"THE UNACKNOWLEDGED NEGRITUDE IN AFRICAN ANGLOPHONE POETS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOYINKA, OKIGBO & ACHEBE"

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This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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C O N T E N T S

A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

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A B S T R A C T

The negritude concept has never been easy to define. However, from the various definitions and interpretations of the movement, one soon realizes that generally speaking negritude is a black literary movement which expresses the black man's assertion of his cultural values in the face of white domination and hangovers from the colonial era. This assertion is to be found in both African anglophone and francophone poets, and yet, in spite of this, negritude is often seen as a francophone preserve. To disprove this assumption the present thesis analyses representative anglophone poetry, namely, the poetry of Soyinka, Okigbo and Achebe, alongside francophone poetry and establishes that there is negritude in African anglophone poetry. Through a study of these post-independent anglophone poets, it also establishes that the movement has not altogether phased out of active black struggle even with the attainment of political independence.

The introduction briefly discusses some of the definitions of negritude and also examines the crisis that occasioned it. The crisis was the double scourge of slave trade and colonization, a crisis that hit both the areas that would later come to be known as French Africa and British Africa. This is a crucial point to mention in any assessment of negritude. Yet most criticism of the movement gives the impression that only French black subjects had cause to react against the said crisis.

The main body of the thesis - in three chapters - discusses the issues raised above. Each chapter deals with one broad umbrella of what are generally acknowledged as negritude themes. "Of Childhood: Birth/Initiation," the first chapter, essentially deals with the reappraisal of the autochthonous cultures, in this case traditional African cultures, by the autochthon who is threatened by cultural alienation. The difference in the colonial policies of France and England is reflected in the poetry discussed here. The French assimilation policy produces an exaggerated passion for the autochthonous culture; there is

a valorization of traditional cultures that is generally absent in the more sedate anglophone search for cultural roots. But the main thing is that there is a coming back to the sources in both the francophone and anglophone poetry; the motivation for this is also one. Here is underscored the proposition that a people seek stability in their own cultural roots during times of crises.

In the second chapter, "Life and Death," poetry that exhibits a juxtaposition of Europe and Africa is discussed. Life-devaluing aspects of European culture and therefore social systems are rejected in favour of life-affirming values in African cultures. This juxtaposition is not meant to be an equation of Africa with life and Europe with death, and therefore a purgation of Africa. It simply delineats what negritude reacts against, namely, the European capitalist-individualist ethos as it threatens more or less traditional socialist communities. The devastation of Africa through European exploitive expansion is highlighted. The European brand of Christianity, couched in this capitalist-individualist culture, is seen as directly responsible for the death of traditional African religions. Its preaching of the individual's salvation is shown as contributing to the fragmentation of cohesive communities, for it helps to devalue the now-life by preaching individualist action in this life for a better after-life. Where does hope for resistance and renewal lie?

The "ancestor" theme in African poetry emerges as the evocation of that, in traditional African communities, which resists alien threats as manifested in colonialism and the legacy it left behind after political freedom - neo-colonialism. The so-called ancestor worship is in effect a ritualization of filial respect, whose cultural function is to be seen in the corporate responsibility realized in ancestor-based social set-ups. The socialist trend in African writing is not necessarily explained by Marxism, seeing that corporate responsibility - a condition for socialism - is found in traditional African communities. This is the essential argument in the third chapter, "Renewal and Perpetuation: Theme of Ancestors and Corporate Personality."

The conclusion is a summary of the "discovery" that there

is negritude in anglophone poetry that goes unacknowledged. It also makes it clear that negritude as a term came to designate a black awareness which preceded that naming. The identification of any one black writer with the movement is, therefore, wrong. Furthermore, differences in the expression of this awareness must be accepted, for different black writers, as artists, have different styles arising out of their diverse backgrounds. It is here in the conclusion that Cesaire, the coiner of "negritude," is referred to at some length. His Return to My Native Land is briefly matched with the "discovered" anglophone negritude, and the concerns revealed in both are essentially depicted as belonging to the same black awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Negritude, like culture, belongs to that category of concepts which can accommodate several layers of meaning and therefore render itself open to a variety of interpretations and definitions. But to isolate a single aspect and uphold it as a definition of the whole, is not only misleading but false. Although it is generally held in certain quarters that the movement phased out of active black struggle with political independence, it is the proposition of this thesis that the spirit of this movement is still with us now; not only among the francophone blacks but also in anglophone Africa. In order to ascertain whether negritude has died out or merely changed cloaks, it is pertinent to review the circumstances of its birth, examine its historical ramifications and identify the various interpretations as expressed through poetry and criticism of black literature.

