

# NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN WOLE SOYINKA'S THE INTERPRETERS

BY

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**Narrative Techniques in Wole Soyinka's**  
**The Interpreters**

# DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another university.



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Kitata Makau

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors

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Prof. Ciarunji Chesaina

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and late father whose spirit could not be appeased without its completion. They are inspiring guardians in all my academic struggles.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a critical analysis of the techniques of narrative crafting used by Wole Soyinka in his novel; The Interpreters. Its main thrust is therefore the isolation and discussion of the elements of the artistic framework upon which the narrative is based.

The endeavor starts by accounting for the independence of the artistic aim of the author in writing the text despite the fact that the novel serves other extra-artistic purposes.

Through analyses of plot, characterization and narrator positions, the study narrows down to a discussion of the artistic positions of the author within these three basic narrative variables. An examination of the various artistic strategies employed to create a multiplicity of fictional figures and their attendant scenes and backgrounds is what these divisions of the study target.

The study therefore is giving express priority to the artfulness of The Interpreters whose content is seen as presenting an artistic function as its basic end. It is this primacy of the artistic theme that this study dwells upon.

In conclusion the study intends to ascertain that, despite the fact that the novel can be used for philosophical, religious or psychological arguments, it nonetheless has its own artistic meaning which is a statement of the author's skill and from which the novel draws its autonomy as a unique art form.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### **Soyinka the man and his background.**

Every phase of Soyinka's living career seems to have been a literary experience. Born in 1934 at Abeokuta in Nigeria, his life is more significant when viewed against the literary output that has gone hand in glove with the former.

A vigorous experimentalist with various literary genres, Soyinka has produced plays, poems, novels and essays that have made him the protean figure in African letters. His inspiration is multi-faceted and polyphonic. Deeply rooted in his Yoruba culture, his writings prowl wider into Greek cosmology and Christianity. These phases echo a writer whose perception and literary conceptions are universal.

Soyinka's life is not merely literary, he has a passionate concern for his society. The essential thrust of his convictions on society rests upon his belief on the duality of the human personality, whose creative and destructive potentials operate simultaneously. In his abstraction of forest father, the Yoruba deity, as creator and Demoke, as the artist in A Dance of the Forests, he investigates the potentialities of human free will. Man can easily be the victim of his own ingenuity.

The phenomenon seems to be a Soyinka pet obsession tacitly captured in his god Ogun who appears in virtually all Soyinka's published works. Ogun, who is the essence of both creative and destructive impulses is a pertinent enigmatic symbol in Soyinka's creative works and criticisms.



Yoruba deities are utilised by Soyinka to give his works a traditional background, which can be understood as a conscious invocation of a trascendental linkage between humans and the spiritual world. In *Ogun*, Soyinka distils the universality of Promethean, Dionysian and Apollonian values into a single image of an African god.

Gods, spirits and ancestors are a main literary prop for Soyinka, and overall designs of festivals and spiritual images are tacitly captured in his crafting of the artist. The carver for example occupies a central role in Yoruba life and worship and by extension, the artist is always central in Soyinka's works as Demoke in *A Dance of the forest* and Sekoni in *The Interpreters*. Kola who paints a pantheon of Yoruba gods in *The Interpreters* is a character whom Soyinka puts in the center for purposes of prioritising this spiritual quest.

Although Soyinka is firmly grounded in his Yoruba tradition, he has received other very impression forming influences from other cultures. Eldred Jones remarks that 'Soyinka had a large dose of Sunday school' (9). The Christ-like Eman in *The Strong Breed* is a direct parallel of the crucifixion motif from the Bible. In *The Interpreters*, characters are named and developed in the biblical strain. Lazarus, Noah and Barabbas are cases in point. Soyinka uses similes that derive from the bible. Joe Golder, dissatisfied with his color complexion felt like 'Essau cheated of his birthright' (180).

Soyinka's engagement with the stage is testimony to a writer who is committed to the realisation of the text in context. In 1960, he formed 'The 1960 masks', the company which staged *A Dance of the Forests* in Nigeria's independence. 'Orisula' theatre was

his next theatre group. His interest in theatre is a response to his demand to provide gesture to language and re-enact the profundity of ritual through imitation.

Soyinka is deeply concerned with human life, albeit in its celebration. In this concern he constantly attacks the forces that stifle it like war and oppressive political stances. The Nigerian civil war and its gloomy prospects are foreshadowed in A Dance of the Forests. The collective voice of individuals dedicated to freedom is celebrated in the song of Ibo prisoners in The Man Died (4) while the corporate vision of the community's power of catalysing reform is emphasised in Season of Anomy. The constant challenges that life presents and the brave choices that one is to take through all contradictory and easy alternatives are offered in his autobiography, Ake. In this text, one can trace the various influences that have nurtured the writer's imagination from which poems, plays and novels sprouted.

In The Interpreters, his first novel, a curious amalgam of Soyinka's previous artistic concerns is rendered. In his narrative, he manages to bring to bear elements emerging from his poetry, drama and philosophy of life from his former works. One encounters The Road plus Death at Dawn in the death of Sekoni, The Tribulations of Brother Jero in Lazarus. The deaths and artistic obsessions found in 'Telephone Conversation' and 'Death at Dawn' are recreated.

It is with this consciousness of Soyinka's artistic confluence in The Interpreters that this study has assumed a metaphorical centrality of the text. An analysis of the narrative inevitably touches on the writer's essential temperament, attitude, previous opinions and artistic vision. The Interpreters is thus a conglomerate image of the

artist's engagement with form and theme and hence its singling for an express stylistic analysis in this study.

## Statement of the Problem

Literature must always be interesting: it must have a structure and an aesthetic purpose, a total coherence and effect (Wellek and Warren, 212).

Technique is what T.S. Eliot means by 'convention.' (211) Every text of fiction chooses and ultimately reflects its convention; selection, structure, or distortion; any form imposed on the world of action - any deviation from the 'common core' (31) of language usage.

Even though traditionally, the novel, because of its form and content, easily opens itself, to questions of politics, philosophy, sociology or religion, it nonetheless remains an image. The critical problem is first and foremost to analyse the structure of this image of life. Technique, if it has to be given a form of its own, assumes the texture of metaphor. It is from this metaphorical conception that the mind is assumed to determine the structural theme and the different elements constituting the metaphor; its symbolic properties.

Like an organism, the novel has 'dispositions' that make it endure and maintain its passion to the end without burning out. In a novel like The Interpreters, where certain qualities and 'alterations' in its make-up show this self-conscious living process,

questions of how the literariness of the different elements that contribute to it as art, come to the fore.

Contemplation on the technique of art is a rescue operation into literature that salvages it from the common interpretation of meaning in literary texts "Meaning has been associated with theme and approximation to ideologies that are extra-artistic" (Medvedev, 9). Meaning in a study conceived from this awareness is embracingly confined to the meaning of technique elements for technique purposes.

In the study of literature, several methodological errors of criticism and literary history have repeatedly taken place. To sum up these errors in one statement, this is the 'continued limiting of literature to reflection alone' (Medvedev, 18); a practice that lowers literature to the status of a simple servant and transmitter of other ideologies, a practice that almost entirely ignores the independent meaningful reality of the literary work, id est, its ideological independence and originality; its literariness. The question then is; what are the signposts for the literariness of the Interpreters? This statement issues from the fact that Soyinka's novel has previously been studied as a mouthpiece for social statements like phoniness of the elite and the ivory tower mentality. The fact that it is an artefact of artistic ideology has tended to be lost.

The continued engagement of criticism and literary history has to a very influential degree considered literature as the medium for the reflection of 'real existence' and in the process elevated the ideological purviews through generating ready theses that present themselves as the basic ideological points reflected by the artist's work albeit in a very dogmatic way. These ready theses and statements are the philosophical, ideological, political and psychic. The practice ignores the fact that the reflected

ideologies are realized from a living process of generation, which is itself, the essential content of literature. Gikandi in his analysis of this text concentrates on giving a learned account of how the text reflects the Promethean motif in Greek lore. The underlying process of this reflection generating process is subsumed in justifications of approximation to a theme.

This continued treatment of The Interpreters makes its identity as an independent and unique ideology vanish without trace. The treatment squeezes the literary work for issues like ethics, philosophy, sophistical, or religious declarations and in the end, the essential thing, the artistic structure of the literary work, is apparently ignored as mere technical support for other ideologies. The technical ingredients of this text continually get buried under volumes of clever arguments that do little to acknowledge its careful intricacy.

Incidentally, the more impetuous, intensive and difficult this process of generation of structure, the more substantial and deep the ideological interest and attention of the critic and reader. In a genuine work of art, like the Soyinkan, this is inevitable and good. The main problem with such attention is that the critic tries to justify the validity of his/her externally conceived thesis using The Interpreters instead of trusting the text to independently generate its own thesis.

Sometimes critics impose a thesis on the artist; a thesis, in the sense of the 'last word' and ignore the generation of the idea. This sometimes dogmatizes the extra-artistic ideological composition of the content; the failure to recognize the independence and unquestionably dogmatic and assertive nature of a purely artistic position of the author. This is what the mere concern with the extra artistic ideological purview does.

The artist does assert him/herself in the process of artistic selection and this assertion is no less ideological than political or social assertions are. Therefore as an artist, what does Soyinka score through the crafting of The Interpreters?

Sensible and serious objective literary criticism will not ignore these facts and questions. The territory of technique is thus not external to literature. The means of revealing the literary physiognomy of the work is pertinent and necessary if the constituents of artistic structure are to gain full ideological acuity. There is evident presence of ideology of structure in The Interpreters, which deserves criticism.

When an ideologue like politics or religion, enters the artistic work, it gains a chemical as opposed to a mechanical relationship with the features of artistic ideology. The author's artistic statement inevitably absorbs the other ideological responsibilities. Extra artistic ideologemes for example satire and irony thus ought to be studied from the standpoint of their artistic functions in the novel. The artistic ideology of The Interpreters is primary and more immediate than is reflected and sometimes twice refracted extra-artistic ideologemes.

The reality of a novel, its contact with actuality, and its role in social life cannot be reduced to mere reflection of reality in its content (19).

Thus, the error of making literature a social fetish and a servant of other ideologies are issues that need to be addressed through seeing the work in its artistic specificity. Soyinka's art, in particular The Interpreters, provides ample premises for the amelioration of this error.

It follows then, that a study of narrative techniques in The Interpreters perceives Soyinka as the artist and not the politician, philosopher or high priest of any religious cult.

## Justification

For a study of aesthetic form in the modern novel, Trilling's famous statement is a convenient point of departure. He asserts that he has no wish to 'Join in the concerted effort of contemporary criticism to increase the super ego of the novel' (qtd in Schorer ii).

This assertion is a response to the state of affairs in criticism where the novel is made to compete with its opponents; poetry, the sermon, drama, history, philosophy and ancient classics. Such competition continually questions the novel's social position. However, whatever the intentions of these processes, the novel ought to be allowed to stay within the basic elements from which it draws its power. The apparent imputation reaffirms the conviction that 'the meaning of a novel rests on its structure' (Schorer, xiii).

The Interpreters like many other modern novels (Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom!*) is a work of enormous skill. The critic cannot ascertain the validity of this claim unless he examines the operation of the skill and this is impossible without first recognizing the fact that its existence as a novel within the genre is the foremost technique and meaning, and that, within it, there is technique that is self analytical and self established. This is the notion of form proposed by Percy Lubbock in, *The Craft of Fiction*:

The best form is that which makes the most of its subject - there is no other definition of the meaning of form in fiction. The well-made book is the book in which the subject and the form coincide and are indistinguishable - the book in which the matter is all used up in the formal, in which the form expresses all the matter' (qtd in Ibid. xiii).

The form of The Interpreters explains its subject: interpretation. Its structure alone forms a curious starting point in understanding of the other implications for which the text might be 'called upon' to justify of support."

The many charges of obscurity to Soyinka's works (The Interpreters included) stem from many a reader's attitude that literature is for amusement and not art. A study of technique is determined above all to grant the novelist seriousness and to take the novel seriously. This approach to the novel is a deliberate contradiction of humanistic approaches for which novels are generally very susceptible to be read; a practice that issues from Aristotle's Mimesis theory where art is seen as the reflection of life and thus the novel is perceived as the immediate transcript of life; a journalistic rendition of history. The adapting of novels into films has increased this view.

The Interpreters in a sense uses material that look like life, id est, names of people, places and concerns that mortals outside fiction actually live through. The 'life-like' materials in the novel are not substitution or commensurate to the genre of the novel itself. If the novel was life itself, talk of technique would sound superfluous and an intrusion to 'life'. But Soyinka gives an illusion of life, not life itself, for there is a difference between 'life' and 'a slice of life'. The difference lies in the process of



slicing, id est, selecting and ordering and the establishment of the basis upon which this slicing is executed.

Soyinka, like other novelists, utilises experience but this experience has been transformed into a pattern, which gives the novel the essence. When Dostoyevsky, for example, shows us the underground man unable to pattern his values but later, struggling to write a confession of his experience, he is not giving us an historical life but rather a condition. The possession of life in the novel like The Interpreters is thus imaginative, as imaginative as the names and background that this life is assigned. An appreciation of the dynamics of structure which these images are assigned is basic to understanding their intention.

