THE AESTHETIC CONFLUENCE OF TEXTUAL DEIXIS AND NARRATIVE LEXIES IN WOLE SOYINKA'S THE INTERPRETERS

BY

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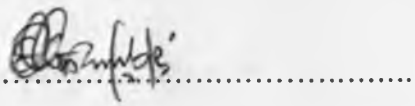
DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.



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This project paper has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

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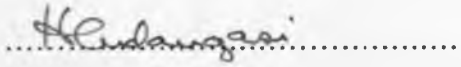

PROF. HENRY INDANGASI

DEDICATION

To My brother - father, Charles, for

'Twas enough to have a Rose for a woman, but

"If I heard the truth,

Never from this depth did any living man return

Without fear of infamy…"

and to Edward and Cynthia with a promise of love.

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ABSTRACT

Reading The Interpreters engages one in a juggling act. The text strikes readers as replete with shifts in narrative stances. A closer scrutiny reveals, however, that beneath these shifts lie Soyinka's artistry and nimble intellect.

In this study--"The Aesthetic Confluence of Textual Deixis and Narrative Lexies in Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters" -- we set out to examine the role of deictic features in the discourse structure of the text. Thus, the cardinal interest of this research is to highlight the prevalence of the narrative shifts and to appreciate the role of deictic features in co-ordinating these shifts.

We begin our critical analysis by illuminating the significance of linguistic elements as constructive units, in a literary discourse. We proceed to establish in our literature review that despite the conscious usage of deictic elements in the text, literary researchers have not focused on this important feature. This underscores the need for the current exercise and explains why we have adopted linguistic text description (textual criticism) as our theoretical framework to unravel meanings submerged by the linguistic form.

Later, as a prefatory exercise, we seek to understand Soyinka's worldview. Of particular interest here is the manner(s) in which his cultural and educational backgrounds as well as his travels and contacts nurtured his sensibilities. Emphasis is therefore put on those aspects of Soyinka's life which influence his style and thematic concerns. We relate the text's moral correspondence to this creative paradigm.

The third chapter constitutes a plunge into the textual criticism. Here, we introduce the various types of deictic features and discern their communicative efficacy. We particularly focus on how deixis defamiliarises meaning and how the allusions that it makes create suspense, among other aesthetic effects. We prove, however, that formulating a 'story' from a 'text' entails extracting details from their textuality, and that a reader should offer no less in trying to understand the novel's dehabituated realities.

Chapter four is a continuation of textual criticism. We discern from the text that the kind of reality that Soyinka depicts does not possess proximate continuity. Instead, we argue for the view that in this novel, meaning exists in a non-contiguous causal nexus. This chapter therefore unravels how the artist achieves coherence (a latent unity of narration) within this perceived discontinuity.

In the conclusion, we summarize our observations about the discoursal structure of the text. This is in no way intended to be conclusive on the text's structural design but it forms a good basis for further critical discourse. The ultimate desire of literary creativity, we surmise, is to inculcate humane values in readers and we aver, here, that the text is replete with such albeit held at some discoursal level. Cognisant of the need for literary critics with the flair for structuralist appreciation to aid readers towards this submerged content, this study deciphers moral values as advanced by deictic elements in the novel. Further, critical appreciation of this novel especially in connection with the author's metaphoric diction and hypotactic sentences could go a long way in availing Soyinka's morals to readers.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Whether it is in the form of a novel, short story or a narrative poem, structuralist theoreticians surmise that narrative fiction presupposes the existence of certain intrinsic conditions that serve to distinguish its discourse from, say, a newspaper report or history book. These conditions relate, mainly, to the formal design of such works.

With the narration of fictional events as one of its fundamental facets, the story that fictional construction must give rise to normally presumes that the formulator is intent on communicating some meaning and that, that meaning should, as of necessity, be understood within some shared context. The ultimate desire of literary artists and discoursal principles, then, is to communicate and possibly to help formulate 'new' societies -- different from and better than the 'old' ones.

More often than not, however, the predicate bases of, say, a shared language, experiential realm or such other intricacies as a level of familiarity with the diverse range of literary traditions, necessary for communication to take place, may not hold. In their own varied ways, these limitations pose real challenges to the literary writer as well as wide and far-reaching implications to the targeted audiences. African literature has especially been seen as cast against a background of its own beleaguered oral literary traditions and worldviews. A real challenge this is and different writers have responded to it differently.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Wole Soyinka is regarded by many as one of the leading figures of the African literary landscape. However, much of his art has been effectively shunned by general readers owing to its 'inaccessibility'. His poetry and drama especially, are considered as unduly clothed in Yoruba mythic garb. The constant allusion that he makes to Yoruba life through his symbolism and imagery, it is argued, particularly makes, from his readers, undue demand for a modicum of knowledge of Yoruba cosmology. Without these, it is argued, the works remain largely inaccessible.

Wole Soyinka has been accused of obscurity in his prose works as well. His prosaic obscurity is, however, blamed not on the Yoruba mythic enactments of which his poetry and drama are popular, but on the rhetorical density of his language and his narrative strategies. It has been observed, for instance, that in The Interpreters, instead of presenting the reader with a clear progression of the narrative sequence (the *fabula*), the artist presents, for the actual reading process, a deformed progression of the narrative sequence (the *sjuzet*). Thus, at the nightclub scene, the artist plunges his readers at the height of actions, or, so to speak, in a *medias res*. In a flash, for that matter, the artist creates an orbit upon which later sections strive to balance their facts. This constant flux has, however, not augured well with readers.

Even though this strategy has earned Soyinka elements of distaste, we surmise that it has not demeaned but actually contributed greatly to the artistry of the text. In The Interpreters, textual deixies seem to be the most dorminant linguistic mechanism by means of which this system of flux operates. Deictic elements, it appears in the text, are quite instrumental in summoning diverse narrative lexies (minimal units of meaning) that the flashes constitute with a view to effect greater communication. It is necessary therefore to scrutinize the flashes more closely so as to establish their role in 'constructive disruptions'.

Much as there, always, is need to understand localised meanings within a text, it is necessary to understand that, often, these are merely intended to augment other larger units of meaning contained in a text. In The Interpreters, this constant mediative role between the text and its localised units of meaning is borne by a varied set of textual deictic elements. Failure, nay refusal, to appreciate the important role that these elements play in the text is a probable cause of its supposed inaccesibility. There is need to understand the relational act and even the rationale behind this proximate fusion. Hopefully, this will catapult us into the artistic confluence of deixies and narrative lexies in the text. We need therefore to analyze the verbal texture of the text so as to show how linguistic elements relate units of meaning and, in so doing, help in creating greater communicative effects.

1.2 Definition of Terms

When all is said and done, all that literature entails is a recapitulation of experience. There's however, no definite demand on the artist as to the manner in which this exercise should be

executed. The *fabula*, according to Rice and Waugh, refers to the plot of a story in its "most neutral objective, chronological form -- the story as it might have been enacted in real time and space, a seamless continuum of innumerable contiguous events"(27). More often than not, however, experiences do not necessarily impress themselves upon the human imagination in this 'chronological' form. The actual text in which this story is rendered with all its inevitable gaps, ellisions, and re-orderings, constitute the text's *sjuzet*. According to E.M. Forster(87) *story* designates the former and *text* the latter. In Soyinka's The Interpreters, this re-ordering necessitates a beginning with what should actually be the height of actions and causal relations. This is what is commonly referred to as beginning at *medias res*

In order that a text may be comprehended, this re-ordering of elements demands from the reader a kind of relational exercise. *Deictics* are textual shifters -- linguistic elements that force the reader to construct a fictional situation of utterance. Derived "from Greek [where it means] 'pointing' or 'showing', deixis in linguistics refers generally to all those features of language which orientate or anchor utterances in the context of proximity of space and of time relative to the speaker's viewpoint." (Wales 112) Jonathan Culler calls them "orientational features of language"(202) and cites personal deictics, anaphoric articles and demonstratives, adverbials of place and time (also known as spatial and temporal deictics) as well as verb tenses especially the non-timeless present, as some of the fascinating ones. Todorov calls the latter the "*perpetual present*"(132). Normally, this deictic flux is obtained by means of anaphoric reference. "*Anaphora* denotes a kind of reference which is backward-looking (as opposed to cataphora -- forward looking). Both are important aspects of the cohesion or connectedness of discourse" (Wales 23).

As constructive elements, these deictics are considered handy in relating units of meaning (lexies) within a sjuzet. Coined by French structuralist Roland Barthes in 1970 in his analysis of Balzac's short story Serrasine, a *lexie*, Culler explains, is "a minimal unit of reading, a stretch of text which is isolated as having a specific effect or function different from that of neighbouring stretches of text"(202. It could, thus, be anything from a single word to a brief series of sentences and the level of lexies would, then, be the level of one's primary contact with the text; it is the level at which items are separated and sorted out as to be given various functions at higher levels of organisation. Wales argues that, "it presents one of the few attempts in narrative

theory to reveal the complex process of how we make sense and interpret a text as we read it"(276), thus presenting it to us as an important linguistic feature of text whose appreciation is crucial for literary pragmatics.

The term lexie is synonymous and has been used interchangeably with *motif*. Whereas a lexie is a linguistic-structuralist term, a motif derives its conception from structuralist-narratology. Popularised by Vladimir Propp in his studies on the Russian folktale, this term has been defined by Tomashevskij as "the minimal dissection of the thematic material"(Culler 202). So, both linguistic -- structuralists and structuralist narratologists view the text as a conglomeration of units of meaning (lexies and motifs respectively), the embedding of which is a task borne by deictic elements.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study holds, as its primal interest, the need to demystify Wole Soyinka's narrative techniques in The Interpreters. By seeking to decipher unified meanings within the general context of shifts in narrative focus, we seek to expose the text's perceived difficulty as inadvertent and as actually deriving from an otherwise well-conceived intention.

In the process of explaining the artistic interplay of form and content, the study seeks to achieve the auxiliary aim of underscoring the importance of integrating strands and diffusions of meaning. In The Interpreters, this role is played by deictic elements and this study will therefore illuminate their role in communicative efficacy. Thus, the overall aim is to demonstrate that what looks like random detail and redundant disruptions in this fictional work are actually functional and contributes to a pattern of expressive motifs.

The study also seeks to make it evident that the supposed gaps and ellisions, disruptive as they may seem, are actually well intentioned and constructive in the verbal texture of the novel. By relating the narrative lexies to the overall thematic concerns, it is envisaged that this exercise will accord the readers with a greater appreciation of Soyinka's artistry in The Interpreters. The overall interest is therefore to recast Soyinka as a committed artist and to assist the general reader in trying to access his text.

1.4 Hypothesis

This study proceeds from the premise that The Interpreters is, as a text, a unified whole, but a whole constituting several strands of meaning as they derive from experiences disparate in time an space. The whole text, it is therefore held, is an amalgam of motifs/narrative lexies.

We also hold the operational view that Soyinka's numerous shifts in narrative focus are actually qualitative shifts and that these shifts are geared towards bringing on board as many different experiences, located in time and space, as possible. These shifts, it is held, serve to authenticate his assertions and moral diagnoses.

The exercise also operates on the assumption that textual deixis, or narrative shifters as it were, are very instrumental in fusing together the different units of meaning in a text. It is therefore held as our object of proof that the text acquires its form and content from the constant mediation that textual deixis achieves between the several strands of meaning in The Interpreters. Textual deixis are therefore considered the main constructive factors in the text.

1.5 Rationale/Justification

The term literature has had various senses. Its diverse conception has oscillated between 'good writing' and 'whatever is written'. It is not right therefore to think that the term exists as a fixed datum and refers unequivocally to a single meaning. In spite of the diverse conceptions of this term, many would probably concur with Northrop Fryer's famous statement that, "literature is not a piled aggregate of works but an order of words... a rhetorical order"(qtd in Alastair 4).

Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters has often been misconceived, however, as lacking a rhetorical order. Conceived within the specifics of formalism, it may be conceded here that the text exhibits a rare structural dexterity but one that only serves to sanction its stature a literary work of enormous skill. There is, for instance, a superb fusion of elements that are not necessarily proximate in time and space. There is need therefore -- urgent need -- for us to understand the dynamics of the structure of this text. This can only be made possible by trying to relate the numerous units of meaning -- seeing how they subscribe to each other and how the smaller units (narrative lexies) culminate into the ultimate meanings desired within a text. We therefore take note of the fact that the text is an amalgam of several narrative strands and units of meaning but seek to highlight the role that deictic elements play as context activators and, in so doing, to

depict the whole narrative strategy as well motivated. It is only then that we will be able to see how small units of meaning embed themselves onto the larger units that are established at the *medias res*

With the full appreciation of the embedding process, it is likely that the charge of obscurity that is often levelled against Soyinka will have been greatly reduced if not done away with altogether. A better appreciation of the structure and levels of meaning in this text will have been accorded to the reader thus putting within easy reach his concerns in the novel. By bringing the message of the text to the fore, it will have overcome the charge of transrationality that is often, by implication, levelled against it.

As to why we are taking both form and content in our analysis, we concur with Indangasi who emphatically says that "even ordinary readers intuitively discern two distinct but related elements in a work of art: The manner of conveying a message and the message itself".(1) Thus, the manner in which content is conveyed demands concerted critical appreciation with a view to foster greater appreciation of the text. Put differently, Indangasi views form and content as inextricably intertwined -- each complementing the other. Kuzmenko aptly captures this when he quips that, "literatures duty to guide its readers towards noble and moral goals is inherent in its structure"(16). It therefore behoves us, as literary scholars, to make a stylistic appreciation of the text to be able to discern the 'noble and moral goals'. Peck and Coyle could not have been more candid about the object of such an exercise when they emphasize the need to "explore the text in a careful and imaginative way so as to arrive at a clear view of its aesthetic and moral coherence as a work of art".(155)

In her paper titled 'Reality: Our Subject and Disciphine', Patricia Meyer posits that;

> as we ponder, teach and investigate texts, we enlarge our own and others' awareness of how... intricate experience is in itself and how unimaginably intricate its verbal renditions.(Hutcheon 1942)

In essence, we need to understand the structural dynamics of a text and to relate the constructive operators to the content that they constantly summon and constitute into a thematic whole. This study therefore aims at asserting The Interpreters' rightful place as a text dealing with

contemporary testimonies of social change. The "intricate... renditions" should therefore be seen as attempts at effective communication even within that perceived vulgarity.

The focus will be on The Interpreters because it best exhibits the kind of structural formulations with which we are dealing. For purposes of in-depth analysis, focus will be on this single text.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Roberts and Jacobs(98) contend that there is always the conception of an ideal pattern or a formal structure of a story that should, as of necessity, adhere to a chronological order from beginning to end. They observe, however, that what often manifests itself in most stories is not this ideal pattern but a 'real' structure that, more often than not, departs from the former. There is no straight-jacket within which every writer has to operate and what matters, ultimately, is whether the chosen form carries the content with utmost effect.

This study is largely conceived within the structuralist theoretical formulation which views literature as a system characterised by the interdependence of its elements. Cognizant of the dynamics of structure, Roland Barthes explains that "the structuralist begins with the real object, takes it apart, and puts it together again".(214) The reconstruction, Barthes quips, is not meant to restore the original object but to bring a new one into existence -- a new one which is capable of elucidating something that remained invisible or, if one prefers, unintelligible in the original object.

In conducting its investigation, this study will adopt Roman Jacobson's linguistic -- structuralist Text Description' model. To understand the constructive role that deictic elements play and the dynamics of form, we derive our technical terms and constructive factors from this structuralist model but take a trajectory to Textual Criticism as advanced by F.R. Leavis. As a critical methodology, Textual Criticism advocates a close reading of the literary text. Sklovskij's famous idea of the 'impeding form' which, as he explains, is not necessarily difficult but with the potential of being experienced as difficult, underlines the need for such close readings.

John Peck and Martin Coyle see in this critical model a mechanism by means of which the "artistry and effect of the work"(153) can be appreciated. Graham Hough concurs with this and supposes that;

> Both moral and formal criticism may be separately useful. But a complete criticism must arrive at a synthesis of the two ...interaction between moral and formal considerations is a dialectical process; and it is this process and this process alone that allows us to see the work as a totality.(37)

Thus, by advocating for a stylo-thematic approach to literary criticism, textual criticism appreciates the inextricability of form and content. Peck and Coyle observe that this approach will "reveal the complexity and subtlety of what is being said...".(153)

Peck and Coyle therefore credit this approach with the rare capacity to show "how the text is written and what it says"(153). In other words, it provides the literary critic with the possibility of showing how the artist exploits the vast resources of language to create aesthetic effects in a reader. Indangasi explains that "aesthetic effects can be realised through other means too such as plot, characterization, symbolism and so on"(7) and it would therefore be wrong to assume that this is the exclusive role of linguistic elements. Aware, though, of this "other means", we adopt for this research Textual Criticism (also referred to as stylistics) whose specific realm, as Indangasi explains, is "the aesthetic realization of aesthetic effects through the medium of language"(7).

As a critical methodology Textual Criticism presumes that "the text has something substantial to say about life" (Peck and Coyle 154) and that language forms the basis of this rendition. This study similarly investigates the artistic exploitation of the resources of language and how the artist helps the audience to discover new truths of human experiences by means of those linguistic resources. It is generally agreed that the selection and arrangement of narrative items is a subjective process but one that is usually driven by the artist's inner desire to give a motivated prominence to certain aspects of the subject-matter. This process of motivation is largely borne by the resources of language. To discern the message, recourse must be taken to the stylistic formulation of the text. In "On the semantic structures of language", Weinrich theorises that meanings are multidimensional and operate with a dichotomy of signs.(150) These, he calls "designators and formators". The designators, roughly, are lexical items and a designator may, on its own, be reflexive towards the content of a whole range of 'formators'. Deictic elements are, in their deceptive simplicity, mere lexical items. As linguistic signs, however, they conjure whole meanings, and it is for this reason that they elicit critical interest.