Negritude as a literary movement took root in Paris among the Black intellectuals of French expression. No precise date can be given for the actual birth of the movement, because though the most coherent as some kind of literary ideology, negritude is part of that awareness by the black man of his unique presence in a colonial situation. Sunday Anozie writes: "the concept itself can be traced back to the famous nineteenth century Liberian writer and nationalist, Edward Blyden."[1] However, the term negritude was coined in the early thirties by the black Martiniquian poet-politician, Aime Cesaire. He is thus generally regarded by many as the father of the movement. But other blacks gave the movement active sympathy. Leopold Sedar Senghor, the Senegalese president, has come to be regarded as its high priest

and full-voiced exponent, a situation that has sadly resulted in partial, or even whole, identification of Senghor with the movement. According to Senghor, these were the circumstances of negritude's birth:

> We were then plunged with some other negro students in a sort of panic desperation. The horizon was plugged up, no reform in prospect and colonizers legitimated our political and economic dependence by the theory of clean sweep. They esteemed that we had neither invented, nor created, nor written, nor sculptured, nor painted nor sung anything. To set our own and effective revolution, we had first to put off our borrowed dresses, those of assimilation and affirm our being, that is our negritude. Although defined as the 'mass of cultural values of black Africa,' it could only offer us the start of the solution of one problem and not the entire solution itself. We could not come back to the situation of yesteryear, to the negritude of the sources. We were not living under the Askias of Songhai, not even under Chaka the Zulu. We were students of Paris and of the twentieth century of which one of the realities is the awakening of national consciousness and a century of which another fact, more realistic again, is the interdependence of peoples and continents. To be truly ourselves, we ought to embody the negro-African culture in the realities of the twentieth century. For our negritude to be an effective instrument of liberation, instead of a section of the museum, we had to shake off the dust and assert it in the international movement of the contemporary world.[2]

Negritude, then, was a natural and specific reaction against a specific crisis – the colonial situation which affected both the French African peoples and the British African peoples. In fact, because slavery had the same exploitative characteristics, the trans-Atlantic black man was also suffering under the same duress. Listen to what Aime Cesaire said during the First International Conference of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris, 1956:

> We may accordingly consider this Congress from two points of view, both of them equally valid, namely that this Congress is a return to the sources, a phenomenon characteristic of all communities in times of crisis, while, it is at the same time an assembly of men who must

> get to grips with the same harsh reality,
> hence men fighting the same fight and sustained
> by the same hope.
> For my part I can see no incompatibility between
> the two things. On the contrary, I believe
> the two aspects to be complementary and that
> our bearing, which may seem to indicate hesitation
> and embarrassment between the past and the future,
> is in fact only natural, seeing that it is inspired
> by the idea that the shortest way to the future
> is always one that involves a deep understanding
> of the past.[3]

I quote at length not only to bring out the similarity between this statement on the congress and Senghor's on negritude, but also to stress that during a time of crisis it is natural that a people seek stable ground in their own tradition. Thus negritude (as it manifests itself in the themes treated in black poetry) although occasionally described as a literary ideology, was in part a natural reaction against the colonial situation - the European dominance in Africa and the white superiority and racism across the Atlantic. This was the crisis. In spite of the foregoing, however, many definitions of negritude hardly do the movement any justice. It is these wanting definitions that are largely responsible for unacknowledged negritude in Anglophone African writers, which this thesis proposes to analyse.