The second major thrust of justification is that the novel, besides being imaginative gives primary importance to style; the agent that unifies the image with its body and ends up giving an illusion of life. Lastly, the elements included in the novel are not for the sake of reporting an incident or action like is done in journalism but an activity geared towards offering a symbolic organised image of action. Thus, the novel is an integration of an attitude which study of technique seeks to reveal; the attitude behind the selection.

The novel contains a high incidence of special or 'deviant' features than other non-literary styles. Between the extremes of languages 'common core' and deviation, it is possible to observe that it achieves its own peculiar style and pattern which is careful.

To say that the language in The Interpreters is careful is another way of saying that it is more conscious in formation. Soyinka uses language as an artistic medium not simply for communication or even expression.

It is not spontaneous whatever theories of spontaneous inspiration may sometimes have been canvassed. It is considered and developed ... impossible for everyday communication, or even for more deliberate registers adapted for certain styles (Chapman, 13).

Study of narrative technique of this novel is thus significant if the highlighting of the artistic compositional finalisation which distinguishes it from all other forms is to be recognised as an autonomous patterning of linguistic acts, deliberately heightened for the purpose of creating an illusion that we call 'life' of the interpreters.

## Hypothesis

Technique is the vehicle that brings one closest to the true meaning of the text. In the largest sense, it is technique alone as Mark Schorer said which 'objectifies the materials of art as symbolism in fiction is the true source of theme' (68).

Literature is distinguished by what can be described as 'pattern'. The text will show selection and arrangement of items that contribute to its total effect. The distinctive feature of a narrative is that it is capable of accounting for its constituent elements. These elements do not appear in a literary text accidentally as this amounts to an oversimplification of the notion of spontaneity. There is a deliberate process of selection and arrangement of narrative elements for a primary purpose of construction of the

organism of literature. The organism of The Interpreters is the text itself and the process of its creation.

This process of crafting is what constitutes the very business of literature as art that is geared towards producing an aesthetic. Recognising the fact that there is an artistry of art that the narrative creator utilises is primary and suggests that there is an art that goes into the making of the novel; The Interpreters, is a contemplative stasis. Thus, artistic composition and its finalisation into the narrative of this text, makes technique distinguishable as a valid literary concern. This undertaking therefore expects to unveil this deliberate art process.

## Objectives

The objectives of literary stylistics are not geared to proving the greatness of a writer or his/her inadequacy. It is with this in mind that the study of narrative techniques in The Interpreters intends to:

- (a) Determine how far and in what respects the written use of language shows 'deviant features'.
- (b) Show how Soyinka uses generally accepted features to special effect.
- (c) Demonstrate how these created and chosen elements contribute to the patterning and realization of the narrative in its totality.

# Theoretical Framework

This inquiry is conceived within the specifics of the formalist approach to literary criticism. Formalism provides the basic conceptual framework and working presuppositions. The German form analysts like Debulius and the Russian formalists give the term 'motive' to the ultimate plot elements. Therefore, what is called composition in a novel becomes 'motivation'. This term when integrated into English semantics becomes valuable for its double reference to narrative composition and the inner psychological or philosophical theories and ties well with the theory of causation as elaborated by E.M. Forster in Aspects of the Novel. This assumption is taken with the premise that the text will account for everything. Russian formalists distinguish the fabula; the temporal - causal sequence (the story stuff) from the *sujet* or narrative structure. The fabula is the sum of these motifs while the sujet is the artistic ordered presentation of motifs. This is the area of individual talent. The relationship between Soyinka presentation of the sujet (the choice and placement of scenes) with the fabula (the story in its chronological sense) is the main theoretical push.

It is with this in mind that the theoretical terms that constitute the core of this exposition are conceived. The basic elements of the formalist doctrine can be summed up by Elkenbaum's assertions on the character of the very essence of the formalist system:

The so-called 'formal method' was not the result of the creation of a special 'methodological' system but was formed in the process of struggle for the independence and concreteness of literary scholarship.

The concept of 'method' was in general incommensurably widened and came to mean too much. The problem of literary methods of literary study is not principle for the formalists, but rather the problem of literature as the object of the study. In essence, we do not speak about certain theoretical principles and these have not been prompted by some finished methodological or aesthetic system, but result from study of the concrete material in specificity (Eikhenbaum, 31).

The crux of the matter is the extent to which the stylistic aspects that constitute the concrete material of the text (sujet) relate to the real essence of the object being studied in totality (fabula). In this strain of theory the primary materials of creation are approached following a subjective instinct; the bias that makes 'poetic language' the specific object of study. This follows after the Society of the Study of Poetic Language (Obshchestro Izuchenia Poeticheskogo Lazyka), OPOIAZ. This school of formalist thought made the crucial step of studying the closed poetic construction with the presumption that the poetic construction had to illustrate poetic language. These elements are, for example, motif and plot. It is with plot that formalism makes the transition from poetic language to poetic construction of the work. In this strain The Interpreters is taken as a poetic instance whose form has to be accounted for.

In this transition therefore, the terms material and device replace content and form. Under the aegis of this polemic and juxtaposition, the constructive significance of material and device in Soyinka's novel attracts theories of theme, plot and composition. In this light, the basic formalist approaches to literary history define the work as a "datum external to consciousness" (145). However, this assertion does not

distance this study from psychological consciousness but from the ideological horizon, which it conceives as extra-artistic.

Thus, to start with, the formalist approach does not define literary language by what it is but by what it is not. This proceeds from the negation of the positive aspect of practical language in terms like transrational language, de-automatization, deformation, deliberately difficult form and making it strange, which evidently apply to The Interpreters. According to Elkhenbaum, this is done;

In order to put into practice and strengthen this specifying principle without recourse to speculative aesthetics ... (16).

According to Tynianov, the poetic language is the constant struggle of its various parts; sound, syntax, rhythm, and semantics. Each factor puts obstacles in the way of the other, thereby creating the perceptibility of the speech structure (de-automatization). Shlovsky asserts in support of this doctrine that 'Every work of art is created as a parallel to some model (Texter der Formalism, 15). This assumption is taken to be the screen for the elements of technique that traverse the entire text and not merely language. Soyinka's novel sounds like a construction in defiance to a previously 'accepted' model.

The above forms the broad conception of the formalist theory under which The Interpreters is to be analysed. However, the specific thrust of the exposition will take the direction of the epiphany and in this case, a definition of the term is in order. This theory proceeds from James Joyce's' Stephen Dedalus.

By an epiphany, we meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of Letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and effervescent of moments ( qtd in Schorer, 31).

This theory rests on three principles whose origin is philosophic and is associated with Thomas Aquinas: *integritas*, *consonantia* and *claritas*. *Integritas* is the 'pseudo-scholastic' language as wholeness or the perception of an aesthetic image as one thing 'self-bound' and self contained outside time and space. *Consonantia* is symmetry and rhythm of structure, the aesthetic image conceived as complex and divisible of its parts and their aggregation harmonious (*Synthesis*). *Claritas* is seen as the 'whatness' of a thing. *Quidditas* is the aggregation of the three to produce a unique structure that however has its own soul and can thus be called the soul of the text or the culmination of technique and in this instance, it is the narrative.

At the end of the process, the perception is supposed to position Soyinka and the text at a subjective 'psychic-distance.' This standpoint obliterates the artist's personality from the work and the narrative elements are thus seen through the radiance they attach to themselves rather than perceiving them through the consciousness of the artist.

The theory is an objective strategy of perceiving the unity of technique, theme and aesthetic principle through an inward looking approach into The Interpreters as sufficiently self sustained and firmly emblematic of the technical principle of the textual elements within its make up. To adopt an Orwellian phrase, 'all uses generate

unique sentences but some uses are more unique than others'. Thus, the formalist theory greatly buttresses this study coupled with psychoanalytic applications, which recognise the autonomy of art as a projection of artfulness.

In this context, a narrative is defined as "The semiotic representation of a series of events meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way" (Onega, 56). Narrativization is thus the narrative structuring which becomes elaborate in literary texts as a way of applying order and perspective to experience. This artistic preoccupation is worth a serious study.

## Literature Review

Literature has, since Plato's indictment of the poets, been seen by some as idle fantasy. The use of the word 'fiction' to refer to literature and especially the novel sometimes carries the connotation that literary activity and its immediate realisations are lies; an attitude continuously 'imported' into literature. But Dr. Johnson asserts that, in that case, 'literature has never pretended to be otherwise' (qtd in Eikhenbaum 32). The Psychoanalysts further clarify that fiction is less strange than life itself, a statement asserting the consciousness that goes into creative activity.

Aristotle, the first critic to diplomatically vindicate the artists, asserted that 'Poetry indeed is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history (Classical Literary criticism, 44). It is with this in mind that he formulated the rules for imitation but of course every artist of genius need not work from prescriptive grounds. The writer is able to completely craft art without the 'guilt conscience' of committing sacrilege against Platonism or deviating from Aristotle's doctrines.



Soyinka's use of unfamiliar language sometimes dismissed as needless obscurantism is well supported by Longinus who in his articles on 'The Sublime' asserts that:

These expressions are on the very edge of vulgarity; but their expressiveness saves them from actually being vulgar (140).

This statement by Longinus is thought provoking and removes the indignation directed towards the artist of 'strong' style.

Gerald Moore in one of the first reviews of The Interpreters terms it as 'The First African novel that has a texture of real complexity and depth' (New African, 2). These assertions are re-echoed by Eldred Jones in the introduction to the novel's first edition when he claims that:

The style of narration gives the novel compactness of structure and a feeling of wholeness of conception (The Interpreters, 2).

At this stage, it is instructive to note that the critics are unapologetically referring to the text itself rather than the artist; Soyinka or any immediate implication to ideology. It evokes a feeling for its structural composition and thus gains the text an epic status. As Ian Watt has said in his discussion of 'Fielding and the Epic Theory of the Novel':

This view is certainly widely held, albeit in a rather general and unformulated way, to deserve consideration. It is evident that since the epic was the first example of narrative form on a large scale and of a serious kind, it is reasonable that it should give its name to the general

category which contains all such works, and in this sense, the term the novel, may be said to be the epic kind (272).

For Percy Lubbock as he postulates in his The Craft of Art difficulty in a novel is an additional source of aesthetic enjoyment. This, in a way, is a restatement of Nietzsche as he is quoted by E.M. Forster in Aspects of the Novel where he shows admiration for what he calls 'formidable erosions of contour' without which there could not occur a Jamesian novel. Though such writings ultimately attract almost instantaneous controversy, it is apparent that, The Interpreters falls under this Jamesian tradition of 'hints and nods' that traverse Ulysses; the tradition of novels that 'attract curiosity about discourse mechanics' (Aldridge, 129).

Taking into account the historical and polemic contexts from which the ongoing argument originates, an analysis of the narrative techniques in The Interpreters does not occur to be particularly outrageous though some critics disavow interest in style insisting that texts presumably enjoy some form of existence independent of the particular structures they present. But, as Roger Fowler has said in 'The New Stylistics',

Stylistics makes the individual work more recognisable, more discrete, its physiognomy more salient (11).

Accordingly, Soyinka is quoted in Wilfred F. Feusers article on 'The Problem of Authenticity' as having the stylistic quality as one of his major concerns;

... I was saying in other words that what one expected from poetry (*generally art*) was an intrinsic poetic quality, not mere name-dropping (Gates, 556). (*emphasis mine*)

Though this was his elaboration of his tigritude statement, it ties well with the Yoruba proverb that 'The Proverb is the horse carrying the topic under discussion; if the topic loses its way we use a proverb to recapture it.' It is apparent that Soyinka's artistic vision has technique as one of its major pillars if the proverb is to be accepted as the wittiest compression of art in literature.

The Interpreters according to Mart T. David is a "multi-focal novel" (2), and in it one will encounter allusions and images long before they are explained underlying Soyinka's literary sensibilities within the book in which genuine concern to literariness is enveloped within a title that is no less literary.

Narrative technique according to Ferdinand-de-Saussure is in a big way a description of language use. This big domain of language level he called langue and in a narrative like The Interpreters it has to take account of its manifestations and prove that though the sign 'signifies' it is itself 'signified' Since The Interpreters was written by a poet and a Thespian, the technique frequently echoes the author's previous poetry and drama. Sekoni's death in a car crash is a product of the same imagination which in 'Death at Dawn' produced the lines;

Brother

silenced in the startled hug of

your – invention- is this mocked grimace

This closed contortion-1? (1)

The futility of Joe Colder's craving for authentic blackness is also richly present in 'Death at Dawn.'

Soyinka's feeling for words and his strong reliance on metaphors of multiple reference is richly present in The Interpreters as it is in his poetry and drama. The first lines in the narrative, 'metal on concrete jars my drink lobes' (7) presents a procession of metaphors whose significance can only be adduced by a mind inclined on the poetic potentialities of words. The memorable picture of the night soil men is a classic example:

'faceless janitors, pail surmounted silences, short broomed swathings tilting dusk to dawn, the cherished emblems of vintage air.' (102)

These former stylistic and thematic concerns of Soyinka are poured down to be interpreted in his text, The Interpreters which is a terminus as well as a cross-roads of an authors commitment to craft.

In The Interpreters, the question of its existence as a literary artefact looms more conspicuously than the traditional thematic implications associated with literature. Though the text has previously been used to provide analyses of satire (Odari, 89) and socially subjective themes as has been done by (Gikandi, African novel, 92) the question of its objective existence as a conscious form needs to be dwelt upon. This issues from the reflection that a novel is not merely a servant of other external entities but fundamentally a self-sustaining finalisation.