1.7 Literature Review

Todate, Roland Barthes' "Structuralist Criticism", Levi Strauss' "Structuralist Narratology", and Roman Jacobson's "Linguistic-Structuralist Text Description", remain some of the most outstanding theoretical models on formal criticism. Deriving most of their critical methodologies from the formalist school of thought which had sought to portray literary works simply as amalgams of constructive elements, though, they made a marked departure from this and set out to analyse works of art as artistic wholes the elements of which only serve to organize its material. Elements within a literary discourse are thus seen as formal and moral constructive units.

In his discussion on textual errancy in the Broken Drum, Mwangi observes, for instance, that shifts in narrative focus may "engender textual errancy".(58) He aptly observes, however, that:

> peculiar use of deixies and tenses locates some parts of the narration in the here and now of the reader, the narrator and the focalizing character. The shifts in the temporal and spatial setting engenders textual errancy while producing cohesion.(58)

Singling out deixies as a constructive element, he underscores its potency in literary creativity and credits the creative writer with elevating the deictic elements into cohesive devices. It is therefore right to argue that what may initially appear as random detail could be playing a very vital role, albeit submerged. Unfortunately, Mwangi's sympathetic treatment does not go past a cursory remark so as to delve deep into the artistic subtlety of deictic features in literary discourse.

Critical writing on African literature has, largely, been focused on the element of social change. Much has been said about Wole Soyinka's first novel, The Interpreters, but few critics have tackled the correlation between its form and content. In Introduction to the African Novel, Eustace Palmer -- an avowed structuralist critic -- even questions the very existence of The Interpreters as a literary artefact. According to him, "the dorminant impression left by The Interpreters is one of tedious formlessness".(xiv) This is, simply put, an abrasive criticism, especially owing to the fact that such a verdict is reached without making any attempt at a formal analysis of the novel. Certainly, literature needs critical appraisal -- a judicious revelation of its form and content -- more than such mere criticisms based on no evidence. Any serious critical claim must venture beyond intuitive generalizations and give explicit linguistic substantiations.

In her M.A. thesis titled "Wole Soyinka's Satire in The Interpreters', Odari observes that "many critics have argued that the message in this novel is not only difficult to understand, but that, it has failed to reach its intended audience".(1) Seemingly convinced that there are great thematic implications associated with literature and that there is need to make the unintelligible accessible, she analyses the use of satire in this text. Satire, she shows, has been effectively employed by Soyinka "to expose human folly and ridicule wickedness that are rampant in and destructive to society".(102)

Important as satire may be in voicing social concerns, and doing so laughingly, this study has left the big question of the text's existence as a structural form still conspicuously begging for attention. About the text's structural pattern, Odari observes that it is "indeed not chronologically written and it goes round like a circle..."(103) but hastens to point out that" this does not stop one from understanding the story".(103) Odari, however, doesn't show whether this 'understanding' derives from within the text, or if one prefers, intrinsic to the text. This 'difficult' form is therefore yet to be exhaustively analyzed especially with respect to linguistic constructive elements within the text. Odari's thesis therefore constitutes a positive effort but it still steers clear of the linguistic domain the appreciation of which would also go a long way in making the novel accessible and availing its aesthetics and moral content to the reader.

In 'Narrative Techniques in Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters', Makau delves into the narrative form of the novel and accords it a rare formalist reading -- delineating plot, characterization and narrator positions as some of the variables that Soyinka uses in crafting his novel. By tackling narrative flashes, especially, this study closely relates to the envisaged study. They both explore the strategy as a constructive factor within the text. It is instructive to note, however, that whereas this is done with a tinge towards explaining plot structure -- and done cursorily at that -- the current research seeks to appreciate the aesthetics of the strategy. Makau tackles narrative flashes but does not analyse the linguistic elements that co-ordinate these into a unit.

Explaining the structural formulation of the plot in this text, Makau claims that;

> In The Interpreters, the supremacy of the subject dispense with time and causality and Soyinka seems to be delighting in throwing motifs in total freedom at a canvas whose assignment is to receive.(30)

The fact that the critic has steered clear of the deictic features and the relational role that they play explains this charge of "throwing motifs". We do acknowledge that narrative flashes contribute to the rhetoric density of this text. To suppose, however, as Makau does, that Soyinka's motifs are "thrown" (and haphazardly slotted for that matter) within the structural outfit is tantamount to stripping him of his very stature as an artist. As an artist, Soyinka executes his freedom -- selecting materials and designing his structures as he deems it fit. There is need to understand the structural formulation that accompanies these flashes.

In The Emergence of African Novel, Larson attempts an appreciation of the narrative strategy in The Interpreters. He candidly states:

> The use of multiple flashbacks (often flashbacks within flashbacks) and the juxtaposition and overlapping of several time levels is apparent in almost every chapter of Soyinka's novel, though at the beginning this is much more confusing because the reader does not have enough information to piece together many of the incidents.(248)

It is made clear, however, that the incidents must be "pieced together". The text therefore calls for critical appreciation especially with a view to situate deictic elements within the general framework of structural formulation in the text. We hold it here that deictic elements are deployed in the text to fuse the disparate narrative lexies. There is need to understand how the artist relates these units.

In 'The Essential Unity of Soyinka's The Interpreters and Season of Anomy', Juliet Okonkwo commends the text for taking a step towards the enactment of strategies with which to confront the oppressive forces.(116) The critic falls short, however, of explaining the formal strategies by means of which the artist achieves what she calls a "brilliant exposition" in The Interpreters. We need to understand the process of securing this brilliant exposition.

In 'Words of Iron, Sentences of Thunder: Soyinka's Prose Style', Niyi Osundare "seeks to identify and examine the linguistic and stylistic sources of this [Soyinka's] obscurity in an effort to throw light on some of the lexical and syntactic predilections that make Soyinka's fiction so tough and forbidding".(25) He avers that the source of difficulty is the economy with which

metaphors are fused into a single sentence, resulting in unusual collocations like 'sky-bull' and 'cloud humps' which, he says, might be called mytho-lexemes. Osundare contends that Soyinka's 'short-cut of metaphor imprisons features, ideas and personalities in a brief phrase. This, we suppose is a commendable effort in textual criticism -- tackling Soyinka's compression of ideas and complexly subordinated sentences. It does not tell us however, how the artist relates the different units of meaning, if at all. It is only then that we can cease to see 'difficult' writing as 'bad writing'. Occasionally, an element of 'difficulty' results from the choice of diction but this should not mean total inaccessibility.

1.8 Methodology

Focusing on The Interpreters, this research seeks to elucidate the 'unintelligible' meanings by looking at how the artist uses deictic elements to conglomerate units of meaning. This, then, is essentially a library research that will rely on The Interpreters as the primary text. Recourse will, however, be taken to critical views when such are deemed as augmenting, in one way or the other, our thesis about the structural formulation of the text.

To realise this goal, we intend to adopt analytical and interpretive approaches. Through these, we will name the deictic features that are used by the author to fuse units of meaning. We will also strive to establish the link between the several disparate motifs that the elements are used to fuse. This will, in effect, assist us in ascertaining the aesthetic impact of this conscious creative activity.

Apart from the primary text and secondary critical works, we will also conduct our research through the internet. We will surf the net to get materials on the latest writings on and by Wole Soyinka. The MLA system of documentation will be used in documenting information drawn from all secondary sources.

1.9 Scope and Limitations

This study basically revolves around the dichotomy of form and content in Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters. Special attention will be paid to the interplay between deictic elements and the various narrative motifs that characterize the text. Soyinka has many titles including a second

novel, Season of Anomy, but to obtain focus and indepth analysis, the study confines itself to this one novel: The Interpreters.

The study however needs a conceptual grounding. In this regard, we will embark on a literary biography of Soyinka first before tackling the formal aspects of The Interpreters. In the biography, we will seek to understand Soyinka's worldview as a way of establishing a basis for The Interpreters. The author's life and background are dealt with but a deliberate effort is made not to deny the text its rightful independence.

CHAPTER TWO

WOLE SOYINKA: A LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

In his introduction to Black American Literature Forum, Wole Soyinka issue, Henry Louis Gates wrote:

> ...the universality of our experiences he never claims, he assumes. In his poetic representations of Yoruba beliefs, rituals, proverbs, and history, Soyinka allows the African part to speak for the human whole. And he does so in a poetic diction that is elegant, compelling, inimitable, and English...(424)

Thus, to Soyinka, the past possesses an inner vitality that cannot be ignored. He sees in it a perenially active force.

Of all the diverse conceptions of the nature and functions of African literature, probably none has been deemed as legitimate as the perception of it as an expression of human experiences. The Swedish Academy, in their 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature press release, commented thus in reference to Soyinka: "His background, upbringing and education have given unusual conditions for a literary career...".(425) It is right to conclude, then, that the sheer variety of human life as well as the various discordant forces and phenomena that surround a literary artist incessantly supply him with the stuff out of which he weaves his plot.

Jahnheinz Jahn contends that;

> anyone who writes begins as an apprentice. His school supplies him with the tools: Literacy and the models for him to follow. Many writers remain imitators all their lives while others sooner or later achieve an individual style.(89)

and, to be able to appreciate Soyinka, we therefore need to see his literary creativity as deriving from an intense imaginative engagement. Intrinsically modern in his concerns, Soyinka has however, earned himself a literary stature through a dexterity of style and a diversity of worldviews.

Wole Soyinka was born Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka of Yoruba parents (an Ijebu father and an Egba mother) on July 13, 1934, in Abeokuta, western state, Nigeria. A prolific and versatile playwright, poet, novelist and critic, Wole Soyinka certainly ranks among contemporary Africa's doyens of literary creativity. His creative prowess was crowned when, in 1986, he became the first black African to be awarded the coveted Nobel Prize for Literature.

Under the tender care of his mother, Iya Oluwole (a shopkeeper and respected political figure in the community), whom he prefers to refer to as "wild Christian", Soyinka was brought up in an Anglican mission station in Ake. McPheron reports that "his parents balanced his Christian training with regular visits to the father's ancestral home in Isara, a small Yoruba community secure in its traditions"(1). Thus, theirs was a Christian family within a cultural setting that was predominantly Yoruba. As would be expected in such a situation, Soyinka's cultural world consisted of contending forces each claiming superiority. The mother must have attempted to impart her ardently Christian ideology onto Soyinka. Probably, this explains why his aesthetic forms are derived, largely, through a synthesis of African, nay Yoruba, traditional values and Western values.

Soyinka first attended St. Peter's Primary School. Here, his father was the headmaster. Later, however, he was transferred to a nearby grammar school in Abeokuta where an uncle of his was the principal. By any standards, this was an elite family. His Yoruba background not withstanding, the schooling system to which he was introduced certainly imbibed in his tender mind certain views and values that have had to compete for supremacy with the Yoruba cultural stuff which he possessed. In fact, Soyinka's lifelong attempt to bring African socio-cultural worldviews to the fore probably arises from a conscious negation that he saw it suffer from this early in his life.

In Ake: The Years of Childhood, Soyinka chronicles his life from when he was two to when he became eleven years of age. In this text, Soyinka's world stretches beyond the family compound up to the hills of Itoko and beyond the buildings of the primary school.

Beyond these buildings, he says, was:

> ...the world of spirits and ghommids who inhabited the

thick woods and chased home children who had wandered
in them for firewood, mushrooms and snails. (Ake 2)

This then is an attempt at conquering the surroundings but he observes that this often remains a tall order. God, he says, lives in the sky and descends on Sundays to visit His places in Ake - avoiding homes of pagans like the local chief. So, we see the child trying to order both the physical and psychological world according to his own cultural as well as the biblical myths and to define his physical and religious boundaries. These, he discerns are in a contentious sort of relationship.

It is therefore evident that Soyinka's encounters with mythic consciousness was at a tender age and these were quite varied in their manifestations. Education and Christianity add onto the dominantly Yoruba reality, a plethora of alien notions. Save for such minor threats as that associated with Abiku, the young Soyinka felt secure, at least within the boundaries of Ake. This, he categorically states, was a tranquility brought about by the community's metaphysical and moral laws. One could not venture into the wild, for instance, for it was the domain of other powerful forces. Such forces however served their own important role of ensuring that order prevailed. Soyinka is therefore hewn as predominantly Yoruba in his cultural orientation but, nonetheless, incessantly struck by forces alien to this reality.

With a school teacher as his father, and an elite father at that, Soyinka's family environment could not have been typical Yoruba. He observes in Ake that by three years of age, he could speak both Yoruba and English. It is no wonder then that he could discern, quite early in his life, the kind of devastation that his scenario portended of. This, he strove to illuminate. He says thus of this devastation:

the young embrace and ostentatiously patronize the new music,
barely recognizing the identicality of the new 'fuji', 'fuji-rock' [etc]
with their equally rapid precursors.(Ake 157)

Thus, Soyinka was aware of the inner vitality of his culture and the contending forces that were trying to rip it off from him.

As it is presented in Ake, the formative years of Soyinka were profoundly influenced by his "wildly christian" mother but this does not demean the role of his father in his nurture.

Winchester quips that: "a sense of form has its beginnings in the knowledge and respect of good writing and literary tradition". In Ake: The Years of Childhood, Soyinka duly credits his father with endeavouring to foster in him a fondness for letters in his formative years. If his later literary career is anything to go by, Soyinka acquired an enduring taste of this. Taken to school at an early age, his play with words, viz: "No - size - in - London" in talking about a man who has large feet, "Es - Ay - sho" in reference to his father, Essay, S.A., are apt illustrations of the poetic in him and which learning would later serve to awaken. The autobiographical work therefore captures the forces at play in the making of the future writer. His inner potentials are however depicted as more assertive and this steers him through the cultural farrago within which he is placed. Offered an opportunity to learn, Soyinka proved himself equal to the task and the rapidity with which he churned out literary works attested to this inner worth which had been activated by education.

Aware of the contending forces in his life but deeply rooted in his culture, Soyinka leaves Ake for Ibadan city at twelve. This was, however, a necessary move in pursuit of secondary level education at the city's elite Government College. Fortunately for Soyinka, the experience of being torn away from his roots was not so much of a terrifying experience. His inner spirit had been fully nurtured within his cultural atmosphere and he had therefore acquired the requisite capacity to weigh any views against his own cultural repository. At the college, Soyinka submitted his first script of amateur short stories to the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (N.B.C.). This marked the beginning of a tortuous journey but one that would be embarked on with a religious zeal.

At the age of 18, Soyinka entered the city's new university - the University College of Ibadan. He stayed here from 1952 to 1954. Incidentally, this is where other major Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe, John Okigbo, Elechi Amadi, John Pepper Clark, among others, also underwent their literary training. A precocious dramatist, Soyinka moved to England, after staying here for only two years. In England, he sought to pursue the career of his ambition in theatre. He also took this new opportunity to complete his degree course in English and Literature which he started at Ibadan. Soyinka graduated with an Honours degree in these fields from Leeds in 1958.

Soyinka's training both at Ibadan and Leeds greatly added onto the stock of western influences on him. He was taught and interacted with scholars from a cross-section of cultures. Among his teachers at Leeds, McPheron reports, was G. Wilson Knight, a well-known Shakespearan critic.(1) An avid reader of European classics, Soyinka certainly acquired a great deal of the literary techniques contained in these works together with the cultural load. His training at Ibadan and Leeds therefore provided him with the tools with which he would later attempt a reconstitution of his past. By improving on his understanding of Western traditions, this training provided Soyinka with a vantage from which he would seek to compare cultural strands. This then enabled him to embark on a more effective self-retrieval -- a retrieval that receives its most emphatic statement in The Interpreters.

While in England, Soyinka got actively involved in theatre and even rose to become a script-reader, actor, and director at the Royal Court Theatre in London. His most serious impetus to literary creativity has been traced to The Invention (1957) and the radio play Camwood on the Leaves (1958). We agree with McPheron, however, that The Swamp Dwellers and The Lion and the Jewel, both written and staged in London, are some of his "first mature plays"(1). The former deals with the theme of misfortune. In the play, this is depicted as deriving from the physical and human nature. The latter on the other hand, deals with the hard choice that is available to a young village beauty, Sidi. She has to decide between Lakunle -- a school teacher (and a representative of modernity) and Baroka -- the village head of Ilujinle (an old man adorned with the vestiges of tradition). Ironically, the old man proves to be in possession of a better notion of genuine progress.

Lakunle is presented as effeminate and his head stuffed with warped notions of Western culture. His 'culturedness' consists of his ardent opposition to his own cultural values like paying of bride price and his dreams of dance halls. He anticipates that even old women could learn to dance the waltz and the fox trot. Baroka on the other hand proves to us that his life is not just a lascivious one. In the end, we are therefore not surprised that Lakunle loses his betrothed to Baroka.

By mocking Lakunle, an educated man, Soyinka is lashing out at those who see civilization for accepting and emulating foreign values.

Baroka succeeds where Lakunle fails simply because he accepts modernity in a positive way. He keeps his culture and strives to uphold the values inherent in them but knows and understands

modern concepts necessary for the development of his village. Baroka embraces and encourages only certain aspects of modernity. The insinuation here is that one should not accept westernization blindly without judicious evaluation. The implication is that Lakunle's blind adoption of western ways can only be at his own peril. It is hinted that a fusion of the two would certainly foster greater development. Baroka stands for this admixture and some optimism for genuine progress is exuded through him.

As a dramatist for six years in England, Soyinka acquired the requisite skills of the dramatic arts from his mentors. The successful staging of these two plays in London and Ibadan can thus be partly attributed to the apprenticeship. These two plays are widely credited with thrusting Soyinka to the fore of literary creativity and sanctioning his stature as a universal artist. With the literary skills, he had managed to make an authentic statement about human nature. His concerns, it emerges, are with the human individual and the forces that impact on him. These are universal concerns of the human experience but Soyinka accorded them a unique taste derived from the thematics of the Yoruba culture.

