regard for spiritual values, is the hallmark of social transformation. These ideals must be exhibited by individual characters. The ending of *Season of Anomy*, which sequels the first novel, gives hope for the reconstruction of a morally decadent society; Ofeyi's success in awakening the dormant spiritual part of Suberu's soul, is a presentiment of victory in social transformation. He is given an opportunity to make a choice between the pursuit of acquisitive physical appetites and the noble quest for spiritual values. He opts for the latter.

The ideal, as conceived of in Soyinka's works, is founded in traditional mores that are drawn from the past; in Soyinka's case, the Creektown and Aiyero. The two societies, separated by lagoons, are detached from the mainstream cities, Lagos and Iloha respectively. The cities in both novels symbolise the new order or, for the purposes of this study, the Tarzanised world. The past itself is not sufficient and this is why there is need for the return of the young intellectual natives who can infuse their knowledge of the 'outside world' to model the ideal to give it a universal appeal. Soyinka dissipates the preoccupation with tradition in its static form which appears central to contemporary discourse on African literary works and cultural orientation. Though Soyinka's works delve into political frailties, especially those borrowed from the Tarzans and perfected by post-independent leaders; most of the problems experienced by natives are drawn from weaknesses that of human nature: their preoccupation with material gains. Nazareth (66) subscribes to this philosophy when he contends that Soyinka's prophetic warning in his works have got to do with 'moral consciousness, not political consciousness' and he demonstrates 'what could go wrong because of the failures and weaknesses of human nature, not because of political forces at work.' This is why social transformation calls for the strength of an individual character, his ability to resist the materialistic attractions of the world and uphold spiritual values.

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