## Methodology

The study is a library research engagement. It will rely on published interviews and articles where Soyinka's commitment to craft is discussed.

In summary, the method will involve an intertextual approach in which the text will be subjected to generic conventions of pattern, plot, archetypes and motifs so as to produce a critical commentary which ties back to the traditional historicist study of comparative literature.

The criticism will approach the text in a way to suggest experiences of meaning creation and feeling for structure involved in the making of the novel. It will involve the choosing of stylistic - structural elements in the work in piecemeal, and then with specificity relate their traits of diction generally to the whole texture. This is what Scot Muchanan calls 'the analytical matrix' (Kenyon Review, Autumn 1949).

The novel largely dwells upon the 'buried metaphor' to create a complex structural pattern with many points of narrative interest. Since these 'dead metaphors' are buried deep in the ordinary idiomatic fabric of language, the style seems strained in an effort to move forward. An analogical treatment will avoid the hindrances apparently presented by this strain. Thus, in the interests of the whole procession, in an effort to systematically capture this grand vista operating in the text, the assumption here is that criticism is not intended to give truisms but present insights. At the culmination of this insight, elaborate confluence's are intended to be met.

Since fiction is art, The Interpreters being a novel of art, the unification of this analogical matrix with focus to technique is as well the unification of all other social values that it serves. At the very horizon of the method is the realization that style alone conceives, expresses and finally tests the symbolization which is both an end and an instrument as Jane Austen has claimed. The method is thus not only an activity of commentary but a creative exercise as well.

The study thus moves towards a closer engagement of single elements in the technical design of the text. The method proceeds from the broad terms of language and structure then narrows down to the specific study of technique and still narrower to the symbolic content of the single text.

These general to specific considerations of symbolic content will seek to explore the way Soyinka approximates and transmits the full meaning of his artistic vision in impersonal language in an effort to complete the central narrative in which his artistic vision is achieved within the limits of his medium. Form, to paraphrase Mark Schorer, is 'the subject' and form, in the ultimate sense is successful imaginative conception' (qtd in Aldridge, 103).

The method realises that composition in the novel does not involve merely a sleeping unconscious but a thoroughly awakened consciousness of craft. There is thus a deliberate attempt in this inquiry to handle the single aspect of technique as the isolable symbolizing image.

The method is therefore both 'syntagmatic' as well as 'paradigmatic' in that it both seeks to investigate the techniques that make up the whole 'pool' of the narrative as

well as the relationships within these contributing variables. It thus comes out as an analysis of the 'technical-literary-syntax' (Chapman 56) that goes into the making of The Interpreters.

The chapters are broadly conceived in the following format:

- ↳ Introduction
- ↳ Chapter 1: Plot
- ↳ Chapter 2: Characterisation
- ↳ Chapter 3: Narrative Stances
- ↳ Conclusion.

## Scope

The investigation seeks to approach technique as the discovering, defining and ultimately evaluating principle in fiction. It is given guidance by the formalist assumption as put by James that 'questions of art are question (in the widest sense) of execution (qtd in Aldridge 32).

From The Interpreters, this study seeks to perceive the totality of movements that constitute it and establish the principle governing its unity. The text also presents action proceeding simultaneously at several levels. It will be limited within the provinces demarcated by the process of symbolisation of the single 'scene' that the narrative alone offers.

The whole narrative is occasionally deliberately halted but the effort of the entire book is to create this impression of simultaneity for the lives of the five interpreters.

This study seeks to account for the various strata that form the unified spatial apprehension of the totality of The Interpreters as it is created within its characters and materials used to flesh them.

The study is within the limits which Soyinka has arrested time and space in the single movement of the text. It focuses upon the spatial technique of the single novel and thus synthesizes the form - content dichotomy into a single principle. It is thus limited to technique of the narrative creation, and hence subjects the text to theories of technique and narrative within a frameworks that account for form.

Consequently it is thus necessary to pay attention to a particular text specifically The Interpreters since within it language will show its diversity and literariness as the narrative unfolds into the process of using device to create a genre.



# CHAPTER TWO

## THE UNFOLDING OF PLOT

### Sujet and the Dynamics of Fabula

'Each work must contain in itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise'. This is a Coleridgian maxim that serves as a warning to the reader not to drag any associations into texts that are artistically irrelevant. If the reader has in possession information beyond the artistic presence, all the better, but seeing the text entirely under 'pigmentation of such spectacles' might throw the former completely out of focus. In the present inquiry of the plot of The Interpreters, the quintessential interest is the matter of its structural universe utilising the internal evidence without pretensions for discoveries of 'cleaver hidden aspects' which the structure can only 'beg' from extraneous theories that might never be adequately collaborated by internal evidence.

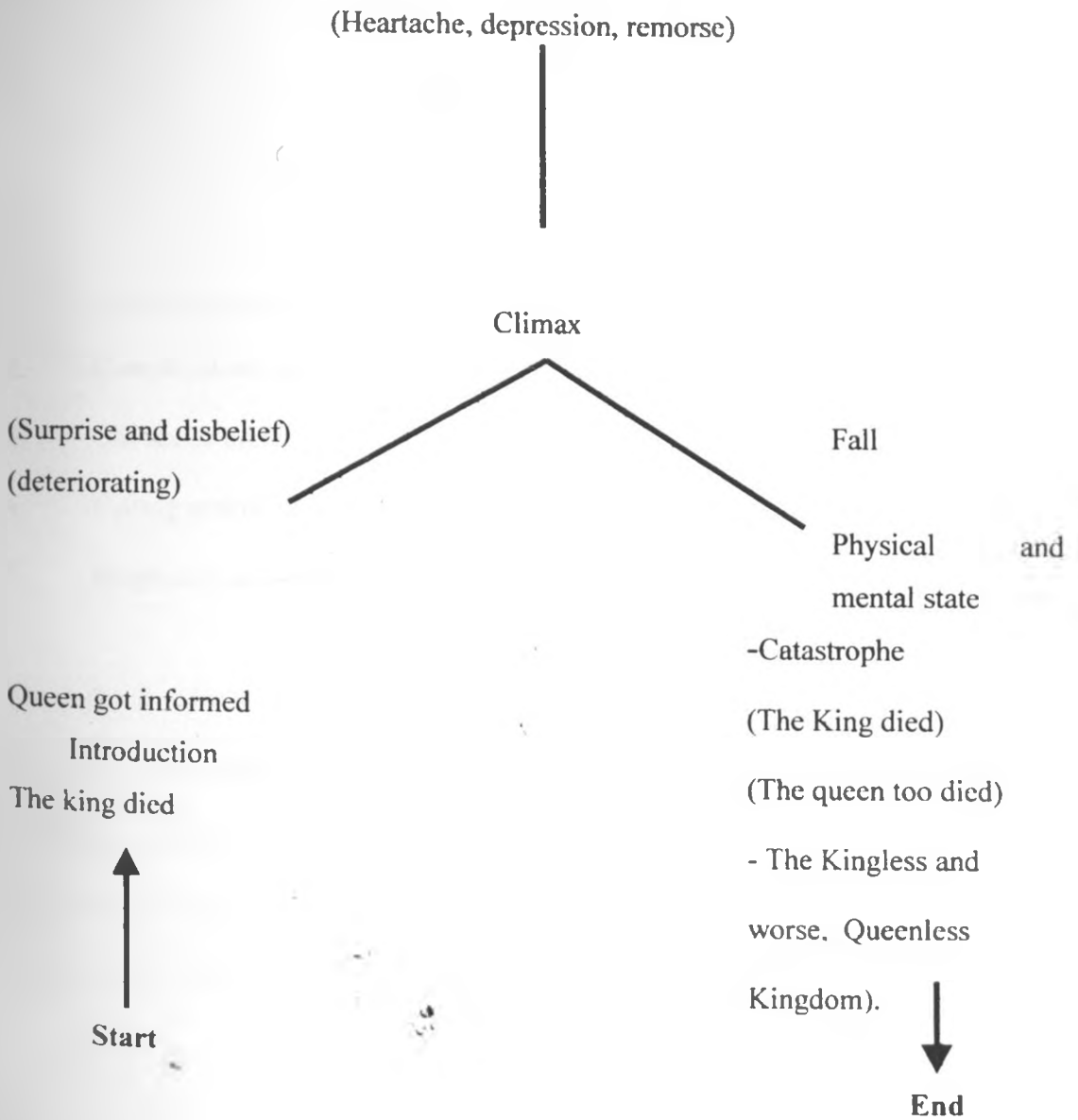
The foregoing argument must of necessity repudiate the Forstian paradigm of plot and hence by the same token, The Interpreters has no plot at all. So, what does it have and what is the reason for this? This question attracts a presupposition that there is something the matter with Forster's hypothesis of plot which Soyinka's text deliberately departs from.

We must assume E.M. Forster to be wrong. His view of plot is expressly prescriptive and writers seldom impose themselves limitations of this kind. Much less Soyinka in

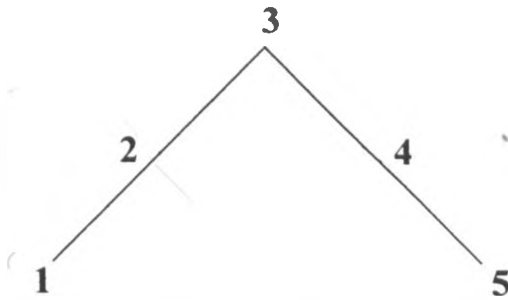
The Interpreters where the action starts in Medias res. According to Forster the absolute model of plot is as follows:

The king died and as a result of remorse, the queen died too (Aspects, 87).

This is a chronological view of event and time in narrative sequence. It conforms to Freitug's pyramidal structuring of narrative movement, (Roberts, 994) which is static and conspicuously 'easy'



This kind of plot does not give space to a plunge into narrative with reminiscential anecdote, the hidden card, or the withheld information. It provides a kind of structure that moves in one direction and one that can only occur to a reader after retrospectively, looking back on the narrative and trying to create a graspable chronology in mind. Freytag's conception of structure translates to the following pyramid;



1. Exposition or introduction
2. Complication and development
3. Climax or crisis
4. Falling action, catastrophe
5. Resolution or denouement

The order in which event and information about character and settings in Soyinka's text occur, can not fit in this scheme and hence it would be unprofitable, to claim the existence of evident plot in The Interpreters when the notion of plot rendered to us in the history of literary criticism does not adequately cut across the boundaries of the narrative. So what is the mode of existence of the rendered material?

## In Medias Res

Freytag's plot scheme is fixed and static and so is Forster's paradigm. If this theory is to be rejected, then we need another that accounts for delayed or distributed (flexible) structure that would cut across The Interpreters and yet preserve it as part of the wider genre of narrative.

It appears prudent at this point to attempt a distinction of the different elements, which bear the burden of carrying the different motifs that the literary piece contains and whose totality contains the narrative. These are fabula, sujet, story and plot.

The fabula of the text like all others is the chronological or chronological causal sequence into which the reader reassembles motifs, (retrospectively). In the traditional tale, this is a progressive process. It answers the question: *And then?* Soyinka deforms and re-contextualises this raw material in what is evidently an act of temporal displacements. Thus what actually the reader encounters in The Interpreters is not Fabula but sujet id est, the actual presentation of the motifs in a final product as opposed to the 'objective' order of occurrence. This is what has been called by critics as "flashbacks" and "flashforwards" (Gikandi 92). As a matter of fact, there are no flashes in The Interpreters. The different scenes that have been thus called are properly placed motifs whose validity of place is legitimately justifiable when called motifs that make the sujet. Calling them flashes is assuming that there is an absolute 'correct' progression of scenes that every narrative has to follow. This notion issues down from Forster but, Soyinka in his novel displays no inclination to adhere. It is an element found in post-modernist art.

When Henry James said that there are five million ways of telling a story, he meant that fabula can be rendered into countless sujet. The texts beginning of sujet of course coincides with Sagoe's 'Metal on concrete jars my drink lobes'- but this is not the Fabula genesis. The beginning of chapters in this novel seems dictated by the urgency of the sujet than by the 'pre-ordained' expectations of the traditional idea of plot.

Story is the compositional backbone of the narrative and it can do without a plot. (Since some narratives do exist with scattered causal elements). The story is the atavistic principle informing the narrative. It answers the question 'and then?'. If it is in plot, we ask 'why'. In plot, the causal sequence is indispensable. In sujet, everything is dispensable including time sequence and causal sequence. What matters is the artistic deformation of Fable. In The Interpreters the supremacy of the sujet dispenses with time and causality and Soyinka seems to be delighting in throwing motifs in total freedom at a canvas whose assignment is to receive. In such an activity, Soyinka's role is that of an artist who places paint and shades and title and lets the observer (reader) exercise their creative powers to make out the fabula. That is why the novel is more of a painting in a gallery than a tale round the fire-place, in a king's court or in a newsroom.

The story is additive, fabula is causal counteraction. It basically depends on suspense for its existence. A typical example would be as follows:

So we quit that city and headed down the turnpike for the next. I was dead sick of that joint and the countryside sure looked good to me with the sun on it. I let the old chev full out and she roared down the concrete at a steady eighty. I

kept on like that for I don't know how many hours biting off the miles – heading for I don't know what..... (Qtd in Hoggart 128)

This is a typical gangster – novelette style of rendition gregariously called 'pageturner', 'unputdownable' and company. A story idly entertains, sujet and fabula challenge the readers constructive abilities.