Owing, probably, to this 'unique' flavour that characterized Soyinka's plays of this period, he was given a Rockfeller grant and returned to Nigeria in 1960 to research on African dramatic arts. In 1962, he was appointed a lecturer in English at the University of Ife and, over the years, taught at a number of other universities in Nigeria, including Ibadan and Lagos. As part of Nigeria's Independence festivities in 1963, Soyinka published A Dance of the Forest. This play had been performed, for the first time, by his theatre ensemble - 'The 1960 Masks' - in 1960. Jahn sums it up as "a play set among gods, spirits and men and dealing with politics, the relevance of history, art, reality and mythology".(Who 372) Art, it emerges, is the only conscience of a nation and here, a court poet is the only one with the audacity to raise a voice and make a scathing attack whenever the King and his queen overreach themselves. Soyinka therefore explained his role as an artist in independent Nigeria right from the onset: the unrelenting voice of reason. But, McPheron observes:

> Hostility greeted the play from all quarters. Nigerian authorities were angered by Soyinka's suggestion of widespread corruption, leftists complained about the play's elitist aesthetics, and African chauvinists.... objected to his use of European techniques.(2)

Apart from the multiplicity of themes, some of which proved unpalatable to the authorities, the range of literary techniques employed is actually one of the most outstanding features of this play. So, early in his career, Soyinka had stamped his authority as a writer and a concerned writer at that -- superbly grafting technical advances onto the stock of his people's 'ancient' traditions.

Also published in 1962 were The Trial of Brother Jero and The Strong Breed. The former, first performed in 1960, is a powerful artistic expose of religious hypocrisy. In this text that Soyinka himself calls "a recital of human evils and foibles" (Duerden and Pieterse 172), we encounter a fraud who, thanks to his eloquence, makes a living as a beach prophet. The Strong Breed, on the other hand, is a philosophic construction of the artist's identity in modern societies. Here, the playwright weaves his plot around the Yoruba festival of the new year. This is a purification festival centred around the people's ritual of sacrificing a "carrier" of the preceding year's evil. The literary artist is likened to Eman, a stranger who suffers a bone-racking torment to alleviate others' sufferings. As a stranger, he is completely external to the community's evil but then he is sort of hounded to death to shoulder the same. The other stranger, Ifada, to whom Eman is a mentor is unwilling thus Eman is compelled to perform the task since he is the only other stranger. He willingly dies a "carrier". Those who have much to give, he says, fulfill themselves in total loneliness. We therefore see in him both the will and temerity to make the plunge. The peace that he acquires in his artistic instincts are cut short.

Just like the sacrificial "carrier", the artist is presented, Oyin Ogunba says, as one "saddled with the weight of human sins and foibles and his task is to help his community achieve a purgation (qtd in Jahn 373). This, it appears, was a task whose time, just like the yearly festival, had come. This, then, was Soyinka's statement to the effect that 'a strong breed' he, as an artist, had become and he had taken upon himself the role of an "artist-carrier". We learn that his father had also died a carrier in his time. In Eman, we are shown a rare consistency in pursuing an appointed course. Its only the elect that have the temerity to hearken to the demands of fate. The artist in society is doomed to suffer a similar fate.

Collectively viewed within this larger context of an avant-garde for a better Nigeria, a large body of Soyinka's works of this period were seen as challenging the status-quo. They emerged as

outrightly lashing at the authority's perceived interference with traditional establishments and ritual practices. This, coming from Soyinka, was not surprising though. He had cut out a niche for himself as a cultural troubadour. Both the comedies like The Trials of Brother Jero and the tragedies comprising The Strong Breed, The Road and Kongi's Harvest, earned him the ire of the political establishment but a "carrier" he had become.

Published in 1965, The Road was performed at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in London the same year and won the prize for published drama. Kongi's Harvest is one play that was particularly considered as making a frontal attack on dictatorship. Kongi, the dictator of an imaginary country, poses as a leader who is determined to 'modernize' his country. He is however exposed as quite irresponsible. Through his attempt to dethrone the traditional leader, Oba Danlola, the play questions Kongi's mistaken idea of modernity. It is a complaint against th new race of leaders bent on executing tradition. Modernity, it is suggested, does not necessarily mean dismantling the traditional systems but drawing from and improving on them instead.

Having taken upon himself the task of an artist-carrier, Soyinka therefore became more bold in his challenge of the societal misdeeds. Bitterness and disgust typify Soyinka's works of this period. He actually got himself actively involved in practical politics. His radio and television broadcasts in which he accused the state of fraud in Western Nigeria elections led to his brief detention, trial and eventual acquittal in 1965. The charges leveled against him were however, framed-up ones. Soyinka's most forthright statement of the need to embark on a quest for self-actualisation was, as we mentioned earlier, through his first novel, The Interpreters. His early works had sought to categorically state that westernization does not necessarily warrant discarding African values. In The Interpreters six elite friends embark on self-retrieval from the past with the common aim of informing themselves on the realities of their present.

Set in an urban area in Nigeria, the novel deals mainly with six young intellectual friends. Sagoe is a newly graduated newsreporter. Sekoni and Egbo are young men who have just been employed in the civil service -- Sekoni as an engineer and Egbo as a foreign office staff. Bandele and Kola are teachers at Ibadan University. Kola also doubles as an artist. Their other friend, Lasunwon, is a lawyer. They share nothing but discontentment with what life offers to them. Still young or freshly graduated, they coalesce on the need to understand what reality

offers to them and meet regularly, either at Cambana or at Mayomi. Raring to exploit their newly acquired skills for the betterment of their society, they suffer serious setbacks. The reality is so deplorable that they can do nothing but fall back on the past and its cultural repository for solace. They share a willingness to do this and strongly feel that a recollection of this past would certainly shed light on the social and political problems that bedevil their lot. They realise, however, that self-knowledge is a prerequisite in this venture. Their point of convergence is the non-acceptance of custom as sacrosanct. They however agree on the need to probe life taking recourse both to the past and the present. Egbo's obsession with water, for instance is quite apparent and telling. His parents, we know, had drowned a number of years before in a river.

We can only surmise that he is seeking his links with the past, an effort that rejuvenates and activates his life. This is the kind of quest that characterize their lives. In spite of his actual death in a fatal automobile accident, Sekoni refuses to die and his artistic artefacts continue to constitute a focal point for his other friends who continue exhibiting his works. The Interpreters, rendered against a Eurocentric background and architecture, secures Soyinka's position as an advocate of his native culture and of the humane social order that it embodies. The characters are eager to reinterprete Yoruba cosmology in new terms that would enable them to appropriate their identities.

One very striking feature of this novel is its narrative pattern. Admittedly, the novel would largely pass for scenes in a play because of the episodic nature of its rendition. There's no clear causal relation and progression of events -- the kind of narrative strategy that novelists normally rely on. Probably, the fact that up to this point in his career, Soyinka had been focused specifically on play writing explains why this novel, his first, veers towards drama. His 'experiment' with the novel should therefore be seen as having depended much on his dramatic strategies. The novel was written at a time when Soyinka's life had largely been enriched by dramatic techniques and all his attempts to make fiction out of life automatically relied on the dramatic techniques that he had acquired. If anything, in the 'theatre of illusion' and disparate attempts at identification, the characters work through introspection and it is only logical that the artist tries to merge or bring each of them in relation to the rest once the introspection is accomplished.

In 1966, Soyinka was awarded, jointly with Tom Stoppard, the John Whiting Drama Prize. His first book of poetry, Idanre and other Poems was published in 1967. This has, as its towering theme, the violence that Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron and war, symbolizes. The same year, Soyinka was appointed Director of the School of Drama at Ibadan University but before he could assume his new responsibility, he was arrested and detained without trial for about two years. The Federal Government of Yakubu Gowon accused him of conspiring to aid the Biafran secessionist cause. In 1968, while at Kaduna Prison, he was awarded the Jack Campbell Prize for Commonwealth Literature for his novel The Interpreters and his poems. His poem, 'Live Burial', was sent to an English critic from prison and appeared in 'The New Statesman' on the 23rd of May 1969. Due to local and international pressure which came to bear on the federal government, Soyinka was released on October 26, 1969 as part of an independence anniversary amnesty. Upon his release, he reassumed his post as Director of the School of Drama at Ibadan University but resigned in 1972 and went into self-exile propelled, probably, by the desire for a space that is conducive for 'unguarded' creative rendition.

Having depicted the literary artist as modern society's "carrier", it somehow appeared a contradiction in actions for Soyinka to opt for self-exile. One argues however that this was outright anarchy and accepting execution would not amount to carrying society's evil. Soon after his release, however, Soyinka had entered a very intense phase of his literary creativity. The inventiveness and energy with which Soyinka churned literary materials could only be rivalled by his 'self-actualization' period as an artist-carrier; that is, around 1963. Among the literary highlights of this new momentous period were Madmen and Specialists (1970) and The Man Died (1972), a harrowing autobiographical account of his life under solitary confinement, a book of poems, A Shuttle in the Crypt (1972), another novel, Season of Anomy (1973) and a philosophic play, Death and the King's Horseman (1975). A Shuttle in the Crypt together with Poems from Prison (1970), a leaflet of two poems, were written in prison inspite of the solitary confinement to which he was subjected. Not even deprivation of reading and writing material coupled with constant surveillance, could deter the muse.

Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman, (concerned with the issue of sacrificial death), The Bacchae and Jero's Metamorphosis, (a sequel to The Trials of Brother Jero), were written while holding a fellowship at Churchill College, Cambridge. In 1975, Soyinka moved to Accra, Ghana

and became the editor of 'Transition', Africa's leading intellectual journal then. Later in the year, after Gowon had been toppled in a coup, Soyinka decided to end his self-exile and returned to Nigeria. He was, immediately, appointed professor of English at the University of Ife and wrote a long poem, Ogun Abibiman (1976) and his childhood memoirs, Ake: The Year of Childhood (1981). He became a professor of African Studies and theatre at Cornell University in 1988 and also wrote Mandela's Earth and Other Poems (1988).

Soyinka has also delivered lectures and written critical essays that discuss his art, tracing its origins in the Yoruba roots and comparing its aesthetics with those of other writers and worldviews. His critical essays include 'From a Common Back Cloth', 'And After the Narcissist?', and 'The Writer in an African State'. These were first published as Myth, Literature and the African World (1975). Later collections of his critical essays are contained in Art, Dialogue and Outrage (1988). Soyinka's The Open Sore of a Continent (1996) attempts to explain the overriding political history that often animates the cultural thoughts inherent in the works. This book examines the deterioration of the humane principles of his people's cultural past. The culmination of this process is witnessed, he surmises, in the execution of fellow playwright, Ken Saro-Wiwa, in 1995 and the death sentence pronounced on him.

The death sentence that was pronounced on Soyinka, he says, followed allegations levelled against him of having organised in collusion with others, bomb attacks against the army. As a consequence of this threat on his life, he went into self exile and lived in the US and France from 1994 upto 1998 (after the death of dictator Sani Abacha). After the death of Abacha, Soyinka formally demanded democracy for Nigeria. The new military ruler, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, in a show of change of political spirit, granted amnesty to all political prisoners and Nigerians in exile. Soyinka voluntarily returned to Nigeria the same year. In the year 2001, he published a play titled King Baabu.

A father of three -- two daughters and a son -- Soyinka now lives and works in Nigeria. A virulent critic, he has been an outspoken and, often, controversial figure. He is often quoted on his denunciation of negritude. In a frontal attack on negritude, he reportedly retorted that a tiger does not have to go around proclaiming its tigritude. He argues in 'The Writer in a Modern African State', that "the situation in Africa today is the same as in the rest of the world; it is not

one of the tragedies which come of isolated human failures but the very collapse of humanity"(16). Thus, the problems that the African is confronted with are human and not African. Within the particularity of his art, he captures universal human problems.

This then is an artist of rapid output and the versatility of his art can only be attributed to the consistency and conviction with which he has pursued his pet subject - the African past, its humane principles and its role in modern social order. Whether in his poetry, drama, essays, or novels, Soyinka has sought to entrench the African ideals that, though not sacrosanct, constitute a part of the whole that humanity is. It is very clear from his life history that his art has, over the years, been greatly influenced by different experiences at various stages. His childhood, education, travels and relations have particularly impacted on his thought patterns and his structural perceptions. In The Interpreters as in most of his other works, the past and the present are juxtaposed. The manner in which these are presented in the text, apart from communicating through its form, can, to a large extent, be attributed to his experience and contacts with drama.

It takes a great artist to make 'poetry' out of experiences. In his literary works, Soyinka strikingly manipulates linguistic resources to capture the duality of the life that he experiences. Whether in his poetry, drama or prose, at the base of Soyinka's thinking appears to be some deep-rooted dualism: Then and now; here and there; this and that. His oscillations in space, time and in terms of personality focus derive from the desire to give 'reality' an alternative perception. What emerges of his writing is a polemic intertextuality of African orientations and Western influences. However, in seeming internal upheavals and changing evaluations, the façade of frivolity actually finds its most profound internal deictic unity in The Interpreters.

CHAPTER THREE

TEXTUAL DEIXIS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES

In this chapter, the study embarks on actual textual criticism. Cognisant of the vital role that deixis, as orientational features of discourse, play, we seek to demonstrate that the artist uses them to co-ordinate disparate narrative lexies (snippets) in the text. In this regard, we focus on personal deictics, anaphoric articles and demonstratives, spatial and temporal deictics, and ellipses.

It is intended that the study will show how deictic elements are used to ignite and heighten tensions, to create suspense and to allude to other experiences that are extraneous to the immediate context. It also seeks to illustrate that some, especially ellipses, operate as aural silences: seeming to be keeping quiet when actually saying something and quite emphatically at that.

In his essay titled 'The Igbo World and Its Art', Chinua Achebe opines that the world should be viewed like one does a masquerade dance: He says:

> The masquerade (which is really an elaborated dance) not only moves spectacularly but those who want to enjoy its motion fully must follow its progress up and down the arena. (H1 65)

Thus anybody who wishes to see it must be in concurrent temporal space. We can only surmise from this supposition that life is in a constant flux and if its recording is to remain faithful to this reality of which it should be a reflection, then, it must mirror the spontaneous thrust that the realities make upon the human mind. No wonder, then, that a great deal of literary texts are replete with retrospections and anticipations and the characters largely present themselves as cinematically shot.

A literary text is just but linguistic signs detailing a desired social order. The ultimate aim of any phenomenon of language use is therefore to communicate. The idea of progression of thought leading to a complete articulation of perception is, however, a process of semantic organization of experience. It is therefore a co-ordinative activity that involves all the lexical items and other semantic codes. There is no prescribed pattern for this communicative process but there are

accepted norms. In literary creativity, these are often flouted to achieve desired ends. The story in Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters is constructed by means of narrative lexies (motifs or small units of meaning).

Instead of getting rendered as a linear chronology of events, The Interpreters takes the form of numerous reported presences. The narrative acts involved in this are phenomenal communicative processes that are duly marked by elements of co-ordinative causality. In literary creativity, what may appear anomalous derives its aesthetics from its communicative dynamism. Constructing the identities of characters in the text from the disparate narrative lexies may, for that matter, take recourse to the deictic elements and their causal relations as a phenomenon of language use. There also appears to be some need for such textual analysis to proceed from the vantage point of view that, more often than not, characters dissolve or, rather, are dissolved into textuality: This particularly derives from the fact that open to the narrator is a whole set of options for encoding his experience.

Rimmon-Kenan explains that:

> Whereas story designates the narrated events abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order... text is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling... In it, events do not necessarily appear in chronological order, *the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout*, and all the items of the narrative content *are filtered through some prism.* (Rimmon-Kenan 3, emphasis mine)

It has been duly pointed out that the text order in The Interpreters is not static (fabula) and that, rather, it takes the form of continually contextualised motifs (sjuzet). Billington Mwangi refers to narrative dicourse as, "an instrument of variegated memory and reality".(28) Dispersed as they may seem, the narrative details of The Interpreters are constructable into 'persons' if only the narrative motifs are seen as motivated shifts and the role of deictic elements in such context bound utterances are discerned.

In their ordinary linguistic applications, deictic elements (personal pronouns, anaphoric demonstratives and articles, adverbials of place and time, etc.) are used to shift attention. Thus,

they serve as references to antecedent referent objects, persons or situations. It is because of this nature of relating known or implied situations that we talk of them as orientational features of discourse. In The Interpreters, interesting demands are made of the deictic elements.

On opening the text, we bump into five intellectual friends. They are in a night-club (Club Cambana) -- drinking and dancing to band music. Femi Ojo-Ade observes that this setting serves as a symbol for the drama of their lives. He says;

> A club is a melting pot of all sorts, a source of panacea, a centre of socialization; it is also a meeting point of solitudes, a refuge for alcoholics and pariahs, a home for the defeated and disgruntled. (Gates 738)

As for these five friends, however, we get to 'know' them without necessarily 'knowing'. Barely a page ends, however, before we meet another 'fresh start'. Thereafter, the story is told both in retrospects and in terms of abrupt actual presences. Through this oscillation in space and time, the text covers a very broad spectrum thus making it, probably, the greatest mark of Soyinka's brevity. Be that as it may, it is only after we have constructed a 'story' from the 'text' that the characters become what they are: intellectuals in a newly independent country whose vaunted intelligence and technical refinements are mercilessly and sadly mocked by a triumphant bestiality. The five pitiful lives - presented in the form of minute fractions -- are, however, imbued with colossal desires to carry on in spite of tragic moments that dog them.

We easily gather from the first two episodes that the artist is capturing a situation that has gone topsy-turvy. Amidst all the merry that we witness in the opening episode, Egbo magnificently presents us with an insight into the pervading sense of suffering. The roof of the night-club is leaking. Quite an isolated incident this is, it may seem, and probably too simple to create a fuss but Egbo peers into this reality seeing the bigger problems that engulf his life. It ignites in him memories of certain other pangs of pain: sufferings of greater proportions. This then is an encapsulation of a lot more unbearable experiences. Actually, the insinuation is that this particular experience is reduced to insignificance when compared to the others hitherto encountered by him. Egbo embarks on a quest to establish his place within the general context of societal dispensations.