First then, a cursory look at some of these definitions, before outlining the colonial crisis that did not leave out what was British Africa, and against which, we have seen, negritude was a reaction. Negritude has not been easy to define because of its dynamic character; definition and the manifestations of the movement in the poetic practice have not always concurred. Any definition that has not taken into account the dynamics of negritude has fossilized itself leaving the movement alive; and perhaps this is the case now. It now seems very clear that the crisis which brought about negritude has not disappeared with the attainment of independence. Most African states have adopted the colonial government machinery and economic system. Racism (defined as "only one element in a larger whole, namely the systematic oppression of a people")[4] is still rampant not only across the Atlantic and in South Africa,

but even in the independent black nations as evidenced by the window-dressing policy in the promotion of Africans working in white firms. Is the fight against these no more? Jean-Paul Sartre has given negritude a Marxist interpretation in Black Orpheus,[5] a prefatory essay to Senghor's Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poësie Nègre et Malgache de Langue Française. This definition or interpretation sees negritude as an "anti-racist-racism" which will destroy itself upon the achievement of its first objective and pour itself inevitably into the struggle of the workers all over the world. Sartre's "anti-racist-racism" should be understood in the light of the foregoing definition of racism. Races must of course continue their existence. The evils of capitalism transcend races, and the solution does not lie in the creation of one human race as regards simple accidental differences amongst the races, for instance, colour or a particular vocation resulting from a unique geographical locality. It would be impossible, indeed, to create a human race of farmers only. Racism is here seen in its oppressive political and economic manifestations. In thus giving the movement its historical perspective Sartre affirms its dynamic character, and by the same token does justice to negritude as a natural reaction, in the face of a specific crisis. Senghor has often had to define and redefine negritude. These definitions, in my view, are all equally valid, as they find evidence in some of the poetry. However, none of them should be taken as absolute. Some of his definitions are closer in sentiment to Sartre's, especially the last sentence of the second definition quoted below:

> Negritude . . . is not the defence of a skin or colour. Negritude is not even attachment to a particular race, our own, although such attachment is quite legitimate. Negritude is the awareness, defence and development of African values . . . It is the awareness by a particular social group or people of its own situation in the world and the expression of it by means of the concrete image. . . . Negritude is part of Africanity, and as such is part of human civilization.[6]

> Negritude is the sum total of the values of the civilization of the African world. It is not racialism, it is culture. It is the embracing and domination of a situation in order to apprehend

> the cosmos by the process of coming to terms with it. Because it is a symbiosis of particular determinisms . . . geographical and ethnic . . . negritude is rooted in these and takes from them the colour of its original style. But historically it does this in order to transcend these, as life transcends the matter from which it arises.[7]

Once again Cesaire is echoed - "the shortest way to the future is always one that involves a deep understanding of the past." Refusal to accept negritude as a dynamic movement has merely produced partial truths for definitions.[8] Cesaire's most quoted definition is to be found in his long poem Return to my Native Land. Incidentally, the title itself is some kind of definition:

> my negritude is not a stone.
> nor deafness flung out against the clamour
> of the day
> my negritude is not a white speck of dead water
> on the dead eye of the earth
> my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral
>
> it plunges into the red flesh of the soil
> it plunges into the blazing flesh of the sky
> my negritude riddles with holes
> the dense affliction of its worthy patience.[9]

Cesaire's definition obviously speaks of something dynamic and forceful. Thus there are many definitions, some more total than others. But what emerges as significant is that negritude is something black, but although black, dynamic enough to be placed in a historical perspective; dynamic enough to allow many to agree with Sartre's Marxist interpretion of the movement. In other words, to see negritude not as merely ending in the defence of colour, but fighting on to change a system that asserts that a people can live without a culture, thereby killing their will to live. More than this, or rather what is so clearly on the surface is the going-back-to-the-roots attitude that is affirmed in these definitions - the implied acknowledgement that a people will naturally seek their roots in times of crises. It would be sheer obstinacy to fail to see negritude as a manifestation of this natural tendency. Now, what was the crisis against which negritude was a natural and specific reaction?

Although the dark skin and the surviving elements of African culture (both here in Africa and among the trans-Atlantic black

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peoples) help to define the black man, the double scourge of slavery and colonialism remains a significant factor in such a definition. René Maran's Batouala and Ayi Kwei Armah's Two Thousand Seasons vividly reveal what it must have felt like for the small, hitherto cohesive black communities when slave trade and colonialism struck. Slave trade, which became regulated in the seventeenth century, took on alarming proportions in the century that followed when yearly 30,000 to 35,000 people were shipped from Africa to America. It does not call for a very fertile imagination to even guess what this did to the indigenous African cultures. The nineteenth century saw slave trade grind to a halt and the scramble for Africa take ascendancy. It also saw enslavement, the exploitation of the black man, thrive through subtle disguises. David Livingstone and other missionaries, as they rehabilitated the routed natives, invited their home governments to come and 'civilize' the African. This 'civilization' in effect, became a euphemism for the enslavement of the black man on his homeland. The black people in America, by virtue of their shipment across, were uprooted and were virtually rendered cultureless, while the colonized natives of Africa suffered a relatively slow but sure shaking and cutting of their cultural roots through the agents of imperialism - the Graeco-Latin brand of Christianity being one of them. How could it be otherwise? The aim of the European contact with Africa was the exploitation of both the man and his land. Frantz Fanon in his essay, "Racism and Culture," has noted that "it is not possible to enslave men without logically infericrising them through and through."[10] So what was the European logic in its impact on Africa? For a start, the Hegellian base:

> Africa proper, as far as history goes back, has remained for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world - shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself - the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of the night.
> The negro . . . exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality - all that we call feeling - if we would comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity

> in this type of character.
> At this point we leave Africa never to mention it. For it is no historical part of the world; it has no movement to exhibit. Historical movement in it - that is in its northern part - belongs to the Asiatic or European world. . . . What we understand by Africa is the unhistorical underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the condition of nature . . .
> The history of the world travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning.[11]

It is as if this was the yardstick to be used by every European in his assessment of Africa. It sums up the tabula rasa idea about Africa. The evangelists themselves could not move away from this code - they alone knew God. The European stuck to the myth that African History begins with European contact; that the African had no culture; that African languages were inferior and primitive. In short the European saw himself as one engaged in the vast enterprise of creating Africa. One agrees with Fanon that all this was necessary if successful enslavement and exploitation of the black man was to become a reality. For the trans-Atlantic black man it was not necessary to prove that he was inferior, the 'uprooting', the shipment across and the selling of him as a slave had done enough. Back on the continent of Africa the various European nations, notably France and Britain, perpetuated their oppression in the name of civilization. They stole a people's land, desecrated their religion and very, very selectively imposed a new culture on the people through their education, Christianity and other aspects of their culture. The idea was always to denigrate anything African and then hold out some form of European "carrot" for the donkey that was the native so that there was a semblance of choice. They could not really make Europeans of Africans - that is make Africans part of themselves, and exploit them. This method, they hoped, would ensure the perpetual plodding by Africans in their footsteps. Frantz Fanon observes: "The institution of the colonial system does not automatically bring about the death of autochthonous culture. It is, on the contrary, clear from the observation of history that the end sought is the sustained death agony rather than the complete disappearance of the pre-existing culture."[12]

In pursuance of this, the colonizer devised a practice that Malinowski referred to as the "selective gift" or the "European gift."[13] That is, in their mission the practice was not one of generous giving, or even a reciprocal give and take, but overwhelming taking. The British practice of indirect rule was only possible because they knew that the sovereignty remained the preserve of the British crown, there was no mistaking who was the ruler just because there was a native chief somewhere. They 'created' native reserves but alienated the best land. They never made gifts of weapons that might mean effective resistance by the natives. The education offered ensured that clerks and messengers would be fashioned out, nothing higher. It was not different with the French, in spite of their avowed civilizing mission. How can the exploiter make the exploited one of them? How did the French go about this? They loudly claimed that they were out to make Frenchmen out of black men. Listen to the French Minister of Colonies in 1920, state it: citizenship might be extended to the natives "who approach us in education, adopt our civilization and our customs, or distinguish themselves by their service."[14] The service would not be, of course, in the interest of their fellow natives, but in the interest of the 'mother country' and her true citizens. Ferdinand Oyono's The Old Man and the Medal, painfully satirizes this aspect of the French civilizing mission. Meka, an old man, has distinguished himself by his service and is to enjoy the rare honour of getting a medal. The commandant, a French administrator in Meka's district, breaks the news to the old man.

> You have done much to forward the work of France in this country. You have given your lands to the missionaries, you have given your sons in the war when they found a glorious death. (He wiped away an imaginary tear.) You are a friend . . . The medal that we are going to give you means you are more than our friend.[15]

This was the European "selective gift" at its purest. Lands taken (not given) and sons conscripted (not given) then a medal given in recognition of distinguished services. The conferring of citizenship upon Africans was to ensure, firstly, that they had tangible evidence of their 'good intentions' in Africa.