It is unprofitable to start attrition between these four narrative factors. Their complementarity is however more significant. The assignment of this entity to the text stems from the realization that we have to accept the autonomy of the present material as the final realization of Soyinka's interest and not of our expectation. If our sensibilities are to remain unantagonised by Soyinka's presentation our calling it a sujet-type-plot is an inevitable starting point.

With this in mind, we could say that the beginning of the text *coincides* with the sujet but since we thirst for a beginning of the fabula, which is of course delayed in *The Interpreters* we can legitimately say that Soyinka plunges in Medias res. We say this because the readers' problem in the text is a time problem par-excellence. It is a problem of objectifying a straight forward narrative progress from beginning to end (within the fabula) and reconciling it with the patterned and deformed progress artistically presented for the reading process (the sujet).

The night club scene in chapter one presents a single action in Aristotelian parlance. This scene is as far as plot is concerned, deftly detached from the overall structure of The Interpreters. If one places the scene in the body politic of the fabula, it is obvious that it comes much later in the retrospectively created story. The language

used is in the epic style in which aspects of causality are kept in suspension and the readers expectations of getting full characterisation and description of scene are frustrated until the 'apt' moment which however will be a strenuous act of discovery. This is apparently a deliberate way of placing scenes in sequences that frustrate the straightforward storyline in traditional tales serves as an important Soyinka venture of elevating sujet above fabula.

In chapter one of the novel, interspersed with talk about drink, is a reminiscient rendering of the characters present idiosyncrasies and analogical hints to their past which they have completely failed to create a complete unity from and are now simply going with the tide. Soyinka seems to be making a selection from a long history omitting whatever is irrelevant to his main concerns. By introducing the main characters in this part of the sujet, the novelist renders us with the sketches of the fabula elements, which are however chronologically posterior but representationally anterior.

After this opening with delayed expositional material Soyinka builds a base upon which later dramatised occasions will narrate the story so that it can stand up and balance the facts of the *Medias res* plunge. Most of the antecedents of the narrative are delayed by the plunge in this scenic scene of the nightclub.

The discovery of the *dramatis personae* is personalized and the hour of their unveiling (the hour and the situation) confirms that the 'heroes' are 'born' into a complex of pre-existing circumstances that intimately determines their future living career. Why is Sagoe a drunkard? Why is Egbo involved in disturbing reminiscents? Why is Bandele a fully evolved cat like figure? Why is Sekoni a cranial stammerer? And why is

Dehinwa so flippant and condescending? The reader has to reconcile this with their expectations. It is upon Soyinka to either surprise or if the outcome is predictable, sustain a climate of belief and life likeness. By this device, Soyinka equips the reader with the tools for curiosity, which is an effective substitute to suspense. The former is artistically noble since it compels emotions to raise to the level of reason. It draws out an intellectual interpretive 'why' attitude concurrently.

Now since in *Medias res* is what Soyinka plunges us into at first glance, he has attentively provided the antecedents operating within that world of probabilities in order to justify the canons of his chosen fictive world. These antecedents declare the story *sujet type* and not story type. His poetic start seems to be a warning to the reader not to drag their own awareness of 'storieness' into The Interpreters. The metaphors 'metal', 'concrete', 'drink lobes' castigate the reader against artistic irrelevance and confirmed 'truths'. The traditional oral 'once upon a timeness' is deliberately undermined by this start. It is, thus apparent that the narrative utilizes the strategy of delayed exposition which will be approached from a 'why' position.

## Delayed Exposition

From the outset, one can hear the remote voice of many a writer's impatience to dispense with antecedent or expositional material. It reminds one of Henry Moore's start in his poem of 'The Duke of Benevento' when he declared:

I hate the prologue to a story.....

I love to dash into the middle.....

There is comfort on reflection.

To think you've done with the beginning.



This seems to be a conscious artistic aim from Homer, to Joyce to Soyinka and to many others. The intrinsic merits of this device are that it distinguishes the literary from the historical narrative. But there is no running away from providing antecedent information however hard the writer may try to steer away from the mythic prototype. The temporal point at which action starts is post-expositional to any of the character's history and though the story should have commencement, in Hardian style in The Mayor of Casterbridge, the narrator gives us enough expositional material though most of it is delayed and significantly distributed. Curiously, unlike Moore, the narrator discovers very soon that the antecedent material is indispensable however hard he may try to submerge it in 'plop' and intoxicate it away with drink. Egbo's pilgrimage to the creeks in memory gives explicit antecedent material to account for his present situation and position and so does Sekoni whom we find at a mental hospital, at the end of the beginning.

Soyinka does not trace the living careers of his canonical characters from birth to death as it were but thrusts them to the reader without warning. The sujet thus starts on page one, the fabula starts later and the story is only possible through retrospective reconstruction and re-piecing together of motifs.

Sekoni's expositional history is rendered quite exhaustively at the end of this chapter and by the end of the second, Dehinwa's presence in that party of 'paddlers riding with the tide' is explained as having been manufactured by 'anxieties and quite simply, blood cruelty'. Sagoe is a northerner (a Gambari) and Dehinwa's relatives cannot stomach her liberalism and cross tribal adventurism. For curiosity and suspense (though some overfastidious critics regard this as 'low brow') the narrator has effectively manipulated elements of narrative interest with a deliberate scattering of

compositional variables upon the narrative field. The narrator arouses and sustains expectation through creating interest in condensed informational blocks and then holding the card for as long as the 'literary breath' can be held then dropping it in place to fit the puzzle. This study intends to present Sekoni as an illustration of this expositional gap formation and the dynamic of its fulfillment. This character's history presents a complete movement in that, the origin, development and denouncement of his life are present though distributed in patches of character crafting collage.

Responding to Egbo's question why the dead are not strong enough to be ever present in our being and why they should not be as dead as they are, Sekoni stammers that:

T-t-to make such d-d-distinctious disrupts the d-d-dome of c-c-continuity, which is what life is. (17)

Upon Egbo's persistence that the dead should fear the light, he responds by a philosophical response to bridges which he calls the dome of religion as they are static and most significantly, they face backwards. Later we see him stammer out his sense of social responsibility when he asks his friends to stop the drinking and see whether they can help the residents of a shanty that had been struck by lightning. He is the 'Sheikh' among the interpreters who would never laugh at the actual time of an event but would brood it through his disillusionment at being offered a job simply to sign bicycle applications while his engineering genius seethed under him forms the causality factor to his present brooding nature and a feeling of hopelessness. When the village Head calls his power plant, 'J-j-j-junk', this seems to have been the last stroke.

He is to end up in a mental hospital. As the sujet starts, it is evident that Soyinka has withheld these facts of Sekoni's development and simply let him loiter in Kola's art classes and the night club. This loitering of Sekoni marries with the 'facts' of his life that Soyinka has left rogue. After chapter one, Sekoni is frozen up to chapter six where curiosity is quenched by news that he is now a sculptor deftly working on his 'the wrestler' (a frenzied act of wood). After this discovery of artistic genius in Sekoni, he apparently becomes, 'the most non-existent person in the world'. Again, Egbo vouchsafes this. Sekoni never talked, he only burst with sudden efforts. He is however still obsessed with the theme of life and death but he still maintains the company he had before going to hospital. At the fabula level, one feels that Soyinka is still shuffling the cards of Sekoni's character collage but within a definite space until the shape of the figure finally falls in place. In this kind of 'craftiness' it is not important which card we encounter first.

In book two, Sekoni's death is thus not a surprising inclusion though from the 'story's perspective, it is entirely unmotivated and a surprise. However it puts us once again to the cyclic return to the after effects of the club scene that opened the sujet. Therefore, Sekoni's life and death provide a full study in temporary expositional gaps.

This is the only life fully treated to a 'logical end' in the Aristotelian sense but though it opens its temporary gaps and explicitly fills them, it provides an emergence to other temporary gaps. Since The Interpreters is a text of art, it is analogous, a process of producing an art piece and the characters and motifs are like the art of collage.

- ~ The motives for doing collage are many, but the primary one is that collage violates the integrity of painting as a medium. It does this by

introducing into the space of painting, materials from everyday world.

Thus in collage the world of painting collides with real life. (Sayre, 279).

In Soyinka's interpreting characters, for example Sekoni, the two worlds collide. The world of art, leisure, misery and agony. For the narrator of the narrative, these worlds stand in stark opposition and the character creating process is a projection of this artistic ambivalence.

The return to the opening of book one at the start of book two not only closes a gap, but further deforms the chronological sequence hitherto temporarily established. The former gap (of Sekoni's life) results already from the process of selection and produces the fabula.

The informational gap is created in the first scene of book one and filled in the first scene of book two. Here the sequence of cause and effect moves in a forward direction. The latter gap, now emergent, proceeds from the process of combination and displacement of the characters and scene that belong to the *sujet proper*.

Part two of The Interpreters thus is as well, an in Medius res beginning. We are again hurled into the heart of the matter, right inside the 'crucial scene'. The fabula at this stage is however intelligible since the narrative at the *sujet* level has already acquired premises necessary to forming warrantable developmental expectations for its future. Sekoni's development and demise provide a plot-type fabula where the past, present and future are linked. Soyinka however uses the retrospective illumination of concrete action and situation as a means of giving some luminous latitude to this 'intrinsically

dull' narrative material of The Interpreters. In the opening scene of book one, the interpreters schizophrenic idiosyncrasies and drunkenness looked entirely uncasuistic. However, their re-enaction in book two has realistic premises in the shape of Sekoni's death.

The narrator thus ties the knots in time by manipulating gaps some small, others wide. A case in point of the short gaps is the rendering of Egbo's past in part one right from the second page or even the parody of the first line by the second one id est, prose line after poetic line and the rhetorical possibilities of this narrative derive from this temporal 'deforming' of chronology. The narrative develops from rhetorical triggered by the curiosity that scene, character and diction generate.

## **Defamiliarisation and De-automatization**

This is a retardatory technique in Soyinka's text. In its temporal nature, this device first analysed by Shilovsky relates to a considerable delay in disclosure of relevant or desired information through a medium deliberately manipulated by the artist. In The Interpreters, the use of complicated metaphor or figurative clusters plays a retardatory function in the structure through blocking or suspending of the development of the plot. We have to qualify then that in this text there is a set of competing structures and lines of interest. The significant plot implication of these devices is the structural and rhetorical tensions between the retarding material and the retarded pattern. These are two variables, which have relative forces of attraction and interdependence.

The first line in the text is testimony to this experimentation on device, "metal on concrete jars my drink lobes". This is retardation through the use of metaphors. Soyinka's brief and parenthetical suspension at this point shows that he is aware at 'that point' not to try the readers patience since this device can at times be annoying. The turgid statement is followed by a rather prosaic rejoinder to it.

This was Sagoe grumbling as he struck fingers in his ears against, the mad screech of iron tables. (2)

This is not only retrospective interpolation but a parody of the device against itself. After giving the reader this complimentarity of device, the narrator defamiliarises the dance hall scene by giving image correspondencies to what is obvious as though the scene was being seen for the first time.

Dancers dodged long chameleon tongues of the cloudburst and the wind leapt at them, visibly malevolent. (ibid).

The automatization of this scene is rendered through authorial commentary but then Soyinka quickly shifts to another defamiliarization phase in the recounting of the canoe journey, which is however shortly automatised through dialogue.

*Two paddlers clove to the still water of the creek, and then 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 canon shoved above the water. It build a faded photo of a past with rotting canoe hulks along the bank, but the link was spurious. The paddlers slowed down and held the boat against the canon. Egbo put his hand*

in the water and dropped his eyes down the brackish stillness, down the dark depths to its bed of mud. He looked reposed, wholly withdrawn (8, emphasis mine).

The ensuing dialogue that follows immediately after this 'meditative' phase reveals that Egbo is in the act of paying homage to the spot where his parents had died and through him, we reckon that even his close friends had to perhaps guess right to know what his 'defamiliar' meant. This kind of construction suggests that the narrative constantly shifts from philosophical and ideological spheres to purely artistic territories in which, parody of the language itself operates. This is an intrinsic ideological import. It gives the plot a uniquely artistic meaning that however goes hand in glove with its kindred ideological meaning (here considered as extra-artistic). It evokes a squeeze-release feeling for the spring of information.

Egbo's sex act with Simi, the Queen Bec, is defamiliarised as though the narrator were recounting the sex act for the first time. No direct mention of the act is done but referents are given to this process showing Soyinka's deliberate determination to avoid automatism's. Through this, Soyinka deftly avoids the time sequence in the act and thus, evades fabula. This 'disorder' thus shifts the reader's attention from suspense to curiosity.

... And a lone pod strode the baobab 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 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... (60)

This kind of rendering necessarily lacks information about the past or the future or the causality factor. It is frozen in time and is an impediment to the progress of narrative expectations.

Sagoe's voidancy theorizing is yet another defamiliarization that Soyinka gives little explanation about except that it is the 'toilet' philosophy, which has evolved as a spiritual reproachment within a world of stresses and discord. This structurally could be the main reason these tantalizing 'erosions of contour' occur. In the entrance to part two of the text, Sekoni's fatal road accident is entirely defamiliarised and the significance of that full page dedicated to his demise is rendered completely impervious, rendering the sujet as a visionary abstract picture through slowed perception. The rationale for this plot rendering seems to be an effort in trying to achieve a trans-emotional juxtapositioning of reflective with vulgar and dizzying episode. Death and frustration are presented side by side with incidents of reflection and jollity. Stylistically, Soyinka is making an effort to avoid plunging the narrative into gloom and melancholy. Interest on the device towers above the thirst to feel.