The narrative shift from the collective experience of the night-club scene to an incident in Egbo's past that we witness is a qualitative shift. It is a movement from the group to an individual's past: a temporal and figural shift. We learn that life has not been rosy to Egbo. His present reality has lost any taste and he resorts to nostalgic melancholy. Disasters loom large and some lives have even been engulfed but Egbo's introspection reveal in him an underdog who has been enriched by endless pain and vowed to acquire a positive resolve instead of caving in. All odds are arraigned against him but he still has the audacity to tell God off. He defiantly retorts, in reference to the chasm that his experience constitutes, "I don't need his pity. Someone tell God not to weep in my beer"(8). Thus, he implicitly acknowledges that theirs is a pitiable lot. The lingering question according to him, however, is not whether it would be prudent enough to wriggle oneself out of this quagmire but how. Like the rest of his friends, he sets on a quest and exhibits a grim determination in this quest.

Normally, we are told, Egbo would thrill to a storm but soon after he starts raking his past for any dregs, "his face [appeared] unnaturally animated" at the prospect of a downpour. He mutters, "I didn't beg you to join in celebrating my depression"(16). Thus, Egbo exonerates all and sundry of any blame for his problems. Not even God or nature stand accused. It is therefore against such ideological precepts that Egbo subtly sets upon tackling the social factors. The artist, thereafter assumes that certain pragmatic implications are shared between the reader and the speaker. Through communicative acts, the reader is offered certain meaning options, although these are deceptively masked at the syntactic level by the linguistic systems in operation.

Cognisant then of the ideological precepts which are shared, suppositionally, between the reader and the artist, we readily understand Egbo's introspective and retrospective acts as relayed through deictic elements. When, on seeing Bandele looking up at him, Egbo quips, "Oh *I* was only having a chat with *me* and *this* talkative puddle"(18), we notice that this is not any ordinary narrative act but a stylistic correspondence. The conscious usage and motivated prominence accorded to the personal pronouns draw our attention to them. As linguistic signs, the deictic elements assume certain distinct pragmatic implications shared between the speaker and his audience.

With the benefit of the foreknowledge of Egbo's introspective and retrospective impulses, it is supposed by the text that "I" is used here to refer to Egbo himself while "me" represents not this Egbo but the Egbo that is within him. The communicative act therefore dichotomises the self such that "I" emerges as the outside self engaged in an internal act of dialogue with "me". Thus, this deictic act relates syntax to semantic implications and, functions to impart social facts. We are therefore not surprised that Egbo is holding a chat with the self that is clogged within him. Through such deceptively simple processes, the artist shows important perceptual distinctions. He has, for instance, captured the fact that the character has engaged in an introspective act: a quest from within the self. We need to note therefore that when appropriately employed, deictic elements become semantically sensitive and perform vital stylistic correspondences. They defamiliarize the event or person and, by so doing, speak about the events more loudly.

On the narrative act above, "this" is an anaphoric demonstrative that is not only suggestive of a demonstrative act by the artist but even puts focus on the puddle. Thus, the speaker is inviting the reader to take due notice of the interpretive engagement demanded of the situation. In as much as "this" draws attention to the rain-drops that are whipping Egbo, the deictic element appeals to, nay challenges, the audience's critical sensibilities so that the havoc typified by the rain may be discerned in its larger terms. The message, then, is that the puddle is miniature evidence of greater suffering borne by the speaker.

The puddle is 'talkative' in the sense that it represents an avalanche of intolerable experiences. 'This talkative puddle' is a phrase that is quite loaded with meaning. The meaning can only be discerned, however, when we look not at the narrative motif within which it is found in isolation but at it in relation to the wider pragmatic implications with which the text is concerned. The underlying message is that there are more harrowing experiences of which this puddle relate. In making the statement, Egbo recognises a drama going on in his mind pitting two antagonistic forces against each other: a firmly resistant reality of his past and the taunts of his prevailing circumstances. The puddle therefore acquires multi-dimensional and metaphorical aspects to itself. The diverse connotations and relation of experiences in this particular context is a task borne by the semantically-sensitive deictic element "this".

By demanding attention to the puddle through the deictic element, the artist expects the reader not to see it on its own terms but in certain other terms. It is therefore only in the wider context of the text that we can appreciate 'this talkative puddle'. The puddle is 'talkative' not about itself but about the experiences that it generally represents in its particularity. Through it, memories are stirred and metacommentaries sought about Egbo's harrowing experiences. It is therefore not surprising that the quest is introduced through it and starts in earnest soon after.

When he begins his quest for identity, Egbo takes an instant flight into the past. We suddenly gather that the narrative scene has changed. The five friends are at a river, and:

> Two paddles clove the still water of the creek, and *the* canoe trailed behind it a silent groove, between gnarled tears of mangrove; *it* was dead air and *they* came to a spot where an old rusted cannon showed above the water.(8, emphasis added).

This episode is the second in our communicative parlance but it presents itself as a 'fresh start'. Ordinarily, events and characters are presented within the fabula (plot of a story) as developments from preceding episodes. Here, we are presented with a retrospective chunk that suddenly refers us back in time in an attempt to dialogise with the reality that is manifest in it. Most of what we find in the first episode could pass for a historical account, albeit laced with echoes of inner vibrations, but the second episode acquires a psychological rhythm. Whereas the former is general, the latter is quite personal and isolated from the historical flow.

Suffice it to note that the seemingly anomalous semantic construction (as is the norm in a sjuzet), is superbly explained by the artist through his syntactic construction. Even though the criterion of immediacy appears flouted when the second narrative lexie is made to stand second to a less compelling episode, the justification can actually be derived from the deictic elements.

To reach this scene from the preceding episode, the omniscient narrator performs what may easily pass for a simple flashback yet it constitutes a real syntactic juggling act. What we witness at this break and in other numerous instances is an act of text cleavaging. In this particular section, there are certain key-words that serve to link the two narrative lexies. 'The' in 'the canoe' is an anaphoric article but the object of which it is used here as a designator does not have an antecedent. There is a subtle supposition through this anaphoric reference that the

encounter with the canoe is not necessarily the first, at least for Egbo. Immediately, we understand that the canoe of which Egbo reminisces could be the ill-fated vessel that claimed his parents. The puzzle that this construction presents can, for that matter, be solved only after relating, as the deictic element demands, this incident to the wider narrative motif. The fact that the mangrove lining the path of the canoe are shedding tears as it passes becomes a subject of speculation and becomes clear only much later because the canoe that had stirred their emotional repository, lacked an antecedent and remained indistinct to the audience.

Another linguistic sign within this syntactic stretch that plays a textual shift and a relational role is "it". This is a semantic designator whose import can be easily misconstrued if the narrative lexie is not looked at in its entirety and in relation to the others adjacent to it. "It" plays an elemental role of particularizing the experience rather than leaving the audience equivocating as to whether the narrative act constitutes a flash-forward or a flashback. The incident of which it relates is in the past, though this is not quite clear at first. The incident could still actually be in the past and only slightly less distant as compared to the club-scene. Be that as it may, it is an aural clue but instead of serving its primary role of creating anaphoric reference, the sign is given a motivated prominence by being made to introduce an event. The event being introduced lacks a referent however and remains outside the immediate context. Through the deictic element, the audience is taken even further back in time relative to the night-club scene, thus intensifying the suspense that had been created by the *medias res*.

The other instrumental semantic code in the introductory shift is "they". Unlike "it" for which the text does not provide a referent, "they" in this 'fresh start' conjures up memories of characters hitherto enountered at the *medias res*. Ordinarily, characters are introduced and any subsequent mentioning of the referent is cumulative information on the antecedent. Poetry, Christopher Caudwell says:

> ... is a bundle of instinctive perspectives of reality taken from one spot... In it the [different] instincts give *one loud cry*, a cry which expresses what is common in the general relation of every man to contemporary life as a whole (206, emphasis added).

The heterodiegetic narrator in The Interpreters, for that matter, strives to achieve this faithfulness in his rendition of experiences. Constantly, additional information impress itself upon the

imagination. Probably, this explains his multi-focal approach and the use of deictic elements become quite imperative in the dynamic process if unity is to be realized.

The unity of action, we surmise, is the unity that is possible to the imagination. In the text, Soyinka captures this unity by the use of anaphoric elements. This is meant to cohere the disparate units of meaning -- a drinking spree and Egbo's recapitulation of his past. Through the element "they", the reader is readily prevailed upon to reduce to unity this multitude of impressions. The important role that it serves is therefore to fuse what apparently are discordant narrative lexies in the heat of actions. Rather than name the characters once more in the new "instinctive perspective of reality", Soyinka commits them to our memory by performing a relational act. Through this, he effectively shifts our focus and can relate the new incident to the opening episode thus making it part of the 'one loud cry'.

The artist, for that matter, deploys deictic elements to serve as aural clues in the interpretive process. By fusing the two episodes, he is insinuating that all these diametrically opposed realities are intrinsically unified in their expression of human experiences. Whether retrospective or introspective, the narrative acts capture the instrinctive perspectives of reality all of which add up to a perspective on the characters' lives. These instinctive dossiers create a great deal of suspense but through textual deixis, the audience is continually invited to perform relational acts. "They", for instance, recasts the five main characters whom we had bumped into at the *medias res*. The element therefore whets our appetite for further revelations on them.

Suffice to note therefore that coming after the first stretch of text, the aural clues "it" and "they" shift the audience's attention from the *medias res* to another heat of action far back in time. They however develop a linkage between the two situations and the characters involved. The first episode establishes a chasm and the second one tries to put it in perspective. Egbo is portrayed as cognisant of the chasm that his experience constitutes and the need to renegotiate the self that is unaware of itself. This then is the justification for the flashback. When it dawns on him that the "I" has to hold a chat with "me" about "this" (the prevailing set of circumstances) and moreover that "they" must come into terms with "it" (the past that is presented as shrouded in mystery owing to the fact that it lacks an antecedent) the character takes to his past.

The gist of this stylistic correspondence therefore lies in the fact that the present is one grim reality and the individual (Egbo) has realised belatedly that his salvation lies in introspection and retrospection. "I" must understand "me" and this, it appears, is only possible, according to Egbo's scheme of things by taking immediate recourse to "it". It has not been an easy decision:

> ...Egbo found he would always shrink, although incessantly drawn to the pattern of the dead. And this, waiting near the end of the journey, hesitating on the brink, wincing as he admitted it - was it not exhumation of a better forgotten past? Belatedly, thinking, who am I to meddle? Who? Except - and this counted for much - that he knew and despised *the age* which sought to mutilate his beginnings.(11)

'The age' that Egbo accuses of having despised his beginnings comes out clear as his own. 'The' serves to particularize this age and confirms its identity by pointedly referring to it.

The past of this age that 'he knew' had despised its beginnings therefore remains blurred and Egbo finds it incumbent upon himself to dig it out and relate it with contemporaneous reality to realize more meaningfulness in life. This is the kind of thematic stuff that Soyinka considers salient and seeks to relay via subtle stylistic correspondences. Beneath these simple linguistic signs therefore lie the gist of the text: individuals' ardent quests for identity in an environment that either denies it or simply deprives one of it. The role of deictic elements in the construction of this identity can therefore not be gainsaid.

For varied purposes and intents, it is evident from the foregoing therefore that Soyinka begins his text by first of all introducing his major characters within the first stretch of text. As the narration progresses into the second stretch of text (flashback to Egbo's past) he finds it rather germane to situate each character's personal quest within the broader realm of the quest for identity. The narrative break that comes barely after a full page of the novel witnesses a deictic thrust that effectively recasts the characters. After this momentary break, the artist proceeds to redefine his focus and we, thereafter, see individual quests within contextualised narrative motifs. This bid starts with Egbo. The narrative lexies that result continually strive to relate their contextualised and figural meanings to the general thematics of the novel - a loud cry for the tortured souls to be excused.

Immediately after the accomplishment of the introductory stretch, we find the following lengthy rythmical sequence:

> 'me too', Egbo said. 'I suppose I can never wholy escape water but I do not love things of death. I remember when I was in Oshogbo I loved Oshum grove and would lie there for hours listening at the edge of the water. It has a quality of this part of the creeks, peaceful and comforting. I would lie there convinced that my parents would rise from the water and speak to me. That they turned into waterman and wife I had no doubt, so I expected they would appear whereas the condition were right. And Oshun had the same overhung greyness, so night after night I went and called to them and placed my ear against the water on the line against the bank'. He laughed. 'I only get beaten for my pains. My guardians thought I had become an Oshun follower. What use, I ask you, would I have for Oshun?(8)

Unlike the preceding narrative stretches where the omniscient narrator used deictic elements to introduce characters and situations and to capture their aspirations using the passive voice, here the voice automatically becomes the assertive 'I' of the first person. Egbo has to be mandated to tell his own story and this choice is certainly made out of stylistic considerations.

Whereas the stretch of text preceding this one chronicles an archetype of experience, the second episode desires to assume the experience itself. In so doing, supposedly, the text is capable of inquiring into the conflicting loyalties in relation to the past, as can be observed from the text. The abrupt shift, we presume, in being meant to shock the reader into an encounter with Egbo, may make the style appear erratic. This shift and the repetitive use of the personal pronoun is however a stylistic strategy aimed at mirroring the increasing intensity of feeling and forging an element of intimacy. Here, Egbo is granted a rare artistic limelight to speak a grand soliloquy. By asserting the self, he validates his assertions, his fears and his pleas. He becomes definite and personal. When he says, "*I* only get beaten for *my* pains", we should, as of necessity, listen and discern the deictic reflection and the semantic code that this entails. Egbo is castigating his guardians for infringing on his rights through the use of these deictic elements. What business do they have interfering when I am prepared to shoulder the consequences, he appears to be asking. His quest emerges as long and greatly misunderstood and his experiences piteous.

The repetition of "I" emphasizes the fact that a new perspective has just been opened up. It heralds the existence of a new being in Egbo. The writer creates a confessional mood for the new being thus striking a rapport with us and endearing him to us. He invites the audience to trust what Egbo is an eye witness to and the account he gives. He begins his testimony thus: "I can never wholly escape water but I do not love things of death."(8) We therefore meet him engulfed in some sort of precarious situation and earnestly appealing for our unreserved sympathies. The story of Egbo is therefore told, largely from the victim's own perspective. By reverting to "I", he accords the story an I - narrative point of view. This enhances the narrator's credibility and endears him to us victim of cruel fate.

After these prefatory apologetics, Egbo starts in earnest to detail his experiences. He confesses that he may not remember but confirms, "*it*" is... as I remember *it*. An interlude from reality." The bit that he can remember, he admits, may appear bizarre but "it" in this repeated sense, affirms the experience to which it refers as harrowing. The artist therefore uses this deictic element to emphasize on the gravity of these experiences.

The past therefore constitutes, such a strong force in the life of Egbo. This explains why he is torn between accepting the Kingship that is his by hereditary right and the civil service job. Inasmuch as he feels obliged to help restore tradition, the civil service job is quite luring. "I dread to...yield to temptation and reclaim my place here"(14), he says. But:

> ...there remained the question of *a choice* still and he had made none, none at least that he was directly conscious of.
>
> 'All right, let's go.'
>
> 'Which way, man? You haven't said.'
>
> Perhaps he had hoped they would simply move and take the burden of choice from him, but it was like Bandele to insist although motiveless. So leaving *it* at that Egbo simply said,
>
> 'With the tide.'(14)

So, the issue of choice presents Egbo with one big dilemma and the indefinite article "a" captures this dilemma. We cannot fail to feel sorry for him when "leaving it" (the deliberations), he opts to go "with the tide" of modernity.

The omniscient narrator says:

> ...something called a stronga-head; for *him, it* was always a term for the stubborn child, and Egbo felt resentful at his helplessness. *They* said *it* too when he was rescued - *they*, the world of grown-ups, of strangers, of wise humanity - *they* pronounced it as they saved *him* from the water, fully conscious; *this* one *they* said, has a strong head. But not the two, the preacher his father and a King's daughter, whose bodies were recovered only hours afterwards.(16)

What then do we make of his 'choice'. Does the "strong head" go ahead and defy tradition?

By use of the personal pronouns the second and third persons are continually juxtaposed and foregrounded. Through the juxtaposition of "him" and "they", we get to notice Egbo's subtle derision of the world of grown-ups. No wonder, "this" (the child that was 'him') survived the tragedy that claimed his parents - the Reverend Johnson and his wife the princess Egbo. Supposedly, the message being conveyed is that whereas 'they' perished, the innocent child that was "him" survived. We can infer further that Egbo looks at the past and his childhood with nostalgia. The past (the age of his childhood) is the age of innocence as opposed to the harsh world of grown-ups that he scorns.

"It" is also used twice to refer back to 'stronga-head' - a term that resonates with helplessness in his mind. Whereas this is initially intended to be a demeaning tag, the recurrent focalisation makes it reverberate in our minds and acquire a positive element to itself. Beneath the child's superimposed weakness, there is some sort of innate power and agility. Beneath this 'helplessness' therefore lies some strength: unexplainable yet quite real. This probably explains why Egbo yearns and earnestly seeks the lost glory in weakness. Through this deictic element, the past and years of childhood are stripped of the pejorative nuances with which 'the world of grown-ups' hold it. The world of the 'stronga-head' is held in juxtaposition with, "that of the grown-ups, of strangers, of wise humanity", and we can scarcely lose sight of the strange collocations and even the sarcasm in this. Here, the world of grown-ups is certainly ridiculed for hanging onto fake notions of wisdom and apparently for lacking interest in the welfare of the less endowed like Egbo. Egbo is pleading for understanding especially of his dreams. These, he holds as dear.