Secondly, this would rob the masses of their leaders and keep them thirsting for French citizenship, toiling to distinguish themselves by their services, being miseducated and miseducating themselves to out-French the French. The number of those who became something of 'first class' French citizens, deserving equal treatment with true Frenchmen, but in effect doing the job of messengers, had to be assiduously checked and limited if it had to produce the desired result. Window-dressing does not require much material. Thirdly, to give the black Frenchman senseless pride, such citizenship had to be rare. Then, the other natives, too, would get infected by similar dumb pride, and assert with the white French man that their would-be leader deserves such honour, thereby making sure of his alienation. This dumb pride is also the target of Oyono's satire in The Old Man and the Medal. The "selective gift" devise did actually work to produce wonders, as evidenced by Blaise Diagne, the black Senegalese deputy in the French National Assembly, who, in defending metropolitan power warned Garvey that nothing could "take from us the pure sentiment that France alone is capable of working generously for the advancement of the black race," and stated that the black French elite "who are responsible for the natives of our colonies, could not allow, without failing in their new duties, the revolutionary theories of separation and of emancipation, to which you have given name."[16] In a man like this, the French double coup is epitomized: The black French elite was evidence of France's belief in human brotherhood and equality, while through the same elite France guaranteed that her colonial interests were adequately served.

Christianity, as brought from Europe, was part and parcel of the European exploitative culture. It cannot be exonerated. Thomas Ekollo summarises Christianity's involvement in the inferiorization of Africa under three headings: 1) Christianity as a means of colonization, or a disguised form of modern Western imperialism, 2) Christianity as a factor of political disintegration, 3) Christianity's responsibility for the death of cultures (where it is preached).[17] There are proofs that this was the case. One need only recall that the colonizer came in

the wake of the evangelist, and more than this, because of their insidious code of behaviour, the two could not be told apart by the African. "The Gikuyu saying 'Gutiri Muthungu na Mubia' (i.e. there is no difference between the European and the missionary priest) is a good example of this identification of the missionary with the settler."[18] That Christianity was also a factor of political disintegration is no idle accusation. Converts were taught to obey the colonial government, thus making them supporters of a government that effected their oppression. The result was that in the event of a budding resistance among the natives, informers came from the black converts. Ngugi wa Thiong'o has dealt with this aspect in his The River Between. Outside fiction, the Mau Mau revolt, here in Kenya, suffered similar blind dis-association and condemnation. The hand of Christianity in the death of native cultures has been a constant theme in many African writings. The tabula rasa "vision" of Africa was at the heart of Christianization. Religion, though a significant element in culture, is not culture itself. Therefore, the missionaries upon discovering that their message brought no significant changes in the African peoples' ways of life; faced with the reality that the natives went to church almost purely out of curiosity, these messengers of God began to condemn the customs and songs of the natives in the light of their European culture. What the missionaries brought to Africa was not the Christian message but their European brand of it, heavily coated with, and distorted by, their culture. It is significant that even today, during important ceremonies like marriage and funeral, Africans pay surface attention to the 'Christian' way of doing it and afterwards do it like they know it in their bones. The 'Christian-civilized,' 'African-pagan' missionary gambit did not work very well, but nonetheless the native cultures did not remain exactly as they were. Thomas Ekollo in refuting the tabula rasa notion in the field of religion argues that fundamentally Christianity has taught the African nothing new; that the concepts upon which Christianity rests are also found in African religions.[19] J. S. Mbiti, too, has done much work in this field and established that in "300 peoples

from all over Africa outside the traditionally Christian and Muslim communities . . . people have a notion of God as the Supreme Being."[20] It is obvious from the foregoing that Christianity took root in Africa through imposition; that it worked hand in hand with the colonizer to kill the native cultures and inferiorise the native for effective exploitation, killing his creative impulse as well. Cheikh Anta Diop has put it thus, "To evangelize the marrow of their bones, so as to make their souls docile for the day of massacre; to try to make them in this way a nation of singers of 'negro spirituals' after the fashion of certain Messianic American Negroes."[21] What happened in the Church also took place in other colonial institutions. The oppressor worked hard to maintain the myth he had created about Africa. In schools 'History' meant European history. In British Africa pupils knew more about the Saxons than about their own grandfathers of the other day. It is fit to term what went on in schools "miseducation," because even the well-known principle in teaching - from the known to the unknown - was reversed. The natives gradually began to know more and more about the oppressor's 'grand' history, the geography of his country, his religion, and less and less about themselves. They began to find themselves in a situation where they could appreciate the roles of the exploiter and exploited as fixed and inevitable. This was part of the systematic process of alienation - the almost total success in "imposing on the autochthon new ways of looking at things, and particularly, a deprecatory judgement of his original way of life."[22] This was the desired goal of inferiorization.