The feeling for plot these evoke is that, for Soyinka, 'unpleasantness' is not necessarily unpleasant but part of the intended structure of the explored material. And neither is sexual freedom necessarily immoral. Simon Gikandi has called the novel a



'subjective' piece. This subjectivity is directed towards the device and not merely on social philosophy. The defamiliarizations represent a passionate protest to obviousness of traditional narration.

If incidents of defamiliarisation are to be elevated as the major interpretative points in the plot, it is noteworthy to point out that the first movement of the text shows Soyinka employing a very high surrealism of perception than in the second part which has explicit religious implications thus creating a binary opposition in the total structure in which the former is grand and stubborn, the latter pathetic and axiomatically vulgar (if we were to dare claim).

Soyinka thus by this device of making unique romantic modification of character and scene by transferring the usual perception of objects and actions through the use of language and combinations outside the common cannon into the sphere of new perception realises in The Interpreters a torturedness of plot which makes interest in sujet more apparent than fabula or meaning. A narrative of this nature will ultimately attract the resigned term of obscurity, unfairly.

Soyinka conceals purpose but unveils action. This is plot brought to the level of story but banking on suspension to heighten an intelligent purpose. Plot in this sense triumphs through the writer setting out the aftermath and leaving us to guess the form and nature of the 'booby traps' that motivate the aftermath. The incidents he uses to unveil these traps look trivial (like the argument between Sekoni and his employer and Sagoe's voidancy) but their profundity is injected with the complexity of the characters. Our sense of reality is kept alive so as to foreground plot. Plot is the 'God of these small things.' We feel that the characters are greater than their destinies but

the fatalistic snare is neither sidestepped nor embraced but nonetheless affects the participants. Poetry, religion, passion and profession are pot boiled in Kola's pantheon which in itself is a proposal and a counterproposal of art while spontaneity like all other paintings does not speak but remains suggestive in the same way the structure of the text does. This is where the collage factor enters Soyinka's art. The characters, scenes and motifs collide with the obvious expectations of a literary piece in the same way collage materials collide with their background. It is not the unity of the materials that the artist is interested in. interest is on the degree of 'leniency' that the background can grant materials.

# CHAPTER THREE

## CHARACTERIZATION IN THE INTERPRETERS

It is impossible to qualify what is or who is brought in as an end in itself or a motivation for any introduction and exploration in The Interpreters. But then, what is motivation in literature? According to Wellek and Warren, in a novel, motivation is that element in the narrative that increases the illusion of reality. It is an abstract aesthetic function. Seeming is heightened by this device (4). As opposed to platonic censures (Republic) seeming is more important than being in art, for art is the creation of illusions not of truth in its circumstantial sense. The image of the heroes stylistically has a different function than say the hero in a classical tragedy. Therefore, from the outset, it is important to have it in mind that the characters are created to seem as opposed to be. What frameworks are used to craft these seemings?

### Allegory and Quasi-allegorization

In this strategy, naming is the simplest form of introduction and motivation. Naming individuates and vivifies the named. Characters are dressed in obviously recognizable costume using social types and stereotypes. This process is used by Soyinka in his creation of Biblical characters: Noah and Lazarus. These are flat and static characters and their literary career in the text is as predictable as the scriptural ancestors from which they emerge.

Soyinka's Noah is set in a cataclysmic deluge and his Lazarus claims to have arisen from the dead. The setting and careers of these two characters echo their biblical antecedents as closely as possible.

Chapters 11 and 12 introduce and close these flat characters and the motivation for their entrance is the death of Sekoni. A fortnight after his funeral, and after his remaining friends and interpreters (Kola, Sagoe, Bandele, Dehinwa and Lasunwon) have returned, after once more re-enacting a drama similar to the one that opens the sujet, the motivation here is that, consistent with Soyinka's vision of the continuity of life after death a reincarnation of the departed Sekoni has to be presented. Egbo announces that; "The night-club salesman of Sagoe has defected to more watery deities" (158). Who has defected? Apparently this question does not sound outrageous and in no place do the interpreters agree that Sekoni is dead and absent. The allegorization of Sekoni's resurrection with Lazarus is issuing from the New Testament of the Bible, chapter 11 of the book of John.

The biblical Lazarus is supposed to have resurrected from the dead after four days in the grave. Dehinwa fearing the intensity of Sekoni's 'resurrection' upon the now drained friends warns them that their habits should change since their routine meetings at the Cambana and Mayoni in Ibadan every fortnight were making memory unbearable. Just as she is about to bring this reflection to proper discussion, the albino, Lazarus joins them and immediately establishes himself as one of them. The transition from remincing over Sekoni to this Lazarus who terrifies them all is far too clean and stark to be mistaken for anything else. Artistically, he fills in a character gap that is wanting;

These were the accidents that grew into set habits, reminders among several more of Sekoni who was more oppressively with them now than the strain of stuttering intensity ever was. 'He's coming', Dehinwa hissed between her teeth.(15)

The entry of Lazarus has a spellbinding power on Sekoni's friends. Kola is in effect fantasizing on what to make of the stranger's timing, "so soon after Sekoni's death ...(160). He found himself boring into the man's face as if he could see Sekoni's face demetamorphose from the albino's. The albino himself claims that before he was put into the coffin, he looked just like Sagoe and all his fellow black friends. On Lasunwon's insinuation that Lazarus, had gone through the horrible fate of being mistakenly buried alive, the latter promptly corrects him that he was actually dead. Kola can imagine Sekoni actually banging on the coffin and asking to be let out and Lazarus, timely, promises to tell them of his ordeal but at a different place and time, not in the Cambana where life looked cheap. Apparently, this seems to be what a fluent Sekoni would have wished for: a change of setting from club to church for he was the Sheikh. This phase in characterization comes full circle then when the Interpreters agree to change haunt and visit the religious. The allegorization at this point is rather obvious. The psychological push is that Soyinka consciously sidesteps the reality of miracles through substituting it with a mystical emergence. This substitution of miracles with mysticism is a quasi-allegorical casting.

In chapter twelve, the character in question performs yet another of this static characterization signatures when he gives a direct statement about himself with oblique further revelation.

My name is Lazarus', said the man in lace-fringed robes, all white.

"My name is Lazarus, not Christ, son of God (64).

After the motivation, Soyinka is now intent on sharpening our perception of Lazarus just in case the reader may be skeptical about false prophets.

The fantastical revelation of Lazarus' calling to the flock is infused with readings from the Bible taken directly from the gospels in which the death and rising of Lazarus by Jesus is re-echoed. At the end of this spiritual locution, it is apparent that Soyinka is intent on creating a parallel between Lazarus and his biblical counterpart but the parody is too intense even to raise some skepticism about the validity of the biblical narrative of the raising of Lazarus by Jesus from the grave. This is given latitude by the mention of Barabbas, the cynical thief who taunted Jesus on the cross and died challenging Christ to save them both. One wonders why Jesus failed to forgive, bless and invite the radical to heavenly bliss if he truly was a God for sinners. It takes an interpreter to make this connection.

Barabbas is mentioned by Sagoe in reference to Noah, a former shoplifter whom Lazarus has brought to church and baptized. This further allegory typifies the movement of Soyinka's characterization of Noah and his apostles in the biblical strain but, significantly, the Bible is re-created in a comic, cynical way if these characters are to be taken seriously. This demeaning character parody is called by Egbo as knowledge of the new generation of interpreters.(178) but the substitution of the saints with lower depth characters is the real characterization mechanics.

This quasi-allegorization reverts to its motivation in a typical Soyinkan style when Bandele remarks towards the end of their visit to Lazarus church that he had been entirely prompted by the recent death of Sekoni to quench his curiosity for the man who now claimed he had died and come back to life. This is a cyclic maneuver of narrative which puts us back to a setting with all the Interpreters alive as for now, the attention shifts to the possibilities of putting Lazarus and Noah, his creation in Kola's pantheon. Incidentally, the painter had been using his friends as models for his pantheon - and the discovery of these caricatured christlikenesses seems to fit in the puzzle like a dice.

Now that Lazarus is about to become the very challenge of Christ if he ever succeeded, Soyinka uses Noah to put a stop to his surrealism that was momentarily taken hold of the interpreters' curiosity. At the moment when he was to be pushed through a literal baptism by fire, Noah bolts and runs away, back to the street of Lagos where he had been a pure Barabbas and not an apostate. This act shatters and completely defeats Lazarus and his religious ambitions in exactly the same way the story of the deluge is said to have cleansed the world of miscreants. Soyinka's narrative at this point has the latitude of verisimilitude as opposed to the Biblical version as there is no fabulous bird messenger for Noah. Kola and Egbo are however secretly present at this denouement. This scene in the text is significant since it forms the genesis to the final link in Kola's painting, which he has searched for fourteen months. The image of Noah whom Kola paints as Esumale (the rainbow) is the final stroke in the canvas. Rainbow coincidentally was the first sign of a new beginning of life after the deluge and significantly it is the last illusion in the yet wet pantheon. In consequence the rainbow is the completion of this quasi-allegorization on the part of the narrator and Soyinka himself, whom we have to qualify for this role by reverting

to the autobiographical theory of the author and his created artifacts. This not only forms a quasi-allegorization of character, but of scene and background as well.

One of Soyinka's female characters, Simi, is treated with an allegorical reference to the cannibal, and images of snakes and bees are constantly injected in her description. The image emerging is lurid and fatal. Her great attractiveness is not only that of the mammi watta (the mermaid), but as well, that of the fatal temptress. Her grasp on Egbo is inescapable like that of the ocean clam onto a drowning man. Under this motif, the narrator assigns her victim, Egbo, a peculiar sadness and an acceptance of the fate like the choice of a man to drown. Her inevitability in the characterizing process is unchangeable for the narrator and no matter the force of character that is assigned to her partner, Egbo, the finale is as predictable as Simi's origin is mysterious. Doesn't this echo Samson and Delilah? It is such direct echoes that make Soyinka's character creating process not only resemble the biblical narrative but quite expressly prove allegorical.

The expositional unfolding of these allegorical characters therefore does not start with The Interpreters. Within this strategy, these characters are presented indirectly through successive windows of other characters and entranced presentations of the character in question. Lazarus is met in the din of the excitement at the Cambana and in his impassioned speech in the church. Simi too is met in Egbo's reminiscence and in lofty sexual alluding. Subsequent direct presentation of these characters serves to bring us short as a considerable shift in character conception is revealed. In Kola's studio, Lazarus becomes a normal person who talks straight about the necessity of deceit to cash in on people's religious vulnerability in a style that echoes Bernard Shaw's Undershaft in Major Barbara. In Shaw's text, undershaft justifies the Salvation



Army's shamelessness for money. The end justifies the means as the cliché says. One realizes that Lazarus is not entirely flatly conceived. There is a dent in his roundness as he is now rogue and trickster while we have known him all along as a mystical character. However, instead of this inconsistency in allegorizing creating a tension in our sympathies for the earlier mode, through creating a contradictory block, it actually serve a synthetic purpose in that the reader's extra-textual subjectivity of a type is challenged by the experimentation of the narrative instance.

## **De-idealization**

An ideal casting is faithful to its original as closely as possible. A writer operating deconstructively on a known ideal establishes some creative departures from the ideal. When such a shift occurs in what is already a known ideal as that of the Biblical Lazarus, Soyinka is involving himself in the process of deidealization, which is controlled and confined to the revocation of traits in personality of hitherto unsuspected components of latent personality. The process does not, however, result in a radical redefinition of the allegory but gives a sense of continuity of characterization. The unfolding of this character not only relies on the obviousness of first impressions, but also on the counterbalancing of positive and negative motifs. Verisimilitude is thus not sacrificed on the alter of the folktale rigidity. The Biblical Lazarus is an ideal for creatures worthy of a resurrection. Soyinka's Lazarus is of course not. The ideal is therefore subverted. This is de-idealization.

The significant prelude to this deidealization of an allegory is brought out through the use of a fantasy, which is a dreamy casting of the Lazarus deep into the irrationality and otherness of his unconscious.

Year through I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.....  
it was in that valley that I felt the hand of God. I dreamt that I was  
walking through a field of cotton,..... (167-69)

The character professes an elaborate process of his own life in 'cotton hell' (186) injecting it here and there with the strength of Jesus to wrestle death plus a concealed plea to the terrified listeners to award his saviour a majestic dwelling place in recognition for his powers and magnanimity. This plea is ostensibly directed to Sago, the newspaperman, but the latter has not been moved to action apparently due to his highly developed sense of cynicism. He even hisses that "The man is suffering from optimistology" (166). This sparring of frenzy versus wry indifference, finally creates the counterbalanced saint and rogue that the quasi-allegorizing is aiming at. A dreamer can only be relied upon by the supplicant who has agreed to efface his/her being. For the dreamer is operating within the framework of an *interpretation*, the other side of the coin has to inevitably go up. The allegory deconstructs itself as it unfolds in character. Gikandi calls this resistance to appear meekly to received and prescribed moulds as the 'Prometheus unbound' (99) spirit in the novel. In their endeavor to make statements of free will in their lives, the characters end up being considerable protests against history. Egbo's refusal to take on the traditional chiefs mantle and Dehinwa's cross-tribal affections fall under this.