Egbo, the omniscient narrator contends, had a panoramic view of life. We see him bequeathed with certain critical abilities with which he easily discerns the ironies of his situation from a tender age. After the tragic experiences of his infancy we learn that he undergoes a trail of breathtaking maltreatments:

> As once before he stood on war airfield ... Egbo and his aunt, Egbo pondering the foolhardiness of this seasoned flyer who thought more of her cloth trade than the grave danger to which she thought fit to expose his life .(55)

This is notwithstanding the fact that we had been told how some of the guardians, with whom she left him, treated him. One of them, the Merchant, tells him, "When you greet elders... you prostrate yourself... on your belly, you son of the devil" (17). These actually validate Egbo's brandying of the world of grown-ups as the world of 'strangers'. Prematurely weaned from parental love by the death of his parents, we learn, Egbo has to contend with wanton acts of cruelty. He finds this too much to fathom especially the reference to him as 'son of the devil' and protests, "my father was a reverend pastor and he never taught me to prostate". Egbo's sees tyranny in this and adamantly refuses to yield. His obsession with the past probably derives from the kind of misconception witnessed here (that disloyal people are devilish) and he attempts to put his record straight and explains hence that religion has only been distorted to perpetuate a status-quo. Ascribing to this distorted view would be tantamount to succumbing to tyranny and this he is prepared to resist at all costs.

The omniscient narrator corroborates Egbo's account of the childhood torment that the strangers subjected him to. He observes that consequent to these treatments, "Egbo was discovered at midnight [one day] lying at the women's edge in the grove of Oshun, one ear against the ground". (17) This captures the deplorable plight of Egbo and the kind of admiration with which he views the past and the supernatural forces that reside in it. Egbo therefore views life from a perspective that reigns supreme in his life. When Kola says "I admit that the face is peaceful, still, but ...", he interjects and side-steps the argument saying, "still! O still that passeth all understanding. Transcental stillness of the distanced godhead ...".(24) He therefore veers from an ordinary discourse into the realm of supernaturals, commenting on the drawing that has become the subject of this dialogue, he advocates for "the exultation of the Black Immanent", and grumbles thus:

What is wrong! Where are the dark closing hills and the cloud crevices? Well, where are they? Instead of which you have merely drawn twin orange slices (TI 24).

Thus, Egbo is more appreciative of 'dark closing hills' than 'twin orange slices'. In effect, Egbo is extolling the beautiful features with which black people are endowed and putting them on a higher pedestal. Blacks, he contends are endowed with more admirable features as compared to others.

Stylistic correspondences are also created by narrative elision -- a prominent feature in the dialogue sections of this novel. The following conversation illustrates this:

'You are just crude. Bush'. Egbo fastened his eyes on the subtle independence of the buttocks. Sagoe was looking too.

'They make me think of two satellites bouncing gently in space, just touching each other.'

Egbo glared at him, so he tried to appease him.

'You know, a white woman that size would be wholly amorphous. Quite revolting. But black woman eh...'

'That' said Lasunwa, 'is just another of your baseless generalities.'(25)

In this excerpt, the ellipsis is not just any interruption in the narrative sequence but rather a 'loud silence'.

We know from the motif's pragmatic place that in Egbo's conception, a black woman is more admirable than a white woman. With this ellision, narrative affirms the beauty of black women. Egbo, it appears, holds black women in the highest esteem. Infact, the insinuation is that theirs is a beauty beyond explanation. Instead of being a 'silence' and a multidimensional reflexive at that, this particular ellipsis is unidimensional and serves to entrench Egbo's view of the black woman. It stresses his view that the black woman is the exact opposite of the revolting sight that a white woman is.

Similarly, when the artist uses ellipsis in "if I may use yours as an example, don't you agree sir, that...", the semantic designation of this shifter is obvious. We know already from the wider context that the system is bent on perpertuating itself and is prepared to do everything towards this end. This ellipsis therefore constitutes an admission on the part of the ambassador that theirs

is a tyrannical regime. As deictic features, narrative ellipses are valuable semantic codes. They allude to the truths and elicit critical discernment of these from the readers.

With this, the Egbo motif reaches its apex. What follows is Egbo's affirmation of the acquired self: the black self and his goodness derived from the past.

> The teacher in Geography, the only man in a precipice-lined career who found a spark of good in '*that* Egbo!' seized him... the teacher said, 'you are something of a miracle. Do you know you came to near dismissal six times? Six times in a secondary school career! Young Egbo, you must ask me for a testimonial because that fact must impress any right-thinking man. (51)

So, "that" is used here to refer to the Egbo that was often misunderstood but who has steadfastly struggled to affirm his real self: the self that was an object of scorn. This is the self that this geography teacher finds out to be quite well-meaning. In fact, 'that self' is the one that the teacher is advising him to cling onto -- the one that 'must impress any right-thinking man.' "This, we surmise, is the undiluted self as it derives from the past.

To comment on the morality of that past that Egbo yearns for, the artist, once more, uses the teacher:

> 'I know a sex maniac when I see one. And I see one standing right before me this moment. Keep away from women, do you understand? Now get thee gone'... . He had a tradition of hyperboles, that teacher, for Egbo was notorious for his fear of women. Until a week before... .(51)

Thus, "that Egbo" of the week before is portrayed as more admirable. The use of archaic language by the teacher confers upon this advice a religious quality and serves to authenticate the teacher's wise counsel against immoral activities. Having been invited by the assertive '*I*' to trust his observations, we develop some fear on seeing Egbo starting to flirt with Simi - the *la femme fatale* of this society.

What follows after this advice takes a very brief moment in time but Egbo veers off the moral path of 'that Egbo' and becomes another victim of cruel fate, albeit momentarily. This is covered in a phallic image and draws a parallel between Egbo and the drowning of his parents:

> ...Good God, in darkness let me be...
> 'Oh my dear, what is it?'
> For pleasure must be sinful and excess pleasure is damnation.
> And Dejiade, Dejiade, he would tell him tomorrow, Dejiade your
> life if simple, so simple and dead.
> ...through hidden floods a sheath canoe parts all reeds, not dies,
> God, not dies a rotting hulk...
> 'But my dear...'
> And a lone pod strode the boabab on the tapering thigh, leaf-shorn,
> And high mists swirl him, haze-splitting storms, but the stalk stayed him...
> 'My dear, tell me, what is the matter?'
> When *it* lay flooded when *it* lay flooded. There were the tassels for the
> man, sweet roots for the child, and above cloud curds waited for the
> chosen one of God...
> ...parting low mists in a dark canoe... in darkness let me lie, in
> darkness cry... .(61)

So, Egbo is juxtaposed with "that Egbo": the Egbo of the past; of untainted morals. The former is found wanting. After the fusion (the stalk), painful as it is, some optimism is exuded. "It" in the above passage defamiliarises Simi (the woman) and by likening her to a river, de-emphasizes her evils. Suffice it to note further that she is thereafter made a symbol of regeneration. It symbolically refers to Simi as a river (a flooded river) but the type of flooding that does not cause death. Egbo therefore salutes his productive 'darkness'. He demands to be left alone to lie and cry in the darkness. Through this allusion to a sexual intercourse (the dark canoe parting low mists), it is implied that excess pleasure can be a source of distress. The morality that the past offers should therefore be fused with the pleasures of contemporary life. Egbo does it and emerges unscathed. He is optimistic, instead, that from this 'darkness' we should wait for "the chosen one of God". Thus, our salvation lies, if anywhere, in our past. Its understanding is outrightly imperative.

In the long excerpt, the artist captures two strands of conversation. There is 'dialogue' between Egbo and Simi to which Egbo does not directly contribute and an interior monologue by Egbo, or rather, a dialogue with his inner conscience. The ellipses also serve as deictic elements to offer us an insight into the workings of this inner self. We can therefore deduce that this self is incessantly interrogating Egbo about the sexual act (a symbolic act) that he is just about to indulge himself in. The individual is torn between clinging onto the past and fusing it with the present. The latter wins the day. He accepts his new role as custodian of tradition.

Suffice to note here that after this introspective act, we encounter a major shift in narrative focus. We are, however, ultimately drawn into witnessing the aftermath of Egbo's wanderings only much later on page 123. It clearly emerges here that after Egbo's sexual intercourse with Simi, he reaches the pinacle of his dreams (the mirage of a dream): an exuberant life. He realises that "desire was an alien thing" (124). Thus, the pleasure that modernity promises proves hollow. Immersed in this thought;

> Egbo could not remember its existence. He looked towards Lagos again, to the single rented room, to the ledgers in the office and stale buns on monthly credit. Best of all, for *that* jostling, dangerous cycle ride to the office across Carter Bridge.(124)

Thus, the kind of life that modernity offered was one big nightmare- - a suffocating experience. The anaphoric demonstrative "that" in "that jostling" is perjorative. Here, it operates as a designator and underlines Egbo's resolve not to be a party to this kind of life.

As Egbo would realise, later, this is quite some long drawn battle and retreating would not be that easy. The conversation with Simi that ensued, explains:

> 'What are you doing?'
>
> 'Putting on my clothes"
>
> 'But why?'
>
> 'Why? To return to my host of course.'
>
> His voice went suddenly small as she took the clothes back from him.
>
> 'You mean... you er, expect me to stay here all night?'
>
> 'If I had wanted to sleep by myself why should I have brought you here?'
>
> There was no more bluster left, Egbo was whining for pity

'But I am exhausted.'

'Well , that's *too late now*, I must get some rest.'(124)

and Egbo himself had better known that it was "too late now" and Simi would not let him go.

She charged;

> That was only the beginning. We have still to get to know each other. We have all night, and tomorrow... do you think you just sleep with a woman once and leave her like *that*? Don't you know *that* is only the beginning for her?(124)

and inasmuch as "that" operates as an anaphoric demonstrative (focusing our attention on its referent action/event), it is methodically silent on the action/event) . "That" is, in this respect, a loud silence -- seeking to defamiliarise the sexual act that the two had indulged in. Literary creativity does not condone obscenity and this deictic element therefore proves handy in making a profound statement through camouflage. We aver that the mark of artistic prowess is the artistic execution of intent and effect; is the beauty and charm of form. The content and impression that literature consists of can only be discerned through an aesthetic analysis of its form. Through its defamiliarised content, deictic elements create suspense and aesthetic flavour in The Interpreters.

The significance of Egbo's experience only gets clear, the narrator says, when;

> In the middle of the night, he woke and could not tell where he was.
>
> ...
>
> so *now*, for the first time since his childhood ascent into the god's domain, Egbo knew and acknowledged fear, stood stark before his new intrusion. For this was no human habitation, and what was he but a hardly ripened fruit of the species, lately celebrated the freeing of the man...(126)

Thus, Egbo had come to the realisation that no man can defy what the gods have decreed and get away with it; and that he would ultimately be used by the gods to execute their desired ends. A black man he was and a ruler over his people he was fated to be. We can only read his resignation to this fate when he says "in darkness let me lie... so now he laughed"(127). Thus, true happiness cannot derive from abandoning the true self and embracing the 'other', however glamorous.

It can be argued that Soyinka's rustic childhood engendered in him the kind of conceptions he creates in Egbo. No wonder then that Egbo emerges in the pattern of Rousseau's the 'noble savage', with its implication that men are better when closer to their 'natural' state , uncorrupted by the artificialities of civilisation. The rustic idyll carries the day.

Apparently concerned about the impotency of the elite and the vice perpetrated by those steering the ship of state, Soyinka creates in Sagoe, another character who runs counter to Egbo, a paragon of virtue. Through him, rustic innocence is greatly contrasted with a pervading sense of city vice. The text itself begins with Sagoe's mutter, "Metal on concrete jars my drink lobes".(7) He is besieged. Thus, we are immediately introduced to his passionate plea for tranquility in a society beset by mindless frenzy: a plea for sanity amidst wanton madness. His concern for his society is even made clearer when he quips, "what a waste"(18). When prodded by Delinwa to explain this, he declares:

> The atmosphere girl, the atmosphere, we should be love pairs. Even scheming lechers and their gulls would do but what do we have? Five drunken sots.(18)

Sagoe is therefore concerned about the general sense of inaction with which his society is characterized. He blames Sir Derinola (the ex-Judge) for having strayed off what he knew to be the right path: the path of moral aptitude.

To capture Sir Derinola's unfortunate slide, the narrator makes this observation:

> "The lawyers named him the morgue. He was all right until *he let* the politicians buy him over. It is funny but I despised him when he was alive!"(20, emphasis added)

This is a frontal attack on Sir Derinola. We equally find it funny that Sagoe mourns somebody he had despised for the better part of his life. Sagoe's reason for doing this is implicitly achieved through a stylistic correspondence that involves a deictic element. By using "he" the artist emphatically states that moral degeneration and the suffering that it breeds is a choice we all make. By relating the individual to the act, it is argued that it is the onus of the individual in society to totally ward off temptations but Sir Derinola "let them buy him over". We therefore understand that he despised him for failing, nay refusing, to renegotiate his identity. After the

death, it would be foolhardy to continue despising him because choices are made out of personal volitions and Derinola's chance was all lost.

After this heart-rendering death we meet Sagoe with Dehinwa. What may be mistaken for a social escapade is redeemed and treated with artistic modesty. His decision to spend the night at Dehinwa's apartment is misconstrued both by Dehinwa herself and by her parents. Sagoe, however, pleads for understanding. He explains:

> 'My house is full. Three full-grown men in it. Where do you expect us to sleep?'
>
> 'Why didn't one of them stay with Lasunwon?'
>
> ' With his wife and two children?
>
> ...
>
> 'If it is *that* you are worrying about, I promise I will behave.
>
> 'In any case, I am in no condition'.(34)

Thus, Sagoe is prepared to sacrifice himself for the benefit of others. The anaphoric demonstrative "that" as used above functions to identify something contextually known to be unique to the audience. We are sympathetically involved in exonerating Sagoe of any evil intentions. We therefore see in him a person driven to the service of mankind.

We meet Sagoe again caught up in this web of being mistaken when Dehinwa's mother and aunt confront Dehinwa over their relationship. The aunt's charge goes thus:

> The aunt, sucking steaming tea as through a straw began,
>
> 'Your mothers *aladura* had a vision concerning you:
>
> ...
>
> 'As you see, we are here. *This* is what brought us.'
>
> 'What was *this* vision?' Dehinwa wanted to know.
>
> 'He saw you brought to bed. You gave me a grandson.'
>
> Dehinwa could not help smiling. 'Did he see the father?'(37, emphasis added)

"This" is a demonstrative whose referent can only be discerned from the general context within which it is operating. Elsewhere, we learn that the mother and the aunt are concerned about rumours to the effect that Dehinwa has been 'moving' with a Northerner (*a Gambari*). As a

deictic feature, "this" is therefore used to comouflage the tribalism that is deep-seated in this society. To the readers and to Sagoe, probably, Dehinwa's reply comes handy. She tells them that, "who *I* move with is *my* own business". (37, emphasis mine) This vote of no confidence in the tribalism that is entrenched and threatening to tear this society apart appears most welcome.

To develop the identity of Sagoe further, the artist recasts him at the 'Independent Viewpoint' interview. A trained journalist, Sagoe is greatly saddened by the ineptitude and corruption that has irredeemably crept into this important Board.

> An he wondered if he really had to go through *it*, recalling a desk of illiterate, unctuous, aggravating toads. Who hunted you from last season's stagnant pools, and constituted you into *this* obstructive lump and an endowment of the outward sign of matterdom.(76)

By using "it", Soyinka defamiliarises the degradation that he is just about to suffer in the hands of inept Board members. This heightens tension, creates suspense and prompts us to develop interest in what would follow. By likening the Board to "this obstructive lump", he contends that the Board is constituted by an inhuman bunch that only serves to retard development of the system that is already reeling under mismanagement. "This" similarly objectifies and hence defamiliarises the dehumanising experience that Sagoe has to go through. It provides form to the otherwise intangible vice thereby validating the artist's disenchantment with the system for rewarding mediocrity. Winsala's statement to the effect that, "how can an interview be conductible with someone who is not taking the matter serious"(78), concretizes the case against the Board members.

We meet Sir Derin and Winsala, principal member of this committee, next when they have gone to solicit for bribes from Sagoe at the hotel where the latter is staying so that they can ensure that he secures the job. Winsala, we notice, does the donkey job as Sir Derin remains under cover. Sagoe, however, is not so naïve and realises that the two are operating in a circuit. He bids his time to watch the unfortunate incident that erupts between Winsala and the waiter. "This game"(91), as Sagoe calls it, turns haywire and draws the attention of Sir Denin thus exposing him for what he is: a corrupt public servant operating under cover and possessing undeserved 'dignity'. That a man of his standing in society can ask for bribes from those who are not even

employed is highly deplorable. To Sagoe, it emerges, being virtuous is far much better than gaining materially.

The extent of this murk is aptly symbolized by a huge mound of shit that covers the road near Renascent High School:

> Over twenty yards were spread huge pottage mounds ...of shit. Right on the road. Nwabuzor by some curious reasoning expunged his pictures from the page, said they would offend the general reader. 'But *it is there*', said Sagoe, '*that* shit is still lying *there* on a main road, in front of a school in a residential area!' And five days later Sagoe returned to *it* in a flagellating pilgrimage, took more photos to show Nwabuzor, who could not be persuaded to go himself -- and still *it* reigned supreme, tyrannous.(108)

Thus, "it" objectifies the rot while "there" puts it in full public glare. "*That* shit is still lying *there*", is actually meant to capture this shift from the conceptual to the concrete. Whereas "that" implies distant, the deictic element "there" affirm its existence. Failing, or rather refusing, to confront the problem does not constitute a solution. Nwabuzor runs away from it and assumes its existence but Sagoe confirms that it still reigns supreme. The 'general public' from which it is being hid has and continues to see it as "it is still lying there" in full public view.