Language, though a tool, soon becomes the carrier, the repository of a people's cultural heritage. Indeed language has been used by some people as one of the basic criteria in defining a nation. What was the linguistic situation in Africa before the colonial era? Each language group comprised what Ngugi wa Thiong'o has called a "national community"[23] in the sense that not only language, but the common territory occupied, the economic set-up and the level of development reflected something common, something national. Colonialism destroyed this by not

only effecting the scattering of members of these communities, but by imposing a foreign language upon them as well. This is not to say that natives were forced physically to learn the foreign languages, but the colonial situation itself made it imperative for any native who wanted relative 'freedom' to learn the master's language. There are numerous examples of results that arise from language imposition. Inferiority complex can be detected in the aggressive use of language. The colonizer's language because of the colonizer's position sapped the commanding element in native languages. It is for this reason that, even after independence, a quarrel for some people is climaxed by a break into English. "Gerra out!" is an order for a dog to clear out of the house in a home where English is never spoken. Deliberate mispronounciation of African names by other Africans is sometimes done to impress. (I give allowance for foreign intonation that would come if one were speaking in a foreign language and had to refer to African names).

Because the exploitation of a people was the sole motive behind slavery and colonialism, and because it is impossible to enslave a man without completely inferiorising him, the common factor amongst black people in the New world, in French Africa and in British Africa has been this attempt to erode their will to remain men in their own right, the attempt to make them men without choice. Against this, then, was what the negritude movement was a natural reaction. I see in the movement a desire, a determination, to nurse a people's mangled will and restore to them choice.

I will now outline the kind of 'unnatural' alternatives that the colonizer thought the colonized had. Since he had proclaimed himself a bringer of light to Africa, he was not going to accept easily a black self-generated alternative. One lie he tried to raise to fruition was that his presence in Africa, his introduction of Christianity, European formal education and form of government (his exploitation of the land and its people, in effect) was not going to have any effect on native cultures. This was particularly true of the British, with their indirect rule; seriously imagining that their politics would not interfere

with a people's way of life. This was a white lie, for how could their active presence amidst a people not interfere with this people's way of life? Forced labour, whether or not effected by the native chief through whom the colonizer ruled; new taxation, whether or not introduced by this 'direct' ruler, these were bound to disrupt native cultures. The second lie has already been referred to. This is the one that particularly went hand in hand with the assertion that Europe had a civilizing mission to fulfil. It featured mainly in the French brand of colonization, not that the British brand was any better, but that the French had a definite laid down policy - the assimilation policy. The lie was this: that the native culture being inferior, and since the colonizer was not really an exploiter but a saviour, he would generously give his culture to the natives. This is how Cesaire has stated the implication of this lie: "To say that the colonizer substitutes his civilization for the native civilization could mean only one thing, namely, that the colonizing nation ensures to the colonized, that is to the natives in their own country, the fullest mastery over . . . different functions."[24] It would amount to a retraction of their colonial policies and their intention to exploit. The third attempt at hoodwinking the native was really assimilation in disguise. Alioune Diop saw it as a trap that

> consists of innocently putting you to the challenge of choosing which African values to preserve and which European values to adopt. This question is obviously only put to the few advanced individuals who, according to the locality, are called developed, assimilated, or elect. As if one could think in isolation. . . . The answer to this question cannot be valid and authentic, except so far as it comes spontaneously into the minds of the people, and is integrated with the system adopted to deal with the problems of their situation.[25]

This offer starts from the premise that two cultures in close contact result naturally in a mixture. This is hard to refute. Since European presence in Africa could not be denied, what the natives were supposed to expect was the birth of a Euro-African civilization; that in British colonies an Anglo-African culture would be born, and a Franco-African one in French colonies.