## The Gogolian Skaz (transrational quasi-psychoanalytical)

The Gogolian Skaz or the transrational quasi-psychoanalytical is a character crafting strategy in which characters reveal their identity through the particularity of their articulations 'verbal' or specific rendering of their emotions in speech. Hlestakov's brusque and breathtaking speech mannerisms establish him as an outright trickster from a psychoanalytical standpoint in Gogol's Government Inspector. So does Chichikov in Dead Souls. In literature, this character regulation strategy has been labelled as the Gogolian Skaz after these models.

Living speech performances and verbalized emotions in mimic articulation not merely narration is thus another significant character revelation strategy that Soyinka employs in a bid to alloy dramatic expressions of either speech or body gesture with intrinsic personality and situational temporal recency. It is apparent that Soyinka's characters' speech behaviour is an integral characterizing strategy. Prof. Oguazo's pomposity and ungrammatical pronouncements establish him as an empty perfunctory character to be associated with superficial scenes.

In the creation of his canonical characters, the narrator of The Interpreters in a bid to create an illusion of here and now, resorts to this strategy otherwise used more elaborately in drama works to create characters who coincide with their personality. This is a strategy of discourse creation utilizing theatrical control over character. The intellectual personage (Sagoc, Egbo, Sekoni, Kola, Joe Golder and Lasunwon) are approached in a variety of means that ensure that each of the protagonists figure is particularly illuminated with details that give the reader a direct estimate of his presence with particular singleness of focus.

The enduring tenacity of the influence of first impressions is what Soyinka capitalizes upon in creating these dynamic portraits of character patterns based on a complex of introvert traits that are gregariously dramatized but with consistency. The writer pricks the character's internal nature and then engages in a comprehensive exploration of the concomitant external possibility.

The persuasive potency of opinions formed by first encounter with the character otherwise called "Primary Recency in Impression Formation (Scholes, 164)" are first arrested by Soyinka in metaphor whose figurative metonymical possibilities are later spread throughout the fabula as a strategy for theatrical externalizations. Thus, this process actually involves the artist in encapsulating of overall personality summary which is the miniature matrice for later development. The real normative function of this technique is conscious foreshadowing. The process is not aiming at character contrasts like in Jane Austen's creation of Darcy in Pride and Prejudice whose character subverts itself, but rather as a strategy for realizing indicators for consistency. These character portraiture are therefore exegetical manifestations of the centrality of multi-fariousness of constants and semblances.

The blocks of information about these interpreters is decisively conditioned by their entries (primary effect of their entrance). The leading block of information (sometimes referential) serves as the frame of reference to which subsequent developments are subordinated. In each case, the leading block of information forms the essential nature while later descriptions either confirm or merely highlight 'exceptional' behavior which can be explained as temporary variations due to mood or circumstance. A deviation therefore in effect serves as a qualification of a previous conception of character. Kola, for example, enters the sujet as a meticulous artist with

singleness of purpose albeit to make the most out of incident and setting as part of an essential inclusion to his painting:

In such a setting', it was Kola talking, hardly taking his attention off the sketch book ...controlling every motion of the place in a rigid grasp, to all purposes a god among men..... that is how I anticipate your old man. And a wholly white head of hair. (11)

This is a portrait of an artist qua artist and among his fellows, he seems to be the one with the word to describe them and their choice of going with the tide. [Like apostates? (14)]. In the description of the club din scene, we meet him exhausting paper napkins he has forced from waiters with doodles. On failing to get more paper from the waiters, he resorts to using his palm for sketches. As the rest were celebrating their depression through muttering and complaints, Kola seems to be a character to whom creativity is a thing autonomous to circumstance.

Sagoe had begun to sense gently. Normally, Egbo would thrill to a storm, his face unnaturally animated ... using his left palm for surface, Kola resumed his sketches. Bandele fitted himself, wall gecko into a corner (16).

This information about Kola and his friends is significant since the strain in subsequent development is to construct and maintain a sympathetic correlative to this 'essential nature' even on the face of apparently objective contrary evidence. Kola in book one of The Interpreters keeps the artistic distance from the froth and din of either his friends or setting for he has after all to finish drawing the pantheon. Soyinka

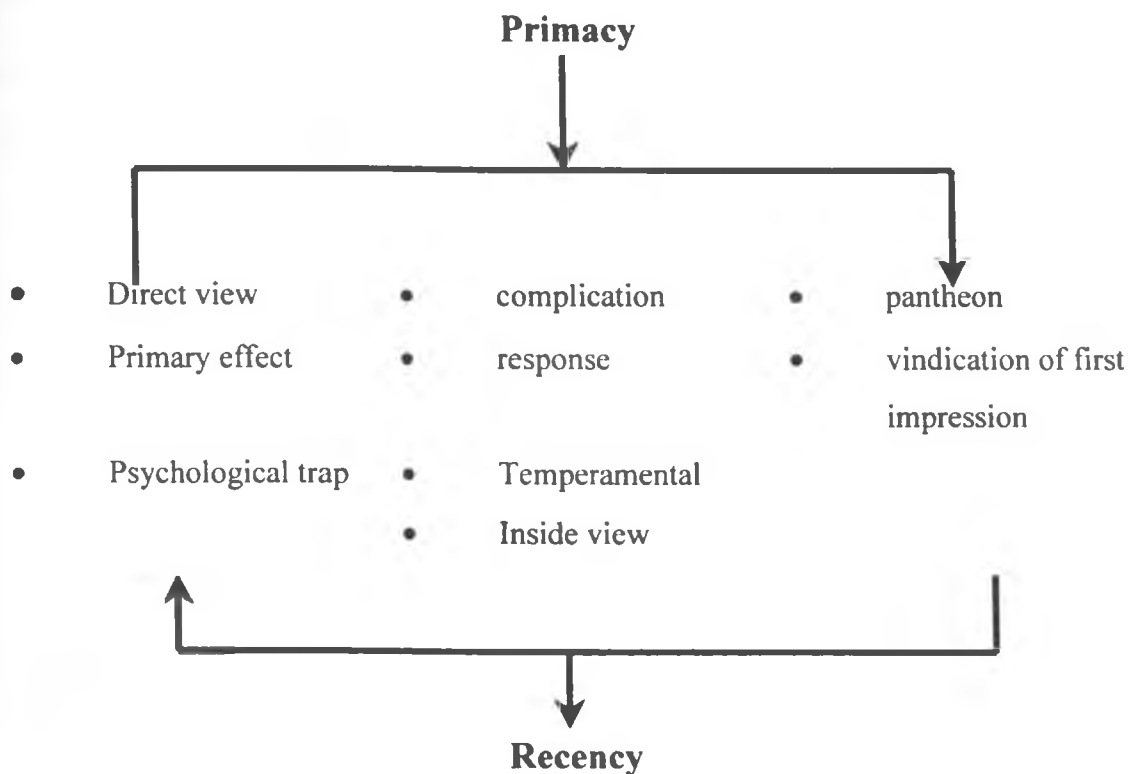
gives him a significant consistent treatment so as to settle the primacy of this effect. But this might be a way of suggesting that the author has bared all the cards to the reader even before the start of the game! This is actually the tactic. But the same author shuffles and reshuffles these cards. Noteworthy, also is the fact that Kola's past is not present in this text and so the 'continuum' starts with art and beyond. The reader therefore is unable to speculate otherwise than expected since the reader by receiving Kola as such on stage, has entered into a psychological trap. The psychic trapping here is that Kola is treated as an interpreter right from the outset:

The interpreter is one who takes up position at a center, or rather in an intermediate space, and proceeds to an exchange; for what is offered he substitutes a term of equal value, at least if he is working scrupulously (Mecherey, 75).

This is a definition of an interpreter and since Kola is the most consistent artist in this text, there is validity in establishing Kola as Soyinka's central character. Gikandi calls art as the means of 'the artists self signature and an expression of the artists ahistorical energies' (102)

Kola is a character involved in interpretive criticism of event and scene. His role seems to be that of denouncing through paint and paper the deceptive spontaneity of his friends. Soyinka engages in a critical discourse in the process of crafting Kola. Since it is impossible to create a 'faultless' character of false impressions. (Though Jane Austin tries this with Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice), this primary frame of Kola is manipulated through a tight and subtle process of subordination whose mode of integration to this primacy effect is a dynamic process mitigated by circumstantial

presences. It appears that the latter negative byways are exercises into poetic licence in character development. Kola is in effect a character portrayal through control of distance in presentational dynamic. In essence Kola's character creation may be roughly presented as follows:



So far, the primacy effect of the full grown interpreter has been unveiled as autonomous to environment. However, in later appearances, Kola is subject to emotional outbursts and temper tantrums. He is alive throughout though his dignity suffers. He is the anti-odysseusian factor. He has no time nor the inclination to reflect about his position on the moral strata. His business is purely to craft as emotions and scene make impressions on him without necessarily having to observe moralistic checks.

In his perpetual sketching, apparently an attempt to capture the chaos and arrest it in art. Kola is constantly receiving criticisms in the literary sense from Egbo in particular

and the rest through interjections. However, Lasunwon, the lawyer, is quite caustic and verging on the vindictive. Their criticisms are thus reflections of their characters' sense of alienation since the sketches have the power to disturb them. Kola is actually the centre. The others role play around him. Egbo's role is the art critic, Sagoe uses the art to comment on the critic's personality and Sekoni uses it as a spur for his depressed philosophy. Dehinwa is a secondary commentator on these, but it is Lusunwon who actually pulls out the bile out of the painter but does not succeed in distracting Kola no matter the intensity of his taunts. Kola is as well the character who is able to fall in love albeit in the illicit sense since Monica Faseyi, his partner in hopeless love is married. It is however apparent that this attraction to Monica is of a single artistic objective and so moralising on Kola would be an exercise in futility. For the moment why not explore the ramifications of this character creation against the powerful presence of love. Does it really survive the potency. How does he keep his artistic interpretive eyes focussed along this 'p-p-path to the universal D-d-dome?.

In Faseyi's house, Kola is left to talk to Monica when Usaye, the albino girl at Faseyi's enters the circle. Kola fancies her as the fit image for the Obaluwaiye (the respectable name for Sapon, the god of small-pox) whom he had almost despaired seeing on the faces of other neighbouring children. (49)

Staring at the wooden stamp, Usaye's eyelashes brushing his palms as she gave them detailed examination, Kola did not know when Monica left the room. Suddenly he was retracing the action, looking closer at the child and exclaiming softly to himself. For long he had despaired of a suitable face among the neighbouring children for Obaluwaiye's hardmaiden. and now Usaye appeared to him a near divine



intervention, color and features achieving his perfect image. He saw Usaye, he skin pure moonstone sitting at the feet of Obaluwaiye, reflecting the phase of the experiments of the divine scourge, emerging each time, clear, unmarked.(50)

This is testimony that Kola is a perpetual image searcher whatever the circumstance he finds himself in. As others are worried about questions of etiquette, he is worried and almost despairing about availability of images for his pantheon of Yoruba gods. This is the primacy expositional confrontation to the contiguity of the 'psychological positive'. Soyinka places it as a narrative antecedent reminding us of the normative implications of this static suspension which soon however receives dynamic explication. In psychological terms, this is a sequel strategy of subordinating a discordant quality in an already persuaded attitude as illustrated below:

And then there was *this other thing*, an insidious beginning of a great yearning .....at such a time surely, not the leavening presence of some tenderness to weaken the laws of his own creation... and then he heard the door of the balcony open and Bandele call to him. He turned abruptly, giving himself no time to think, and fled the house. (50)

Apparently, in this passage Soyinka reminds us that Kola operates within the fundamentals of art and just as the character is about to commit a breach, Bandele, the control role enters once again to re-establish the laws of creation which this (insidious) feeling just creeping in threatens to taint. 'Bandele's arms never ceased to surprise' (1) His presence seems to be a frozen one, a control for the interpreters as again we meet this implication in many other instances where his character is purely

dramatic and restorative. His traits are purely dramatized in actual movement around the demarcated boundaries of sanity within insanity.

The preliminary accounts of Kola are thus explicated against devices of anticipatory cautions and post-expositional checks. The anticipatory check on Kola is that he is an artist. The post-expositional checks have to operate within the dynamics that the artist figure is supposed to portray. The narrative perspective created around this very dynamic character is played upon a careful reconciliation of the ambiquity of dichotomies, albeit the psychological and the moral, whereby one wields the flag of essential being against that of decadence under the pressure of situation. It is apparent that in the maker of art, Soyinka treats Kola with spatial linkages unallied and undistorted but in the moralistic matters he only presents punctuational acquaintances. These make the character able to view from a distance and put on canvas. His interest in Monica Faseyi reveals itself as a yearning to merge or even substitute her with simi, the goddess in his pantheon. It is illuminating in the sense that, immediately she dares to unravel his confusion; 'And you are so afraid of compassion, even, of tenderness as if this might weaken you,' (225) Kola begins to work on his last figure in the pantheon like a '*demented man*' (226).