This rot is so deeply entrenched that others have simply given up trying to find any remedies. The Editor who appears 'sane' enough has learnt to live with it. He tells Sagoe:

> ...Look, I have been in this game for thirty five years. Believe me there was a time when I held *these* ideals. I moved from one paper to the other, leaving a flurry of righteous indignation. But look man, journalism *here* is just a business like any other. You do what your employer tells you. Believe me Sagoe, just take my word.(95)

The Editor is therefore imploring him to abandon his moralistic ideals and learn to 'live' but he adamantly refuses, saying, "I am sending it to the other papers".(95) Painful as it is, he observes, "God won't forbid, Mathias. Do you know, I did not even know I was sold body and soul to Sir Chairman of this place...".(98) The Editor's use of the first person pronoun greatly affirms his "sold body and soul" -- a thing Sagoe dreads.

Note that the artist does not even bother to enumerate "these ideals". Probably, "these" are the kinds of ideals that Sagoe holds and which he tries to propagate. This necessitates, "his first family delegation, a clever assortment of eleventh cousins whom Sagoe could not know. Pleading caution. Please, don't make enemies".(107) We also learn that "journalism here" is a *business*. Thus, the Nigerian set up of which "here" supposedly refers, has put in place measures to gag the press and defying them is detrimental to personal security. Sagoe learns this painfully but refuses to cave in.

Through Sagoe, the artist also tries to present us with an insight into the paradox that corruption constitutes. Winsala and Sir Derin are decidedly corrupt yet they are held in high esteem. Sir Derin is even made a custodian of morality. When he dies, his eulogy goes thus:

> ...His life *our* inspiration, *his* idealism *our* hope, the survival of *his* spirit in *our* midst the hope for a future Nigeria, for moral irredentism and national rejuvenescence...(113).

One cannot help but disagree with this. If there is anything that Nigeria could be well advised to purge it is "his" kind of life, idealism and spirit.

The parallelism in "his... our" implores us never to try merging the two separate poles. In presenting us with the case of Barabas, a small citizen who has allegedly stolen, thus earning public ire, we are invited to debate the irony. Whereas the big thief's spirit is celebrated, Barabas (against whom there is no tangible evidence) is crucified. Sagoe and the albino exhibit their virtues. We are told that:

> Sagoe leapt off the bus and joined the throng - Run, Barabas, run, all underdog sympathetic. Run, you little thief or the bigger thieves will pass a law against your existence as a menace to society. Sagoe followed them... run, Barabas from the same crowd which will reform tomorrow and cheer the larger thief returning from his twentieth Economic misison... .(114)

It is interesting to note that it is the albino about whom one actually remarks, "... were they short of firewood at home? Your mother forgot to bake you properly..." this object of derision; that seizes and saves the poor Barabas. He is accused of being protective to the 'thief' but we later learn that he had also taken an active role in Sir Derin's funeral arrangements. When asked, "was he your friend? Our dead, I mean", he replies curtly, "No, I didn't know him at all... .(118) So,

both Sagoe and the albino are strangers to the poor Barabas and to one another but they are drawn into companionship by sheer humanism.

The artist uses the Sagoe to comment on human destiny. On his way to Sir Derin's burial, Sagoe bumps into another funeral procession. "Sagoe's cortege stopped, while the other, a mile of car and human mourners, filed slowly past. Forty cars at least followed the hand-pulled hearse, and all cars were piled high with gory carnations".(112) We cannot lose sight of the opulence being demonstrated here. But in a sarcastic turn of events, we are told that "at the cemetery, separated by a hundred graves or more, the two bodies accepted *now* a common destination, passed through to the final expunction".(112)

The temporal deictic "now" operates as a semantic designator to underline the fact that there is a common destiny for all regardless of social or economic status. As a marker of time, it conjures memories of the imminent disparity in life. The suggestion is that as one wallowed in wealth, the other one lived in abject poverty but time being the leveller that it is, "the two bodies had accepted now a common destination". So, the peace and sense of status that wealth confers upon the individual is rendered momentary and meaningless in the long run.
The albino and Sagoe have the innate capacity to recognize the drama of survival that is going on in individuals and involving two antagonistic forces. By pleading with Barabas to keep on running away from "them", they display their respect for change. The kind of change that they desire is one that has respect for the human individual. In a sense therefore, they stand for a humane society. This, they aver, is not easily attainable as all forces of destruction are aimed at the individual.

The other quest that is prominently displayed is that of Sekoni, the civil engineer in The Interpreters. When we first meet him, he has just been prompted by Egbo to respond to a philosophical issue. True to form, he gives a philosophical response and Egbo commends him saying, "there should be more Alhajis like you, Sheikh... you all violate the silence but yours insists on a purpose".(10) Thus, like Eman (the Christlike figure in The Strong Breed), Sekoni evidently has much to offer to society but rather than indulge in petty chattering, he fulfills himself in loneliness. He is a recluse with a cause, one would say.

As the omniscient narrator remarks:

> Sekoni would not laugh at the actual moment of an event. Often he would react with alarm, with worry, and if the others were strangers to *him* they would wonder if they had not been guilty of some callousness. But invariably, prompted by some accident or whatever reviewing device Sekoni had built in *him*, he would recollect the scene and laugh, a short illicit laughter.(19)

So, Sekoni is endowed with innate powers with which he first consults before reacting. He is therefore hewn as an artist whose guidance, rather than occur on the spur of the moment, derives from an evaluative muse. This must be the force within him that defies all interference. Sagoe observes, "somehow when I interrupt *him* and sense *him* still struggling in the background, I feel I have somehow strangled *him*, strangled *him* but not quite finished *him*...(20). Sekoni is dichotomised into a person and a force. When he did respond, the omniscient narrator confirms, "...his fantasies needed so much time to unburden".(20) Thus, Sekoni is endowed with a rare intellect which he sets out to exercise to the benefit of society. He shares with us this conviction when he says that in an intelligent man, a fear of beauty or goodness amounts to cowardice (Soyinka, 22). He also believes in the equality of races, arguing, "Or...ange, pumpkin...sssame things...all d-d-domes of moisture...feminine".(26)

Believing, then, in his abilities, the civil engineer devotes his time, energy and vision on a power station project at Ijioha. This is later declared a junk. To his astonishment, it is not even tested. He gets summarily dismissed and banished from the site. We only learn much later that there are underlying reasons to this turn of events. Sekoni is too keen for the corrupt political operators who hold sway. They are bent on benefiting individually from this contract. After the dismissal, however, Sekoni's determination sees him get arrested when he is found at the plant. But, "... he allowed the police to lead him off without resistance".(31) He therefore offers himself to be sacrificed as a 'carrier' of the society's ignominious acts and suffers a mental turbulence which lands him in a mental hospital.

Courtesy of his unrelenting spirit, however, "Sekoni began sculpting almost as soon as he returned. His first carving, a frenzied act of wood, he called 'the Wrestler'.(99) It is observed that:

> Kola called out Joe Golder... the American stared long and silently at the sculpture and offered to buy it. Sekoni simply shook his head and continued to work. He worked now - it was the finishing touches -- with uncompromising concentration, fluently a contrasting delicacy...of *the man*, wondering if Sekoni had done any other thing but *this* all his life."(100)

Thus. in "the man" the artist defamiliarises Sekoni and dichotomises him. "The" anaphorically refers not to Sekoni, but to the 'other' Sekoni that is clogged within him - the artistic muse in him that defies all battering. With some benefit of hindsight, we concur with Kola that "this" or rather the art that "this" refers us to, has been both his damnation and triumph.

The Wrestler' emerges:

> ...one of those single once-in-a-life co-ordinations of experience and record, Sekoni was an artist who had waited long to find himself but had done so finally, and left no room for doubt".(100)

We therefore see in him an individual driven by the desire to achieve something much more important than monetary gains: a desire for self-worth. This, he can only derive from "himself". By distinguishing the self from the inner self, the artist affirms Sekoni's conviction that intellectual prowess as a tag of the artist is an innate ability of which he cannot be stripped. It is either that one has it or not and if not too bad but it cannot be forcefully acquired. Kola laments:

> ...look Joe, *that* thing, *that* something which hits you foully in the stomach, just below the belt, I have returned often in the night to look for *it*, to catch event he beginnings of *it*, to catch even the beginning of *it*... .(101)

Thus, the artistic inspiration is a mysterious force. The artist seems to be arguing that we should look for ways of benefiting from it like Joe Golder is passionately interested in buying the carving. Kola is, in this respect, ridiculed for hoping to imbibe the force itself rather than benefit from it. This proves a tall order and he admits as much. Whatever the forces that "it" refers to, they are not easily attainable.

Another character who has been hewn to comment on the political scene is Ayo Faseyi. Highly qualified doctor and lecturer at the university, he lives in constant terror of losing his stature and respectability. In the following passage, Faseyi and his sweet natured wife, (an English girl)

have been invited to a party at the house of an Ambassador. They are to be presented. Their conversation goes thus:

'...Do you mean you didn't bring them?'

'Bring what, Ayo?'

'The gloves, of course What else?'

'But I haven't any gloves. I gave the ones I had away soon after I came'.

'I am not talking about two years ago. I mean the gloves you've bought for tonight?(39)

We only learn that Faseyi's obsession with gloves is as a result of the English etiquette and mannerisms that he had swallowed hook and bait. He tells Monica:

'Darling, if the Queen was attending a garden party, would you get dressed without gloves?'

'I really don't know, Ayo. I never moved in such circles.'

'Darling, I am surprised at you. These are simple requirements of society which any intelligent person would know.'(39)

And from this, we can easily deduce what Ayo Faseyi is suffering from. Having been to England, Faseyi becomes more English than Monica who is English. One cannot help but question why he tries to universalise the simple 'requirements' of the English society which, as we learn from Monica, are not even the rule among the English themselves.

When Monica, later at the party, decides to take palm wine instead of champagne, Faseyi gets even more nervous. He enquires, "where did you get *that*?" Here, "that" becomes the single most important linguistic sign. Deceptively, it may be taken for a mere demonstrative. As a deictic element however, it constitutes a causality. If we take note of the fact that this element does not just refer us to the palm wine of which he disapproves but to the primitivity with which the 'society' associates palm wine. Faseyi is therefore not concerned about Monica taking palm wine per se but about what others would make of this. According to him, this is a distinguishing mark of a primitive cadre of which he is no longer a part. He is totally alienated from his society.

Though an aural clue, this technically constitutes a narrative 'silence'. By merely calling the drink "that", he is silent about his derision of it and in so keeping 'silent' creates even greater

tension. If we embark on a relational act and situate it within the context of the adjacent narrative lexies, we realise that this 'silence' is actually very loud about what Ayo Faseyi thinks about his own culture. He spends lavishly in trying to be 'the other'. He stinks less, or differently from the corrupt judges and politicians but he stinks. That he can get time for such petty stuff makes him an object of pity rather than anger. He has a false notion of civilization and wastes his time, money and energy in trying to perpetuate this. His portraiture acquires an ironic shading when, against all our expectations, all we see in him is an irritating narrowness of view and experience. Our hope is that he releases Monica and the others from the discomfort that is often caused by his presence and be himself released from his self-induced suffering.

We concur and conclude with Ferrara that:

> In fiction, the character is used as the structuring element: the objects and the events of fiction exist - in one way or another - because of the character and, infact, it is only in relation to it that they posses those qualities of coherence and plausibility which make them meaningful and comprehensible.(qtd in Rimmon Kenan 35).

The character must therefore be seen as integral to the actions. The experience of which the numerous contextualised motifs tell is cumulative and reads through the text. This relational experience calls for our understanding of the clues inherent within a text.

We realise in The Interpreters that through personal deixis, anaphoric articles and demonstratives, spatial and temporal deixis as well as ellipses, literary communication is made even more aesthetic. The silences, the tensions and suspenses, the allusions that deixis creates all evince a nimble intellect. Egbo and Faseyi emerge in the text as expressions of revulsion against dominant values and satirizing the cultural humbug among the elite of this society. In Tropics of Discourse, Hayden White argues that:

> ...he who seeks to retrieve history is neither an anti-quarian fleeing from the problems of the present into a purely personal past, or a kind of cultural necrophile, one who finds in the dead and dying a value he can never in the living.(4)

So, Egbo should not be accused of whiling away time by seeking the past. Faseyi is his very antithesis and the artist riles at him. Sekoni, on the other hand, constitutes the society's unrelenting patriot -- giving his all for the betterment of a society that hardly appreciates him.

It is evident that deictic elements are semantic codes. They serve to designate vital units of meaning. On account of their breathtaking simplicity, the depth of meaning that they add onto the narrative lexies is normally lost on many. It is important to establish their referent incidents and motifs if the meanings coded within them are to be deciphered.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXTUAL DEIXIS AND THE CONTINUITY IN DISCONTINUITIES

In this chapter, we continue with discussions on empirical issues of text and discourse in The Interpreters. That the macrostructure of this text is a product of numerous text connections is obvious. We hold, however, that this process of integrating narrative lexies into a structural unit relies on stylistic correspondences, and that this task is largely borne by deictic features. In scrutinising the text and its discourse, we unravel the logic behind deictic features' connective relations. This is important especially in appreciating the aesthetics of the submerged narrative form and the moral correspondences. We seek therefore to explicate the subtlety and sophistication of the text's integrative and communicative processes.

Raymond Federman is categorical that;

> If life and fiction are no longer distinguishable one from the other... and if we agree that life is never linear, that, in fact, life is chaos because it is never experienced in a straight chronological line, then similarly, linear and orderly narration is no longer possible.(10)

Thus, when all is said and done, life does not in itself form a seamless continuum. It would therefore be improper to demand that literature, in its reflection of life, gives a semblance of order to the chaos of life. Literary creativity entails, more often, presenting this 'chaos' in the very manner in which they thrust themselves upon the mind.

Communication, however, is the essence of literary creativity and it follows then that "the text [usually] has something substantial to say about life" (Peck and Coyle 154). So, inasmuch as the literary artist strives to be truthful to the chaos of life, it is always incumbent upon him to establish the relationships between the structural entities that the narrative lexies constitute. In a literary text, there has to be links between disparate spatial, figural and temporal entities.

While analysing the structure of The Interpreters, Emmanuel Obiechina argues that the author continuously manipulates time and space as a way of advancing his narrative insights. He contends that

> Soyinka introduces 'complications' in the use of time and space by dislocating the time-scheme and letting the spotlight travel forward, backward, and sometimes inward to focus on the characters' minds, reflecting their disjointed thoughts which may also plunge backwards, stand still, or lunge into the future.(138)

The narrative act in the novel, then is a non-linear activity but from the submerged acts, the reader has to discern meanings.

It is clarified that Soyinka's 'complications' are; "not merely a juggling of time sequences, but also spatial in that space is not entirely physical but also internalized in individual consciousness"(Obiechina 138).

It is only fair then to conclude that this movement, whether of thoughts or events through space and time, locates the actions in a sort of grid. Thus, The Interpreters is rendered cinematic by the manner in which considerable attention is put on a single scene which gets illuminated fully before the spotlight is shifted to explore another scene. This artistic brevity is actually a methadological virtue.

Suffice it to note that in so shifting its focus, "the text makes a complex statement about human experience"(Peck and Coyle 153). John Peck and Martin Coyle therefore underscore the need to "explore the text in a careful and imaginative way so as to arrive at a clear view of its aesthetic and moral coherence as a work of art"(155). This exploration cannot be said to be whole without appreciating the manner in which the artist coheres spatially and temporally disparate elements within a story.

The Interpreters begins its rendition of experience with a focus on a concrete spatial experience. We meet five intellectual friends out on a drinking spree at the Cambana Club. The experiences that this text relate are therefore collective and individual. The superimposed level of the Cambana club experience, for instance, is collective. The characters suffer immensely before the text abruptly plunges the reader into intervening introspections and flashbacks. The actual flow of the *medias res* story is only resumed on page 31. "*They* left *the club* towards morning"(31), we are told. The reader is therefore instantly implored to embark on relational acts.

Even though it is located at such a distant spot from the antecedent to which it refers, the personal deictic "they" does not in any way relate to the numerous intervening episodes. Instead, it disregards all these episodes and refers us back in time to the participants of the *medias res* events. Thus, it provides continuity to the discontinuous narration. The anaphoric article "the" in "the club" also thrusts upon the readers imagination an assumed knowledge of this referent. As a deictic feature, we know however that "the club" is basically meant to conjure up our memories of the previous night's activities at Cambana. The artist therefore uses deictic features to make relational demands and, in so doing, redeems the discontinuity.

Even the episode that, comes immediately after the *medias res* plunge shows a proximate discontinuity while at the same time it constitutes in some ways, a continuation of the *medias res* narration. The narrator observes:

> Two paddles clove the still water of the creek, and the canoe trailed behind it a silent grove, between gnarled tears of mangrove; it was dead air, and they came to a spot where an old rusted canon showed above the water. It built a faded photo of the past... (8).

Hence, the artist is aware that certain aspects of narrative completeness would be lacking if he does not form surface relationships segmentally by using locative markers of time and person like "it" and "they". The artist is therefore aware that having seen it necessary to give the *medias res* events a conceptual grounding through Egbo's introspection, he must include, in this new opening, words that explicitly invite the reader to recognise his kind of continuity; that is, continuity by reference. The break in narrative sequence is therefore necessitated by the need to give introspective explanation as intervening episodes.

It is still in the context of the medias res activities that we can understand Sagoe when he tells Dehinwa, "Sand. Is it now raining sand?"(32). Similarly, there have been numerous intervening episodes and it is only when we look at "it" through the lense of the *medias res* experience that we can understand it. "It" had been raining the previous evening before he fell asleep. It is only logical then that "now" a locative marker of time, be seen in relation not to the immediate intervening episodes but to the circumstances of the initial experience. The other referent to which "now" relates and provides a continuity remains submerged. This then is continuity not of the proximate kind by one created through spatial and temporal referencing.