And this, at one level is the case, until we take that simple definition of culture into account, that culture is a way of life. This done, we come to the basics of the colonial situation, a most 'unnatural' contact between two cultures in which the one culture is the culture of the exploiter, while the other is of the exploited. It is colonization, remember, a situation in which talk of culture must centre on the political and economic issues. There is no meaningful life in an arbitrarily motley culture, and that is why the choice taken by the oppressed must be "integrated with the system adopted to deal with the problems of their situation." The way out of the colonial situation, therefore, was not going to be any of these three lies, calculated to make the black man still feel inferior and without choice. Because it is impossible to kill a culture completely and at once, a natural reaction took root, underscoring the truth that any people during times of crises will find anchor in their tradition. Negritude is, in part, a manifestation of this truth. Pan Africanism, African Personality are similar manifestations of the same truth. All these are reactions against the inferiorisation of the black man, reactions against the white lies offered as the black man's innocuous alternatives.

Many critics like to emphasize the differences in this revolt. The result is that one section of the black people, although more closely connected with the appearance of "negritude," are taken to be negritudists to the exclusion of all the other black peoples. Secondly, in an attempt to justify this all their poetry is read with the expectation of finding only certain aspects of the revolt emphasized, while different aspects are associated with other black poets. Mezu rightly notes that

> with the impact of colonialism there came divergence, but as long as colonial literature was primarily a revolt against the other, the expatriate oppressor, African colonial literature, especially its poetry had much in common. But there were differences with francophone writers emphasizing cultural emancipation, anglophone writers of West Africa proclaiming political freedom, and black writers of Southern Africa preaching racial pride.[26]

I suppose that the trans-Atlantic black writer fits in the third

category. What is important, as far as I am concerned, is to stress that the three areas of assertion are part of the same movement, for they are motivated by essentially the same situation. We cannot seriously think that all that the Anglophone writers were interested in was political independence and hardly cared for cultural independence and racial pride. There are valid reasons as to why these three areas of assertion should be marked. That the assertion by the trans-Atlantic blacks and the South African blacks should largely take the form of racial pride is to be explained by the rampat racism in those social set-ups. However, we must remember that racism is "only one element . . . in the systematic oppression of a people." It is true that the trans-Atlantic black man is nowhere near his cultural roots, but that is no reason to see racial pride as his preserve, to ignore the note of racial pride in Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation", while minimizing the political, revolutionary ardour in Cesaire's Return to My Native Land. Nor should we ignore the political overtones in "Defiance", a poem by David Diop, just because he is francophone and francophone writers emphasize cultural emancipation. No one can dispute the fact that in a colonial situation political independence is a condition for cultural emancipation, but politics itself, it must be remembered, is part of a people's culture. The fight for political independence, an actual physical revolt by a people, should be seen as a transitional culture embraced by a people, and upon which a more stable culture and tradition are to be built. Although we may demand that our writers write from their roots, we cannot demand political manifestoes in the form of poetry from them. In other words we must recognize that they are creative artists and that since "literature is . . . primarily concerned with what any political and economic arrangement does to the spirit and values governing human relationships,"[27] the francophone writer, under a political and economic system which wanted to half-bake him into a Frenchman, was inspired by that system's assimilation policy and his refusal to be infericrised took on a cultural emphasis. Fanon has said that the alienated native in moving back to his roots "plunges with passion into this culture which he has abandoned, left,

rejected, despised. There is a very definite exaggeration, psychologically related to the desire for forgiveness."[28] Is this not the case in this black movement - that the francophone writer should be more strident than his anglophone counterpart who suffered similar inferiorisation but under the insidious system of 'indirect rule,' no overt assimilation? Thus we might expect to find degrees of negritude as manifested in particular themes, for instance, the reappraisal of the autochthonous culture. The motivation remains essentially the same, but while some of the francophone poets valorize this traditional culture to embarrassing degrees, most anglophone poets exhibit what might be called a sedate acceptance of the traditional culture as part of their past and present. What Senghor could do with the Yoruba material Soyinka exhibits is not difficult to guess. The significant thing, to me, is the very clear going back to the roots, as an indication of self-acceptance, whatever area of assertion.

The question this thesis seeks to answer is whether the distinction between francophone poetry and anglophone poetry is a tenable one, in the light of what has been discussed in this introduction about negritude. To do this I will examine anglophone poetry for themes that are either acknowledged as negritudist, or simply but exclusively associated with negritude because expressed by francophone poets. I will study these themes as they are treated by both francophone and anglophone poets, but with emphasis on the latter and particularly Soyinka, Okigbo and Achebe; all this against the general background of the thesis that a people take a stance in their own tradition during times of crises.