The dynamic of characterizing Sekoni, Sagoe and Joe Golder is a dramatic mimic fusion of setting and syntagmatic structural units into personified personages. The identification of these character sketches with linguistic units is a strategy that gears towards providing individuals who are beyond the arbitrariness of the language used to describe them. These characters emerge from the language they use. They are on a large scale self-defining locutions. The interlocutor cannot do much in discovering them beyond the evidence of their being, as emergent from their salient linguistic

eccentricity. The mythographers, Propp and Levi Strauss define the prototypes of myths, fairy tales and the folktale as characters who create themselves through intrinsic externalization's approaching the mythic models in which character enforces from the mythic figure. The hare in folktale for example, will only need to communicate in a lisp to establish a premordial transcendental identity.

This characterization technique is therefore a message in code. The fundamental point of interest is how these codes and their relational variants contribute to the formation of a unity. Stammering for Sekoni is a particular characterizing element, which places the individual in a stark clear position recognizable even without the narrator having to mention the character in question. Sekoni never talks, he simply struggles to utter and finally his talk is like an eruption within the chaos of experience.

Nnnihilist!' At last forced out like the sudden flow - out of air from a tyre valve. 'T-t-to be afraid of gog-g-g-goodness'. In an intelligent man, a fear of b-b-beauty or g-g-good is c.....cowardice.(22)

Incidentally, Sekoni uses these eruptions throughout the narrative. One does not see him arguing with his friends. He only gives philosophical verdicts that summarize the topics his friends are involved in. He is in effect, as Kola is, a completely metamorphosed type that is just struggling to express itself. He is arrested message and one waits with animated breath for his message to emerge. His madness and schizophrenia are therefore not illnesses but in a Dostoyevskian sense, very high levels of sensibility and a finalization of interpretation.

... what the majority calls almost fantastic and exceptional, sometimes constitutes for me the very essence of the real. (prisma II, 169).

This view of Dostoyevsky seems to form the very germ of the conception of these three apparently exceptional characters since what we see foregrounded of them is their strangeness.

Sekoni's characterizing strategy seems to be expressly in the style of the crafting of a genius of the old school in psychological terms whereby an infirmity is a symptom of deep seated creative powers and uniqueness of perception. After having faced all the frustrations upon his return to Nigeria with his engineering gifts that were despised, Sekoni loses his mind in the same aesthetic mode as the saint and prophet only to realise his true self in sculpture with his master-piece; *The wrestler*.

A wrestler in the literal sense struggles to pin down the opponent in mortal combat using the energy of his body against the challenging energetic advances of an adversary. Sekoni's speech acts and his apparent discomfiture in the company of his friends feels like frustrated energy seeking expression. He is thus a compact and terse figure throughout and all this is distilled out in his sculpture, the only self expressive independent gesture before his death, which Soyinka treats tersely with, weighty metaphor and obliqueness. Sekoni's sculpture was a 'tortured act of wood.' (155) He had crafted this piece in a period of dumpness with Kola and Egbo as witnesses to this burst of power.

... but Sekoni had kept this knowledge within him until his power burst out of itself, in a work seemingly divorced, of much pain and pity. Obscuring his own identity (220).

Incidentally, Soyinka vouchsafes information about the seriousness of the sculpture during the tense search for Lazarus' church by Kola and Egbo, thus creating an illusion of a denser strain within a tight canvas. Though Kola's pantheon is 'weight' (228) he concedes that he is not an artist if put alongside Sekoni. The wrestler therefore as an art form, forms a concretised image of the mimic illusion of Sekoni, whose unveiling process is by far the most involving emotionally. The aesthetic significance of this sketch is that through what the character says and how he says it, combined with the products of his detached involuntary creation, a character is realised.

Sagoe's voidance philosophy though lightly dismissed by E.D. Jones as a product of Soyinka, the lighthearted essayist in the mood of 'salutations of the gut'. (Reflections ed. Ademeta) is a serious characterising element for this character as an evolved 'spiritual reproachment with a world of stresses and discord' (72). The voidance philosophy, which defines Sagoe, is called by him as his; 'sense of dedication to the systematic study and objectivisation of digestive behaviorism in a sensitive child. I responded to the well-known posture of a quick finish and be-gone at other times I experienced a self-communion, a resolution, acceptance, peace attainment.... (72).

It follows therefore that this philosophy is the character of Sagoe himself. It is full of metaphorical terms with evaluative hints which provide a proactive image of their use. Soyinka in Talking with African Writers has expressed his affinity to the metaphysical poet John Donne whose predominant use of metaphor defines his literary style where the image projects worldview and its adherent user (the fictional character), the embodiment of its essence. Nathaniel Hawthorne's creation of a character in The Scarlet Letter of to this canon. This is an interpretation of ones

philosophy of life, psyche and personality and the author who explores these materials in character sketching is in effect engaged in a process of alloying narrative presence with psychological essence. In a post-romantic sense, metaphor is character and character is metaphor. Sagoe takes drink and shitting as aesthetic experiences and, by extension, aesthetic experiences just like aesthetic objects are capable of eliciting character. Voidance therefore is Sagoe and Sagoe is voidance. The mention of one automatically evokes the other.

It is Sagoe who metaphorically mentions his seat of selfdom; the drink lobes, which he feels the club din is disturbing. To Sagoe, such discoveries of his deep-seated sensibilities are expressed in metaphor as inborn qualities of quaint-essence. One is meant to understand that his characterization process is a product of a delicate process seeking for confirmations where one can feel fully peaceful within chaos. The philosophy of shit is what Soyinka uses to craft this protagonist.

.... Of - isms I dirge this day, from homoeopathic Marxism to existentialism. If I am personal, it is because in giving the history of myself, I do neither more nor less than uncover the mystery of my philosophical development for this is one Ritualism for which I am indebted to no predecessor but the entire world of humanity, this is one vision for which I acknowledge no cause but the immutable laws of nature. If I am personal, it is because this must rank as the one true philosophy in human existence. Functional, spiritual creative or ritualistic, voidancy remains the one true philosophy of the Egoist - voidancy is the last uncharted mine of creative energies, its paradox lies the kernel of creative liturgy - in release is birth. (71)

Sagee's philosophy at length is a complete summary of a character-creating process. It sums up like notes on a preparatory pad, the signposts around which the characters of the personages in the text are to be revealed. When Sagee thought of this philosophy, he would achieve 'beatific passivity' (187). This is an element in the craft whereby for a creation to participate in the interpretive program, one has to be like a philosophy (a philosophy is a program of action within an environment that threatens to annihilate its ideal existence). From a psychological standpoint, the philosophy of Sagee and Sekoni's wrestler are synaesthetic stylised expressions correspondingly analogous to character unifications. The full realizations of these characters in a climate of disunity is made manifest by their unconsciously mastered speech performances amid mimetic articulations like sculpture and painting.

These peculiar traits function as pantomime and their appearances function as emblematic accompaniments. The importance of these 'static' references is an echo of Soyinka the dramatist in which the artist for purposes of compressing narrative time, has to present as soon as possible the obvious trait either the caricature or an abstractive idealization.

In the process of achieving the unity of plot and character, the author has to utilize several vessels and strategies of narration through which the narrative is not only told, but dramatized as well. This factor which is the one purely artistic engagement for the author is assigned to the narrator through whose voice the narrative issues like rays of light reflecting from a dynamic prism.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## NARRATOR STANCES

It is through the selection of varied narrative stances that Soyinka of The Interpreters transports the reader through the narrative with the narrator as the agent. In the expressly literary engagement of narration, the writer is exercising a variety of narrating strategies. Narration creates the plot and the characters that traverse it.

### Restricted and Self Restricted Narration

Dorothy Richardson commenting on the literary technique of James Joyce, claims that the modern novelist has shown a distinct departure from the way in which the conventional novels unrolled themselves in majestic leisure with the author constantly telling the story omnisciently to the extent of knowing everything about his characters. Novelists like Tolstoy are known to claim the privilege of being confidants to the secrets of their creations and may even unrestrictedly claim the knowledge of the passions that govern the conscience of young women (who themselves might be unaware of them). The first person narration and the third person narrative position myths are confusing distinctions since the narrator as the mediator of the story stuff can hardly sustain any of these positions to the end. For purposes of informational distribution, the narrator - agent merges these positions and for the benefit of realistic communicativeness and the recognition of personal limitations, the omniscient like narrator utilizes techniques of restrictedness in order



to avoid extravagant declarations of knowledge which might ridiculously fail to convince.

Soyinka consciously flaunts his omniscience by drawing attention to the existence of gaps in his confidence. He impresses on the reader that he could clear the informational gaps by entering the minds of his characters. His characters talk in a state of semi-consciousness as though they were aesthetic patients divulging their secrets. The narrator of The Interpreters is manifestly the omniscient aided by the interpretation of it (the narration) by others (characters).

Soyinka's procedure indicates the constant shift in point of view whereby the narrator avoids absolute arbitrariness and majesty of knowledge. His expositional exigencies have a limited access to information and through this agent, he can manipulate gaps temporary and permanent in a realistic guise that delegates his task to a humanly limited agent. We do not find the narrator giving promises of an exposition or deliberately withdrawing information as though he had the monopoly of his secret stuff which writers invariably will be forced to apologize to the reader like the narrator in Dostoyevsky in his Raw Youth:

Before describing the extraordinary events which took place so recently in our town... I find it necessary, since I am not a skilled writer, to go back a little and begin with certain biographical details concerning our talented and greatly esteemed Stephan Trofinovich Virkhovensky. I hope these details will serve as an introduction to the social and political chronicle of our town (18).

The tone of the narrator indicates that the reader has been promised a description of 'extra-ordinary' events in a narrative that is yet to be executed. The indication that the narrator has been compelled to resort to biographical evidence is a plea to the background to mediate between him and the hopeful reader.

The above apology has covert aesthetic implications and not artistic ends. The humanly restricted narrator in The Interpreters however communicates through giving concentrated exposition *ab novo* (irrespective of whether he gives reasons for doing so). To this narrator, biographical justification for apparent traits in scene and character are secondary and only implicit for their artistic value per se.

Even children knew of Simi. Wives knelt and prayed that their men might sin a hundred times with a hundred women, but may their erring feet never lead them to Simi of the slow eyelids. For then men lost hope of salvation, their homes and children became ghosts of a past illusion, learning from Simi a new view of life and love, immersed in a cannibal's reality..... (50).

The narrator does not set covert principles for his selection of materials but self-restrictedly selects and combines communicative material as is aesthetically possible. The reader's expectation is not apparently canalized but is left to wander freely in inferential suspension. The above extract about Simi is an effusion of a narrative strategy that aims at surprise for the reader and the engaging of their attention in both Aristotelian and Forstian terms. Chinua Achebe in Arrow of God resorts to extra-artistic digressions of having to describe Ezeulu's attire and regalia in a bid to justify his mention of the 'Alo' staff and the 'Ozo' title.

Soyinka's self restrictedness suggests a literal authenticity of character and scene since it is intended to compromise the manipulations of scene and setting with the handling of compositional material of the persona. Thus foreknowledges for example in Simi's case, are treated not as innocent autobiographical materials but as opened boxes of fate.

The excerpt about Simi quoted above however, represents one of the narrators considerable shifts in narrative attitude since it is completely disambiguated and is sharing privileged information rather than withholding the informational privilege in metaphor and allusion. The self-restricted narrator at this point affords to be omniscient in that the reader senses the author's primary concern with character over plot. In this strain of narration, though the narrator has plunged in medias res about Simi, the chronological handling of material about her, redeems the reader from the jungle of delayed discovery. The message about the character seems credible since the narrator has not performed an absention from the persona. In Soyinka's prose, this represents a drastic playing down of expositional gaps. The writer presents to us the secrets known to him and the effect is that as far as the confidence between the reader and narrator is concerned, Soyinka does not at that point intend to climb to olympian heights. Such a stance represents Soyinka's unsuppressed omniscience but at length, we discover that this is not the major narrating position. Elsewhere in the novel, concealment, retrospection and manipulation of gaps are utilized and in this sense, Soyinka tries to establish autonomy of knowledge and keep close to himself the informational privilege. This stance completely dispenses with the fabula for even though the traditional narrative constantly compels the narrator to stick to a

recognizable time sequence, the drive in this novel seems dictated by a desire to maintain an apparently self-resolving ambiguity.

The realistic explanation for deviations of the narrator from Fabula is found in the self-conscious narrator.

## **The Self Conscious Narrator**

The suppression, delay and distribution of exposition material through the narrator agent represents a psychological quasi-mimetic aesthetic plot position in which action filters through an implied vessel of consciousness. Soyinka does this self-conscious narration in two main ways, first, he invests the character with special or distancing traits and secondly, he superimposes plot like structure as aesthetic motivations for the lives of some of his characters. The characters in the second instance are figurative embodiments of an implied plot.

This is a Jamesian technique (Ulysses) of narration in which the novel confuses the reader with what the narrator knows and what it chooses to divulge. The purpose for this kind of narration is that the author expressly in a Jamesian sense is purely aesthetically motivated and so the insertions, whether preliminary or delayed are in a concentrated form and in the form of blocks addressed to the reader. But this process of thrusting purely expositional material down the throats of the reader can be disgusting. Soyinka in dealing with this dramatizes these blocks using scene and interscenic commentary so as to drug the reader into recognizing his fictive world. Hardly does Sagoe shift into his voidating philosophy, than the narrator injects an implied explanation of the same. The self-conscious narrator is aware that such

deliberate choices of character blocks need contextual justification. In the absence of these contextual comments, the characters would seem like mental subjects in convulsions.