"It" is rather equivocal about its exact referent. Is "it" the rain of the preceding night which it assumes to have continued and acquired a new dimension to it or the one of preceding night which is actually non-existent? In seeming to be talking about the present, "now" is actually implicitly referring us back to the loathsome experience of the preceding evening. The two deictic elements - "it" and "now" - therefore express both the uncertainty of Sagoe's sentiments about his present set of circumstances and the finality of his dislike for the preceding night's experience. The temporal movement that "now" connotes is in effect reflexive of the Cambana experiences from which this narration proceeds. These elements, in their varied ways, provide continuity to the discontinuous narrative lexie. When Sagoe tells Dehinwa "'Moreover, you have chosen to bring me *here* when I can neither defend myself nor assert my manhood", the implication of "here" is that there has been a spatial shift. The original point in space having been at Cambana, we are therefore invited to see this narration as contiguous to the club episode. By relating "here" to the club, we know for instance that he had been worn out by the drinks that they took at the club. We also know that he had spent a good part of the night 'outside' and in hostile weather. Dehinwa should therefore be in a position to understand him.

But, as mentioned earlier, apart from glances into the collective experience, the immediate concern of the artist, it appears, is to delineate individual responses to the collective experience. Not much transpires at the club before we get introduced to Egbo. Together with the fellow revellers (his friends), they are collectively beset by a calamity. In most of the characters, we find individuals who are least inclined towards casting any apprehension beyond surface reality. It is only Egbo who emerges as uniquely imbued with an imaginative versality. He ventures beyond the concrete reality of the collective experience into the submerged plane of this reality. For him, the latter - a speculative realm of the imagination - recognises the potency of the past as an experiential domain. This is the domain from which he cannot disentangle himself. Through Egbo, Soyinka therefore casts the reality of the present against the events of the past. This is a see-saw activity in which temporal, personal and spatial deictics as well as anaphoric articles and demonstratives play a vital role.

The see-saw narrative structure of the text therefore derives from the kinds of retrospective acts in which the characters indulge. We are informed, early enough, that Egbo "knew and despised the age which sought to mutilate his beginnings"(11). The present therefore exists in perpetual

contention with the past. Egbo is depicted, however, as proud of his ancestry and striving to contend with the dilemma that the lures of contemporaneous realities of "the age" offer him. The expectations of "the age", we are told, are not in tandem with the past's cherished ideals.

For one, Egbo sees nothing inherently wrong with holding a foreign office job and associating with other young intellectuals of his society. They meet on a fortnightly basis either at Cambana in Lagos or Mayomi in Ibadan to reflect on reality. These, however, are some of the modern tendencies that are seen by his community as barricading him from ascending to the communal throne that is his by hereditary right. These modern tendencies are therefore in conflict with the Osa expectations of him and are actually jeopardising their relationship. An Osa, a delegation is sent to him from the Osa Descendants Union supposedly to demand his allegiance to the tradition of his people which he is perceived to be slighting and treading down upon.

Whether Egbo has been disloyal to his tradition is neither here nor there but at the time of this visit, we are privy to the fact that Egbo's father, the Reverend Johnson, had drowned. This effectively
puts him as the next in line to inherit the communal throne upon his grandfather relinguishing it. This experience that dogs him for the rest of his life is captured as that by stylistic correspondences:

> '... my parents drowned at *this* spot? The canoe began to move off. '... How can I say my parents died at *this* spot when it isn't the same water *here* today as was *here* last year or even yesterday. Or a moment ago when I spoke. Anyway, my grandfather is no philosopher. He buoyed the cannon *there* to mark the spot, and so, my parents died at *that* spot'.(8)

The movement from "this" to "that" and from "here" to "there" serves to situate this incident of which the cannon is a symbol in time and space.

Through the deictic elements, we can infer that movements in space and time do not necessarily change truths of human experience. The referent "here" to which the anaphoric demonstrative "this" relates, appears permanent. It is "*here* today... *here* last year or even yesterday." Thus, movements in time do not necessarily affect the truth that it represents. When Egbo moves in space from "here", however, the artist changes to the spatial deictic "there" and the anaphoric

demonstrative "that". These shifts alone underscore the movement in space but the fact that they refer back in time and space to the original referent that the cannon represents is evidence of an attempt at textual connectivity. Spatial and temporal deictics are therefore relational features that grant proximity to events or objects that are actually quite distant in space and time. It is in this light that we talk of them as providing continuity in an environment of discontinuities.

After having been introduced to this experience of Egbo's infancy, we get to see what this igniting experience portend of in his life. Almost as a toddler, we are witnesses to the fact that his past and the tradition of his people that it embodies, have conspired to thrust upon him an enduring sense of heavy responsibility to which he feels unequal. The responsibility is firmly engendered in his psyche when;

> He saw dwarfs sitting at the foot of a warlord... [and] into this scene he was thrust by his aunt, impervious ever to her father's dignity and shouting almost in his ear, 'I've brought your son'.(10)

It is evident that in its deceptive simplicity, this event of Egbo's past is ceaselessly laying a stake on

all his subsequent dealings and ever defines the structure of the novel. The artist therefore uses deictic features as memory entities. As context facts, the elements serve to activate the preceding contexts. In spite of the fact that he has a foreign job, the union is still demanding that he accepts to succeed his blind and ageing father as chief. Insidiously, the past is still very much a part of him and this alone explains the temporal and spatial oscillations that dot the text. All his activities relates in one way or another, to this context and so it is constantly activated using deictic features.

Through the indefinite "a", it is implied that the 'warlord' and Egbo are hitherto unknown to each other, but;

> Egbo could remember the sudden transformation of the ancient strong man, his laughter of menace changed to true delight and a sudden incomprehensible strength which lifted him clean above the dwarfs onto his knees... *That* was their last meeting. And *now* something, something, a vision of the warlord retiring from audience...(10-11)

So, on getting introduced to his would-be successor, it is not surprising that the ageing chief is woken up from his seeming senility. The situation looks so desperate that when the daughter

announces the long awaited Egbo to him, he becomes agile and agitated. This agitation is one aspect of the entire encounter that continues to haunt Egbo even with a long lapse in time.

In the excerpt, the deictic element "that" operates both as an anaphoric demonstrative and as a temporal deictic. As a temporal deictic, it locates the encounter to which it is shifting our attention on a temporal plane. We know, as a result, that the experience to which it refers is located in the past and that it has simply been defamiliarized by "that". This defamiliarization arouses interest and draws our attention to the events in the past. As an anaphoric demonstrative, "that" becomes a 'loud silence' - alluding to the communal responsibility that had been thrust upon Egbo. We are implicitly reminded by this deictic feature that the chief's celebration of this 'homecoming' was tantamount to him heaving a sigh of relief and transferring the crippling burden to Egbo. That this burden is crippling is evident in the fact that a mere announcement of a would-be heir is enough relief. As a result, he feels rejuvenated and even manages to lift himself up. Thus, the burden is temporarily lifted off his weary shoulders.

By shifting the attention of the reader to this event, the deictic feature therefore conjures up our memories of the fact that the heavy responsibility of steering the community had been thrust upon Egbo. The event that "that" refers to therefore holds Egbo hostage, especially with the looming prospect of the 'warlord retiring from audience'. We are therefore being told that Egbo had better
make up his mind because the community is looking up to him to hearken rather than continue flirting with 'the age'. All in all, it is interesting to note how this deictic feature is used to graft these latter elements of the Egbo motif to the initial bit of the narrative lexie. This relational act therefore provide continuity to aspects of the narrative lexie that are not proximate in space to Egbo's initial encounter wit the grandfather.

Even more interesting to note from the quotation above is the stylistic correspondence that the author accomplishes by using "now" to run counter to "that". Superficially, one need not wonder why the temporal deictic "now" is put in juxtaposition to "that". At the submerged level of the text, the positioning of these temporals emerge as quite strategic. The superimposed insinuation is that even "now", the demand that "that" represents still lingers in Egbo's life, "That was... and

now" is a juggling act whose import is that not even the longevity of temporal lapse can exonerate Egbo of the responsibility to tradition that is due to him.

By relating "that" incident in the past to the momentous demands of "now", it is impressed upon us that Egbo's moment of reckoning had come. 'The warlord was retiring' and he had to make a choice - -and make it fast. He has to make it "now" because "that" demands this of him. "That" and "now" therefore defamiliarize the experience and in so doing, heightens its representation. The defamiliarization accords a peculiar sense of specificity to the represented reality and the audience is thus made to attend to it more earnestly.

The act of relating distant events as deictic features therefore serves to cohere the text. The deictic elements constantly demand that the reader engage in relational acts involving contemporaneous and preceding experiences. The prevailing circumstances are thus looked at in relation to the past. The choice that Egbo has to make "now", for instance, depends a great deal on his reconstruction of "that" -- the incident in his past. An appreciation of the stylistic correspondences that the deictic elements achieve is necessary if the submerged content is to be deciphered. The deictic elements conjure up memories and, in so doing, they provide continuity to disparate aspects of the narrative lexies. Relating these is imperative if narrative comprehension is desired. The deictic elements should therefore be seen as 'loud silences' operating as context activators and seeking to capture the preceding entities. Egbo is presented as still oscillating between "that" past and "now".

But, when we meet Egbo at Dejiade's apartment in Ibadan "where Simi still held court"(53), we automatically conclude that he has finally embraced the present (modern) and moved in space to an urban setting. We are baffled however by the first question that Dejiade asks him. In "what's all *this*?... Don't tell me you are carrying forward the *family banner*"(53), "this" affirms to us the fact that Egbo has decided to cling onto his past - the vestiges of which Dejiade readily notices. The anaphoric demonstrative "that" situates the two in a shared communal past. But, whereas Dejiade sounds utterly scornful of this past, Egbo embraces it and seeks to fuse it with the tendencies of 'the age'. His reply to Dejiade is quite succinct. He tells him, "I wish you would do the same"(53). The artist, by using the deictic feature to capture Dejiade's derision, seems to be boldly stating that embracing change should not be misconstrued to mean discarding the

cultural banner. "This" therefore tacitly refers us back in time and space to the incident whereby Egbo was implored to carry the banner.

"The" in "the family banner" leaves no doubt about the anaphoric referent. Dejiade subtly affirms to us through the definite article that he shares a pragmatic plane with Egbo and the fact that Egbo readily understands him is evidence of this. It attests to the fact that the decision that Egbo is on the brink of making is a matter of communal knowledge. Himself an urban dweller and an outcast at that, we are not surprised that Dejiade explicitly demands the same of Egbo. But, by moving to town, Egbo appears to have made a choice.

Lest Egbo's decision to embrace the modern be mistaken, the narrator observes:

> Egbo found his will was towards consummation, even self-destruction in the process, remembering that after all, he was still a virgin, and why not Simi? Why not Simi to initiate him once and thoroughly into his past in the life mysteries. And he said to himself it was not *that*. It had gone much further, for the truth blighted than his hope of withdrawal and he started up like a madman, nerved by the outstanding simplicity. So, *this* was why he pursued her - he had to take her away from *this,* from all *this*.(56-57)

So, Egbo is dispelling our fear that by embracing aspects of the modern trends, he had immersed himself in the immoralities of 'the age' that is alluded to by the anaphoric demonstrative "that". Instead, he says he had come, armed with the 'family banner', we suppose, to save her 'from *this*, from all *this*". We can deduce then that his is a fusion of the past and modernity and is motivated by the desire to inculcate moral values in the latter.

To understand what these deictic temporals, anaphoras and spatials refer to, we must always relate them to the original point of departure. The past and the cultural environment from which Egbo has come is rich. His movement in space to Ibadan, for instance, should not be taken as deriving from craze for "this". The contemporaneous reality surprises Egbo as superficially appealing but intrinsically loathsome. He has taken due notice of Simi's 'outstanding simplicity' and instead of stealing this simplicity and seeking a momentary reward, he is driven by the moral ideals that are embedded in his culture. Rather than allow her to degenerate into a whore, he wants to "make her his wife"(57). This then is evidence that Egbo did not wholly forsake the cultural responsibility the sense of which had been bestowed upon him. We can infer from the

foregoing that the artist is advocating for the type of change that would embrace tradition and recognize the wisdom of its cultural precepts.

No wonder then that when Egbo breaks ranks with tradition, he is endlessly pursued by feelings of guilt. The fact that he had abandoned the path that his grandfather, Egbo Onosa, and the people had defined for him gives him nightmares. He admits as much when he confides in Bandele thus:

> Home?... I thought I had buried it, but it isn't true. I am haunted often by the feel of *that* old man's fingers on my face and his blind eyes.(192)

"That" in this particular context refers us back in time and space - the time and space that have defied burial attempts -- to the encounter that Egbo had with his grandfather, Egbo Onosa. This is actually the event that informs the entire motif. "That" therefore activates it in our memory and in so doing, we realise the needlessness of running away from what fate had decreed.

At this point in the narrative process, we are simply being reminded of how Egbo had received and turned down an offer to become his people's long-awaited "enlightened ruler"(12) in succession to his grandfather. "That old man", the revered custodian of tradition, had sought to bequeath upon him the honour of holding the community's mantle of kingship. This is the honour he had turned down preferring instead to be a civil servant. And, this is the decision whose repercussions persist with time thus eliciting his confession. By means of deictics operating as context factors, we run away from tradition and home with him but realise that we are in circular motion to the same space as it pursues us.

The encounter of which "that" talks actually occupy Egbo's mind and it refuses to die like he is admitting to Bandele's charges;

> 'Why do you continue to brood?' Always Bandele knew exactly when he flogged his mind over the decision at Osa. 'You brought yourself to the point of a choice, that had to happen, you know'.(120)

and to this, Egbo quips:

> 'Even that choice is a measure of tyranny. A man's gift of life should be separate, an unrelated thing. All choice must come from within him, not from promptings of his past'.
> ...

To be manouvred towards a choice -- never mind by what forces or circumstances, never mind how tenuous the forces...'(120-121)

Thus, Egbo was presented with a choice and he failed miserably only to turn and blame others who had not snatched his human will to make the right choice. The artist seems to be acknowledging that we are often compelled to make choices but dispels the notion that some are fated to make wrong choices.

Suffice it to have a glance at the duality of Egbo's temporal planes and the intensity with which the dilemma of choices presented by these different realities plague his psyche. The narrator attests:

So *now*, for the first time his childhood ascent into the god's domain, Egbo knew and acknowledged fear, stood stark before his new intrusion... and he was remembering the wrung cries of his love-making *now*... In darkness let me lie...so *now* he laughed.(127)

Here, "now" denotes a temporal lapse, and ignites memories of Egbo's moment of truth. In a mixture of reflections and recollections, we realise that "now" Egbo was having second thoughts about his past actions.

It is necessary at this juncture to cast a glance at that actual moment of Egbo's 'special vulnerability' when, we are told, "there remained the question of *a choice* still and he had made none, none at least that he was directly conscious of"(14). Probably too naïve to weigh the gravity of "a choice" at this point but we are aware that later, he finally made one that he lived to regret. This is captured thus:

I have thought about *it* often and if *it* happened again, I am not sure I wouldn't say. My rejection of power was *thoughtless*. (182)

Here, Soyinka seems to be arguing that the human individual is imbued with innate powers to think and we are always presented with situations that demand serious thought. Apparently in answer to Egbo's earlier view that the whole idea of "choice" is tyrannous, Egbo's own revised view here is that one should never bother as long as he does not make 'thoughtless' choices like he did.

As a matter of conjecture, Soyinka therefore seems to be suggesting through Egbo that African ways are whole in themselves and playing second fiddle with them may turn out to be regretable.

Justifiable as Egbo's choice initially appears to him, it later haunts him. Thus, the foreign office job for which he opts is directly put on a pedestal with the Kingship (a role he had refused to discharge) and he personally acknowledges that the former is found unequal in terms of the challenges it would offer.

Egbo ultimately confides in us through stylistic correspondences that he had become a prisoner of the space and time (his home and its traditional ways) that he despised and ran away from. This, then is Soyinka's manner of portraying a people struggling to belong in a world where traditional and modern forces are fighting for supremacy. Egbo typifies this search for survival. He forsakes the essential that tradition offers him for the superfluous of "the age" only to realise it much later that the lures of the latter do not provide that ample solace as he had anticipated. We can, for that matter, surmise that the individual who defies what the collective society has prescribed for him can
only live to regret the moment of his "thoughtless" choice. We also realise that society avails no second chance to whoever misuses his will and makes a thoughtless choice. This is the salient message that the artist presents through flashbacks, juxtapositions and intervening introspections. The indecision inherent in the individual reflects on the form -- the see-saw movement of the narrative motif. Textual deictics are however used to relate these narrative units. Eventually, Egbo emerges not just as a witness to but worse still as a victim of this indecision.
Another incident that runs through the work and is captured through multiple flashbacks, juxtapositions and everlapping of different time levels is the death of Sir Derin. After hours of drinking, Sagoe is driven by Dehinwa (his girlfriend) to the beach where he starts pondering on this death. What follows this is actually a discontinous narration but Soyinka uses deictic features to provide a narrative continuity to this. This death ignites in Sagoe memories of the interview he had attended at the *Independent Viewpoint*. Through this flashback, we get an inkling into some deep-seated hatred for Derinola hitherto his death. It is not until we reach the actual interview episode, however, that we can solve the puzzle as to the cause of this hatred.

What we have of the sour relationship, at first, are mere dossiers. Egbo confesses to Dehinwa, saying, "'You won't believe it, but it's our dead Chairman, Sir Derinola. I never thought I could shed a tear for him'". Thereafter, Sagoe offers us hints:

'...The lawyer nicknamed him *the morgue*. He was all right until he let the politicians buy him over. Its funny but I despised him when he was alive!'(20)

This presents us with two time planes. An erstwhile principled judge, Sir Derinola's moral degeneration earns him the ire of society. This transformation is captured through stylistic correspondences. "The" as an anaphoric demonstrative, implies that he was, at one time, one of his own kind -- virtuous in a society where vice prevails. His normalcy therefore 'rightly' constitutes an abnormalcy and, unfortunately, he later caves in.

At one time, we meet Sagoe left alone in Dehinwa's apartment and in a trance. This transformation enables him to transcend the realm of reality and within this semiconscious state, he can be able to hold a dialogue with the dead Sir Derinola. Their conversation goes thus:

'No', said Sagoe, loudly, 'they couldn't take that away from you, Sir Derin. They'll bury you with the Knighthood. But the top-hat *now*, let's see, the top-hat *now*, what do we do about the top-hat?...(64 emphasis mine)

The repetition of the temporal deictic "now" connotes a shared pragmatic plane in the past the relationship with which "now" is being made. The insinuation is that the Knighthood was actually awarded on merit. However, the fact that he deserved it is all in the past. By veering into corruption, all that he is left with is the title but "now", he has been stripped of the honour that went with it. "Now" therefore compares the two Derinola's - a principled judge and a compromised ex-judge (stripped of all honour). Thus Sir Derin has died a shell - a pale shadow of his former dignified self.

To capture this major character transformation, Soyinka uses deictic elements:

'Yes. Oh, never mind the past. In fact, by all means, mind the past'.

You *were* my friend. *You tell me the truth at least*, and that has lately begun to matter, you see. There was not much time for truth in *those* days, was there?'

'*Now* I have nothing left except the truth. That is all I get *now* ...(68, emphasis added)

Here, the artist uses three temporal planes to communicate his message. "You tell me the truth" is put in the *perpetual present* (Todorov 132). This is a situation where, Todorov explains, discourse is never behind and never ahead of what it evokes. By evoking truth in the perpetual present, Soyinka presents it as a timeless and all-pervading principle.

It is therefore interesting to note that after affirming the timelessness of truth, Soyinka uses the deictic elements "those" and "now" to juxtapose two temporal planes. The past of which "those" talk had got little respect for truth, we learn. Owing to the timelessness of truth, it nonetheless existed then as "now". Sir Derin only learns much later that the truth has to be reckoned with at some point. "Now" is his time to be at the altar of the truth that he sacrificed "in those days". By using the deictic element "those" as a context factor, the artist therefore demands that the reader indulges in a relational act and constitutes the past that had little respect of truth. Our attention is drawn, for instance, to the incident whereby Sagoe was literally bundled out of an interview only to be followed later for a bribe in order that he could secure a job. The salient issues being talked about in this excerpt are therefore presented through subtle stylistic correspondences and if we fail to take note of the temporal shifts and the capacity of truth to traverse this shift then the gist of this discourse is lost.

We should also consider how the artist uses ellision as a deictic feature to render the gravity of this murk. He says;

> 'Stalin, like other dictators, did purchase longevity with human lives. So did Hitler. But it is in the nature of dictators to be rather predatory on human beings'
>
> 'I agree, sir. But still you believe that a dictatorship is often the most sensible government for a nation?'
>
> 'It depends on the nation, as I said before'.
>
> 'If I may use yours as an example, don't you agree sir, that…'
>
> 'Ah, will you excuse me a moment, Mr. Sagoe'

In this interview, nothing is left in doubt about this system. Sagoe drives the ambassador into admitting that theirs is a tyrannical regime and that they would do any weird thing to muzzle dissent.

By using the ellipsis, the artist makes a very emphatic statement about the system. He is simply not putting his fingers on it but it is not left in doubt that they would do anything to secure longevity for their regimes. They would stop at nothing to perpetuate their status-quo. The artist is indirectly advocating for a 'live and let others live' philosophy that seems to be lacking. While seeming to have brought the flow of this particular motif to an abrupt end, the narrative ellipsis,

in a way, continues dwelling on discourse. In their perceived silences, narrative ellision can serve to further the discourse. The generalities of this narrative motif that deals with glowing injustices actually achieves its particularity by way of the ellipsis. We get an implicit admission and we are not left guessing the desperate heights to which struggle for power can take individuals. We learn that it can strip them of the very basic tenet of humanity - humanism. The kind of brevity that ellision achieves is therefore a methodological virtue. It affirms, the very statement that it appears to be keeping quiet about by so leaving open our meaning options.

After juxtaposing the past of which Sir Derin is now ashamed and the unbearable truth that is a feature of the present, Sagoe embarks on pondering about this reality.

> And *now* Sir Derin was dead. Sagoe felt for strength in his legs, wondering why he felt compelled to go and see him buried. A big feature would be expected from him but *it* was not *that*. His photographer would be present... But there *it* was, he felt a need to go in person. (104 emphasis added)

So, there's a bigger dimension to the fact that "now" Sir Derin is dead. Sagoe makes it clear that he feels compelled to go and see Sir Derin buried. Thus, there is a higher motivation to his act. At this point then, "now" as a context factor, reinvents for us the past and we look at Sir Derin in the light of his despicable acts. Sagoe is therefore compelled to go and see this vice that Sir Derin personified, get buried.

Used as a personal deictic, "it" makes it clear that the referent is bigger than just a big feature. Whatever Sagoe is going to do at the funeral is therefore not explicitly stated but it is made clear that their shared past has some relation to it. The deictic feature therefore makes it incumbent upon the reader to reconstitute this past and, in so doing, uses this past to explain the scene. "It" therefore assumes all the intervening episodes and refers the reader to the interactions that the two had. From these, it is implied, the reader would come into terms with "it". Put within that context, Sagoe's determination to attend the burial could mean the desire to bury the past itself. Largely, Soyinka uses this deictic feature as a textual silence. He defamiliarises Sir Derin's loathsome past and in so doing even demands greater attention to it.

The anaphoric demonstrative "that" is actually used in relation to "it" with a view to dispel the notion that his drive to attend is cheap and selfish. Rather, it is just too serious a matter to be

sensationalised even though "a big feature would be expected from him". The reason is big enough for him to go in person. We can therefore deduce from his kind of resolve that he would be there to witness the society ridding itself of what Sir Derin personified.

It is also not lost on us that whereas Sir Derin emerged as that disgusting to Sagoe, even less despicable is Barabbas the thief who, together with Lazarus, turns into religious frauds. As Lazarus preaches, Sagoe cannot fail to notice that, "there is little left of *that* Barabbas. As if a wet astringent sponge has wiped flat a face of eczema"(172). "That" predisposes us to the 'thief' but we are left wondering at his transformation, nay, newly acquired contrived behaviour. "That" therefore, juxtaposes the past and the present and calls upon us to see Barabbas in relation to "that" Barabbas. In fact, the kind of continuity that this feature constructs even supposes that Lazarus could actually be "that" Barabbas in disguise.

And, as if in full agreement with our hypothesis, Lazarus *himself* advices that, "the apostles... are the servants of the flock. Their appointed tasks are deeds of great humility, for they follow in the path of *He* who chose them"(172). Here, the "He" that this deictic feature refers to could be lost on many. We know, however, that the referent is Lazarus himself. So, the erstwhile thief, now claims divine powers. "That" and "He" are therefore relational features that, as a matter of necessity, imposes continuity on a discontinuous text. "That" Barabbas and Lazarus are not temporally proximate becomes even more evident when Sagoe observes:

> There are moments when I don't believe *this* is *that* young thief, you kow. It is hardly the same thief, but perhaps he was too scared at the time.(176)

So, "this" and "that" are linguistic features that offer referential continuity to disparate units of the narrative lexie.

On his way to witness the burial, Sagoe bumps into a cabinet shop situated side by side with the cemetery and to his astonishment;

> Side by side with wardrobes, desks and cabinets were coffins, some flat on wooden tiers and two upended to reveal ornate brass workings on the lid. He looked across to the cemetery
>
> where there were glass wreaths, many cracked or broken, sealed into concrete slabs, and he looked back at the glass handles of the wardrobes with the dead flower beneath them,

and recognised *now* from where the carpenter's inspiration had been obtained; with *it* came a sense of exorcism.(110 emphasis added)

Within this context, Sagoe's ponderings mature into self actualisation. His pre-occupation with Sir Derin's death and with the glaring irony in the handles of Dehinwa's wardrobe, are resolved.

That the wardrobe -- an intricate symbol of glamour -- and coffins are put side by side proves quite a puzzle to Sagoe. Superficially, it may not mean anything other than the physical reality it denotes but the artist draws our attention to the fact that an elemental discovery is attained within the context. Sagoe recognizes "now" from where the carpenter's inspiration had been obtained. To discern the submerged referent to which "now" relates, we must perceive it as a temporal deictic that denotes the culmination of a process. By "recognised now", it is implied that the realisation marks the end of a long drawn exercise. We are therefore invited to cast our relational acts so wide as to encompass the entire span of Sagoe's past. Through it, allusions are made to the glass handles beneath which there was a dead flower. This constitutes one big puzzle to Sagoe.

To understand Sagoe's realisation, it is imperative that such puzzles of Sagoe's past are solved. At the cemetry " there were glass wreaths" and Egbo recalled that beneath the glass handles of Dehinwa's wardrobe, there were dead flwers. To Sagoe, it had persistently presented itself to him as inconceivable that a dead flower and glass can form a homogenous unity. This puzzle becomes meaningful only when the metaphorical meaning is deciphered. The implication of the collocation is that beneath the glamour of human life lies death; that within the physical setting of this novel, most people 'live a death'.

The foregoing truth of human experience actually represents the puzzle whose sudden realisation exorcises Sagoe of his pent-up mysteries. That there is a dead flower on the back of the glass handles become clear to him. The realisation that amidst all the glamour of life there's death as an eventuality and as intricately intertwined with life is big relief to him. This is the truth that he recognised "now" and which relieves him of all that had bogged his mind. The temporal deictic "now" therefore alludes to the past and in so doing forces the reader to fuse it with the temporal plane of "now".

After unravelling the inevitability of death and its proximity to life and determined still to fiind his place in all these, Sagoe sought to gain greater insight into the human perception of the state of death. On his way to the cemetery, he met two contrasting funeral processions, and;

> did nothing, preferring [instead] to watch what would happen if the two should meet at the bridge. And they did. And with the automatic respect of the poor for opulence, Sagoe's cortege stopped, while the other, a mile of car and human mourners, filed slowly past. Forty cars at least followed the hand-pulled hearse, and all the cars were piled.
>
> ...
>
> At the cemetery, separated by a hundred graves or more, the two bodies accepted *now* a common destination, passed through to the final expunction.(112 emphasis added)

As said earlier, the audience is presented here with two contrasting funeral processions - Sir Derin's and another. Suffice it to note that at the point of his death, Sir Derin's standing in society had reached its lowest ebb. Comparably, the other funeral procession was filled with greater fanfare.

The artist takes leave from this trite narration and uses one deictic feature to communicate his message. The temporal deictic element "now" points to an ultimate moment of human destiny. As used here, it captures the gist of Sagoe's 'recognition'. The gist of the statement it is making here is that the past of which Sagoe was pondering is steeped in deception. Upon Sir Derin's death, he comes to the realisation that when death beckons, one's fortune is of no help. We are told that "the two bodies accepted 'now' a common destination" and this apparently is the same destination as had been accepted by the other hundred others or more whom they found already buried at the cemetery. In death, there's equality in status. "Now", therefore underscores the fact that however one wallows in glamour, death constitutes the common destiny for mankind. In death, you cannot keep anyone down. This is the truth that the artist intends for the likes of Sir Derin who would stop at nothing to acquire wealth - fraudulently or otherwise. The message that Sagoe's ponderings ultimately avail to him is therefore that in death wealth ceases to count. Human virtue is hailed instead lest the unbearable truth dawn on one when it is too late. Through the allusions and textual silences that the deictic features engage us in, the artist achieves unity of discourse. This is the kind of unity whose attainment the text desires to achieve.

Apart from these semantic codes, the artist also uses ellision (textual interruptions) as semantic designators. At the end of chapter two, we are told;

> And Dehinwa, steeling herself for the final act that must pronounce the break, was slowly being worn down from the midnight visitations of aunts and mothers bearing love, and transparent intentions, and manufactured anxieties, and, quite simply, blood cruelty...(39)

Here, the ellipsis implies that the "final act" - the show down - actually came to pass. The artist seemingly does not feel obliged to report the specific details of this "act" but with the cue that Dehinwa was "steeling herself", an ellipsis is deemed enough to send us speculating on how she vent out her outrage. At this point, we know the tribalistic taunts to which she had been subjected and the aspersions that had been cast on her morality. The suspense that this ellision achieves serves to universalise the motif. All that we have of her action are varied imaginings. The artist seems to be bent on winning our sympathy for Dehinwa. This was a rather unfortunate tide but one whose time had finally come anyway. Unfortunate as it was, she executed it and we can only accord her modesty by keeping quiet about it. She had to assert her individuality and she supposedly did it.

It is instructive to note therefore that Soyinka introduces his motifs and then assumes some shared pragmatic plane. What follows are circumstantial relations to the motifs all operating in parallel and intervening manners. Upon introducing one narrative motif, there are concerted efforts aimed at unifying the seemingly discontinous elements. The text becomes unitary only when we appreciate the duality of time and space and the role that deictic features play in superimposing unity on the events that are disparate in time and space. As locative markers of space and time, deictic elements shift the attention of the reader to an event either in the past, in the present of the narrator (or character) or existing in the perpetual present. Narrative ellision, while drawing its parallels with the events of the past project into the future and allow the reader to fill in gaps with materials derived from the shared context.

CONCLUSION

More often than not, the historical materials on the basis of which literary artists seek to understand the past, impress themselves upon the mind as unrelated impressions and uncontiguous events. In this study, we have argued that in The Interpreters, Soyinka depicts characters who have embarked on individual quests to acquire new estimates of their own worth in an environment that denies it. He expresses the characters' revulsion against European culture and the urge to determine their position in relation to traditional life. As it emerges, this entails, largely, psychological introspections and speculations: As it emerges, the experiences that these bids yield are therefore not proximate in space and time. We have consequently observed that the reality that the characters' experiences offer to them are mere disjointed bits: a complex jumble.

Communication being the essence of literary creativity, we have shown that it is Soyinka's desire to communicate. It has been made evident, for instance, that he strives to accord narrative coherence to the disparate impressions with a view to creating connective relations and thus, to effect better communication. As a text, The Interpreters is thus imbued not only with lots of moral content but also with a great deal of aesthetics.

To reduce the multitude of impressions to unity of narration, we have shown that Soyinka uses deictic features. We have identified personal deictics, temporal and spatial deictics, anaphoric articles and demonstratives, as well as the perpetual present and ellipses as some of the text's relational features. We have demonstrated that in their deceptive simplicity, these linguistic elements and discoursal strategies possess a rare capacity to fuse apparently discordant elements with the resultant effect of enhancing communication. They are used to merge narrative content and, in so doing, accord The Interpreters with a great deal of aesthetic flavour. As an exercise at polemic intertextuality, we look at the discourse's context, core text and co-texts with a view to merge their disparately located morals.

The complexity of this novel, we contend, is in itself a statement on the complex situation in which the five intellectual friends are. Thus, inherent within the text's structure is the artist's main statement about the reality that prevails. With the help of deictic features, however, it is evident that he highlights problems like corruption, ineptitude, tribalism and religious hypocrisy,

among others. The deictic elements therefore make it possible to discern the salient issues in the text. The myriad of problems bedevelling this lot are presented as constituent factors within the complex social set up of which the text is a structural motif. Deictic elements therefore serve the elementary role of affirming the motifs and fusing their disparately located units. By defamiliarising their messages, they create suspense, allusions and widen the readers' imaginations about the complex situation. As connective relations, they assume a certain pragmatic context which they defamiliarise by using either these linguistic elements or ellipses. Whereas certain deictic features simply defamiliarise the reality of which they relate -- and by so doing draw attention to it -- ellipses keep quiet about it in a manner that renders it even louder.

Apart from operating as meaning relations, we learn that deictic features are also instrumental in (re)constituting the text into a narrative plot. We deduce from the text that the kinds of experiences of which this novel relates lack proximate continuity. It is apparent in the text, however, that the artist resorts to continuity by reference as availed to him by deixis. It is therefore right to conclude, as we have done, that apart from operating as reservoirs of meaning, deictic elements also play a pivotal role in the structuring of the text's plot.

That our world and our place in it are increasingly becoming hard to understand cannot be gainsaid. The sense of that difficulty cannot be expressed anywhere else as in literature which, by its very nature, is an expression of human experiences. The perceived difficulty of the text is a structural testimony of the reality of which it is a reflection. The experiences of which it relates are a jumble: an incoherent drab. They lack proximity in space and time, but Soyinka accords them narrative continuity by way of reference. Constructing the narrative sequence of this text therefore demands considerable concentration and failure, nay refusal, to do this does not warrant suggesting that the experience it tries to capture dissolves into coherence. Instead, such a view would certainly totter at its base when a close scrutiny of the role that deictic features play in the text reveal a thoroughly coherent work.

Suffice it to state here then that Soyinka's shifts in narrative focus are not a methodological flaw but a stylistic strategy in its own right. He constitutes his message into small semantic options and uses deictic features either as context factors or locative markers to relate these semantic options. Through its form and content the text therefore constitutes moral statements on a

topsyturvy situation. It coherently tackles issues of human concern. It possesses a coherence, a different kind of coherence but a coherence all the same. What is significant in the text is not that these linguistic and structural elements are introduced. Rather, it is that they offer some criteria of meaning options and order to the text.

Difficult or not, literature is a humane art. The truth of which it relates derive from human experiences. Its essence is to make the world (the condition of man in it) more bearable. We have shown that as a text, The Interpreters is imbued with vital moral testimonies, albeit submerged within its form. In his art, literature emerges as an organic growth rather than a mechanical construction...a series of separate acts acquire an interfusion. Soyinka has a dynamic self-knowledge and thus through a dialectical interchange between the two poles of his own self (the rustic individual and the universal self in him) he evolves solid characters and achieves highly organized unities. The Interpreters is coherent, and reverberates with meaning. That technique is the perfect embodiment of the subject and gives the subject its largeness of effect and meaning, cannot be gainsaid. This text is bewildering in its course and mission. It is hoped that this research will stir further structuralist interests on it.

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