Character is therefore dramatized and the summary time is very close to the time of the discriminated occasion of exposition unlike in a Dostoyevsky (crime and punishment), where the discriminated occasions of exposition are mainly distanced consequences of a distant time. The scenic norm dominates the narrator's focus and so one even wonders whether it is an exposition at all. The sujet time at the beginning of The Interpreters is not identical to the fabula time and as well the scene of Egbo's paddler's journey decades ago is compressed in a single day. The same applies to Sekoni's journey home and frustration. The narrator has self-consciously alloyed cause and effect and projected them as a unity in the form of a dramatized admixture. In the effort to simultaneously present antecedents and finalizations, the narrator ends up giving composites.

Soyinka's narrative strategy seems to use the self-conscious narrator as an agent of sujet manipulation in the same way Conrad uses Marlow to deform Kurtz's in only one glance. There is a conscious avoidance of presenting event and character successively. The first glance like a glance at a portrait in a gallery is what is given. It is not a case of presenting the picture in the process of its making, right from its sketch to its finalisation.

This self-conscious narrator in Soyinka's novel however is aware of the necessity of affecting the transition between action and antecedents. The author quite often cuts into the narrative by interjecting observations within characters dialogues.

So you are Joe Golder, I met a friend of your only yesterday ...?"

Often it's only a manner of speaking. Sagoe was becoming irritated with reason.

In this novel, the author hardly gives his characters the privilege of un-interrupted dialogue as Joyce does in *Ulysses*. The self-consciousness behind this strategy is that The Interpreters time spirit is so compressed between action and antecedent such that the explanatory interjection is inevitable.

However, Soyinka further shifts his narration to the almost exclusive dramatic and verbal activities of the characters. These are the vessels of consciousness. This device otherwise called stream of consciousness is an architectural principle of bringing the information through the sense of unity or even disunity of the persona's mind. Sekoni and Sagoe are such vessels.

The narrator consistently restricts the narrativism to presenting things that only the consciousness of the dramatic persona chooses to select, combine and distribute. The persona's vision and interpretation is the window of consciousness and the author's role is to engage into conspicuous ignorance with the reader within the dramatic arena. The feeling it evokes is that the author could easily narrate the psychological states of these characters but he leaves them to present themselves well knowing what they will say and do. The idea of the invisible but omnipresent God prevails. The compositional game is therefore to constantly postulate character as the centre performing a dramatic role with an aesthetic significance. Therefore, it is only through the mirror of Soyinka's sentient figures that one is able to draw the artistic or

even thematic attributes of the narrative. Sagoe for example with his voidance philosophy (71), which he gives to Mathias, is a dramatic channel of information. His quest for self communion is not narrated; it is rather dramatized by the character within context.

This is Soyinka's strategy of dispensing with the arbitrary omniscient narrator by giving the desired narrating intelligence to the unself-conscious dramatic persona and after this happens, the author sees no need of suppressing gaps as happens in part two of the novel since the narrator's angle of vision is to adhere to the already established gaps in the antecedents. This strategy however, makes the author fall into the trap of Trollop's censure where the modern novelist sacrifices or subordinates the portrayal of character and psychology to the manipulation of narrative dynamics. On the contrary, the manipulation of chronology and distortion through characters, far from distancing the reader from the vessel's inner conflict, realistically focuses on significant psychological implications albeit in the principles of selection and combinations. Directly, this has a bearing on the illuminated insights of the vessel's consciousness which in this novel is disenchantment. Sekoni's stammering is a case in point. When he finally fills the informational gap by saying that his efforts were deemed 'J-J Junk', the disambiguation between technique and theme is apparent.

This self-conscious narrative mode consequently makes a tight but flexible distance between the reader and the text. Using these characters as the vessels for information communication establishes a sympathy between the vessel of vision and the perceiver as is the case with Joe Golder's homosexual and colour inferiority confessions.

It is a strategy, which Soyinka uses to reconcile disparities in hypotheses: the arbitrarily omniscient and the self-restricted through the unselfconscious vessel mediated by a self-conscious narrator. Through such vessels as the persona Joe Golder, Soyinka is able to anticipate and resolve the psychological improbability of his quasi-mimetic disclosure by using the character to lay bare the device himself. His characters are engaged in a form of autobiography which at the functional level creates a disinterested curiosity with a sympathetic air.

This point of view for Soyinka through dramatised exposition creates a complex actional framework dissolving it in a consolidated admixture of plot, character implied author and the reader into a binding concentrated aesthetic unity which tempts the realistic to marry with the aesthetic.

## **The Omniscient Histor**

In this stance of narration, the reader can confidently say that the author and not the narrator is the voice behind the words.

The histor is narrator as inquirer, constructing a narrative as inquirer,  
Constructing a narrative on the basis of such evidence as he has been  
Able to accumulate. The history is not a character in narrative, but  
He is a persona, a projection of the authors empirical virtues.  
(Scholles and Kelly, 266)

Critics have labelled this strategy of narrative stance as the narration of super sobriety. In novels like Tolstoy's War and Peace and Fielding's Tom Jones, this strain of



narration is richly present. It is a literally moralizing narrative stance in which the narrator strongly suggests to the reader what to feel. History of criticism has rendered down this stance as the concept of the intrusive author.

This concept of intrusion is no more than the narrator exercising his/her license. Classic examples are found in Thomas Hardy's The Return Of The Native where the narrative voice is a subjective but intelligent observer. Hardy constantly suggests to the reader what the observer would have made of scene and character albeit the emotions and actions of his empirical narrator.

Had a looker-on been posted in the immediate vicinity of the barrow, he would have learned that these persons were boys and men of the neighboring hamlets ..... (Native,15)

Hardy not only forces the reader to be an observer like his narrator, but an ascetic interpreter of life as well.

The narrator in the omniscient histor freely emerges as the so-called intrusive narrator and then submerges in a character 'central intelligence' (Kelly 270). This concept has been extensively developed by Joyce and Henry James.

In The Interpreters, Soyinka's omniscient histor is distributed among his main interpreters (Egbo, Sagoe, Sekoni, Kola, Bandele and Kola).

By this strategy, Soyinka's narrator not only reveals scenes that these characters have attended but also scenes the characters have not including mental scenes. The narrator at the Lazarus church scene freely sifts through actual scene presence and psychological reality:

In spite of the small group which stood *alienated* by the side of the lagoon, *oblivious of their presence*, a ripe field of corn swept past again and again, pausing for prayers at the door. Then the breeze would swell once more, white sails and light raffia sails on mused earth, and a hundred hands lifted Noah and the cross *till they felt themselves routed and grounded superfluous*. Bandele broke his silence. 'I would not have been curious to hear Lazarus if Sekoni had not recently died. Deep inside me I suppose that was why I came? Egbo looked into the darkness of the deserted church. 'What did you think Lazarus could tell you? Bandele shrugged. 'I was curious. It gave me a strange feeling to sit opposite him at that table and hear him claim that he had died. (181, emphasis mine).

The omniscient narrator in this extract freely filters through time and space. Artistically, through this device Soyinka's narrator is not only the eyewitness but also the secret sharer in the psychological processes of the characters. The omniscient narrator in this case resolves an apparent 'disunity' of points of view by being versatile.

For an artist like Soyinka who is also a dramatist, this strategy helps him resolve the challenges of drama (showing) and narration (telling). The Interpreters therefore is immensely a narration that moves simultaneously in two directions. This is an ironic gap in which Soyinka crosses freely and thus gives the text a feeling of a constant shift from drama to telling and vice versa.

This counter-directional movement of the narrator in The Interpreters puts the reader in two simultaneous paths of comprehension. The one direction, the telling where the

narrator gives a distanced account from the characters dialogues forces the reader to accept a resolution to the novels meaning which is however limited. The other strain, (the drama) compels the reader to reduce the scene into a single meaning. This is because one is apt to succumb to the authority of the dramatis personae from their dialogue and movements. But this plunges the reader straight into the ironic gap and the narrator has to come in and rescue the victim from this misguided assurance.

Joe Golder's character rendering through telling and drama is a classic omniscient histor marker. His character in drama is mainly characterized with bellows and melanchonic musings on the misfortune of his colour complex. The lecturer of African history is a black American who is apparently trying to be a real black African and as a consequence becomes mentally maladjusted on his craving for authentic identity. When he appears as a model for Kola's pantheon, the rendering of his life through drama and narration helps resolve the ironic gaps that had hitherto kept the reader puzzled about why he is such an anachronism.

Kola was apprehensive. He was in no mood to deal with Golder's periodic fits of depression, self-hatred and physical abasement. For he knew the various faces of his disease. Joe Golder sitting for his portrait, breaking down all at once and beginning to weep shamelessly, without restraint. He had said once, 'you should paint me as one of those Indian gods, Hermaphrodite'. Kola laughed and said, 'you should be surprised we have a few gods like that. In one area they are male in another female'. – 'NO there is more precision in your gods, as if they made up their minds from the beginning: the remaining confusion is only in the minds of chroniclers. And your carvings of

them are strong, masculine. Even in the female deities. Organically Indian gods are hermaphrodite, neither, nor'. And with a face fiercely distorted, with an anguish, which Kola foolishly, vainly tried to place on canvas with anger and deep self-hatred, Joe Golder would bellow suddenly, 'God! They disgust me'. Hunched on a stool like a soul deformed, Joe Golder began to weep out his life. (215)

After this promise of Joe Golder weeping out his life the reader is confronted with a dramatised rendition of Golder's history and his homosexual escapades with his students. Soyinka's narrator does not allow Golder to weep out his life but the reader is left to wrestle with the 'time spirit' in an effort to reconcile the drama and the told story.

This omniscient histor technique is like comments for a Jazz rhythm coming simultaneously with the progressive plucking or beating of the instruments. This Jazz element is hinted at in chapter 18 of book two, when Soyinka's narrator deliberately drops in lines from Louis Armstrong's popular Jazz song 'I feel like a motherless child'

This line is sandwiched between paragraphs that 'tell' about the lives of the interpreters and Joe Golder. It seems like a background song urging the reader to connect the current lives of the interpreters with the Negro blues spirit. The Negro blues derive their logic from the singer's constant mention of his/her predicament until the mere repetition of this line effectively purifies the singer's feelings of sorrow through inverse invocation.

The lives of the interpreters who choose to ride with the tide and thoroughly suffer their sense of alienation in a desire to purge themselves, is no less than this logic of the Negro spiritual. As Soyinka's characters are struggling with the naivete and discomfort of the social dogmas of their time, the narrative voice seems to be in combat with narrative legislative tradition. This gives rise to the omniscient historian who has express empirical resemblances with Soyinka, the author. Soyinka by assigning the task of narration to these several narration trajectories achieves plot, character, scene, and their attendant literary nuances.

# CONCLUSION

The analysis of plot, characterisation and narration strategies have served to extricate Soyinka's artistic commitment from the suffocating mass of studies of extra-artistic motivation. It has ascertained that when placed within the stream of literary history, The Interpreters will slide and fit into the canon of text that express the artist's ahistorical exigencies both in temperament and execution.

Soyinka's choice of plot structuring, character creation and different narratological positions are deliberate and not accidental scribblings. The whole exercise seems to be a struggle against history (literary and existential). In an attempt to construct a meaning out of the meaninglessness of their station in life, Soyinka's characters end up withdrawing from common society and recreating the unreality of their frustrated aspirations in reminiscing, dreaming, philosophising and liquor. The rendering of such a dizzying actuality is thus communicated by Soyinka through a device equally withdrawn in a bid to create an artistic correlative to alienated personalities.

Readings of texts from such a stylistic push are apt to be dubbed critical dissections, which find beauty in the post-mortem rather than in the living process. But this is exactly what the interpreters in Soyinka's text are engaged in, id est, the making of music out of the fragmentation of their present reality. Needless to say that it did not take Freud to discover the 'weakening' of emotions by excessive introspection into the meaninglessness of existence: Golyadkin and Raskolnikov had gone through these motions with thoroughness and the interpreters of Soyinka are just but descendants of a disturbing social reality, whose capturing in prose is an author's plunge into audacity.

Consequently, the expectations of many a reader are frustrated by the narrator's push to organize the energies of the characters' interpretive energies (emotional and intellectual) within a setting that is efficiently tailored to frustrate the same. Therefore it irritates the social and literary tradition by giving no aim to the heroes 'like the choice of going with the tide' (3). Style and character parodies bring no satisfaction to the reader's sense of change but the strength of the text lies in the symbolisation of the social activities that traverse it.

Crosscutting Soyinka's narrative in The Interpreters is this attitude of a historicism, which challenges the readers who belong to the cult of clearness. The product vindicates itself of charges of obscurity with its aesthetic effects. The fundamental question that the text asks and answers is purely artistic.

The Interpreters thus presents a cognitive structure upon which interpreters can hang their themes as they interpret the literariness of the novel. This is because, the author and his dramatis personae are engaged in issues close to their heart, and not merely the spontaneous outbursts from the crudely assembled social canvas.

In summation, the study has determined that The Interpreters is a narrative that utilizes generally accepted features of language to special effect. The patterning is a culmination of a successful experiment with available linguistic and stylistic 'deviant features' whose execution in plot and characterization achieve the distinct entity that the text is.

The study has also demonstrated that, Soyinka has utilized different narratological stances to bring to life the characters, scene and a plot that interprets an aesthetic tradition within a title that is no less literary.



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