CHAPTER ONE

OF CHILDHOOD : BIRTH/INITIATION

"Only the fool points at his origins
with his left hand." - Akan Proverb.

Birth, childhood and initiation are used by most of the poets discussed here more metaphorically than in a real sense. Thus the devastation of Africa's way of life by slavery and colonialism can be seen as a kind of alien initiation forced on the black peoples. We shall see this clearly, for instance, in Okigbo's poetry where he speaks of Christian initiation. Still retaining the same metaphor, childhood stands for Africa before the colonial crisis. This will be made clear when we come to discuss the poetry. Birth, like initiation, marks the transition from one state of being to another; and since there is no birth without a mother, traditional African social systems, because cohesive and therefore protective, are seen metaphorically as mothers in some of the poetry. The third chapter which will deal with the "ancestor" theme, will discuss these social structures which give rise to what can generally be seen as an African world-view or way of seeing, which way, Taylor finds, "is being opposed and compared, consciously or unwittingly to the ways of the western world, and no longer does the balance come decisively on the side of Europe."[1] Where there is a 'factual' treatment of childhood or birth, for instance in Soyinka's poetry, we get a strong suggestion of a thriving traditional culture, in this case Yoruba, which in fact has effectively resisted the western onslaught. Since my task is one of showing that anglophone poets, too, react against the colonial crisis or its after-effects in more or less the same

way that francophone poets do, let the foregoing suffice for an introduction to this chapter. For while an extended survey of the significance of birth and initiation rites within the traditional set-ups is of interest, such a survey would not necessarily lay ground for proving negritude in anglophone poetry.

As we step into the discussion of the poetry, we must be aware of one important distinction; not that it is the only one - others will be drawn in the discussion. The distinction is this, that the main body of what is acknowledged as negritude poetry by francophone poets was written quite some time before Ghana (the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence) gained her political freedom. The three anglophone poets forming the core of this study, on the other hand, came on the scene at a time when political independence was about to dawn. My justification for the examination of negritudist sentiments in anglophone poetry is the falsity of this dawn - that since colonialism was in a sense only Africanized, the crisis against which negritude started as a reaction was never resolved. There is an interesting variety of poetry that falls within our present grouping; from poetry that glorifies childhood, in its metaphorical as well as real sense, to poetry that uses a macabre belief ("Abiku") to explore some different reality. Senghor, like Camara Laye in his African Child, is idyllic in the description of his childhood.

> Bless you, Mother
> I remember the days of my fathers,
> the evenings of Dyilor
> That deep-blue light of the night sky
> on the land sweet at evening.
> I am on the steps of the homestead.
> Deep inside it is dark.
> My brothers and sisters like chicks huddle their
> numerous warmth against my heart.
> I lay my head on the knees of my nurse,
> Nga, Nga the poetess
> My heart pounding with the warrior gallop
> of the dyouna-dyounga, great gallop of
> my blood my pure blood
> My head melodious with the distant songs
> of Kumba the Orphan
> . . . . . .
> Whilst in the distance arises surging
> the strong warm smells,
> the classic murmur of
> a hundred herds.[2]

Whether or not this is a sincere and accurate remembrance is of little importance. The sincerity of the response to the assimilation stimulus comes out very clearly. The exaggeration of the warm harmony of childhood is evidence of this sincere response. Here we see an imaginative journey into childhood, for all the poet is doing is remembering "the days of my fathers," from it the poet emerges with a glorious picture of childhood, free from want and distress. The stanza below (from "For Koras and Balafong") also quoted in full to speak for itself, sounds a pathetic racial defence 'before' a lycee class. Here we witness the tangible assimilation stimulus; the poet, as it were, discovers himself a teacher of a white class.

You, my lambs, my delight with eyes that
shall not look upon my age
I was not always a shepherd of fair heads
on the arid plains of your books
Not always the good official
deferring to his superiors
The good colleague, polite, elegant . . .
with gloves? . . .
smiling but rarely laughing
Old France, old University, all the old routine.
My lambs, my childhood is as old as the world
and I am as young as the everlasting
youth of the world's dawn.
The poetesses of the sanctuary have given me suck
The king's griots have sung me the authentic
legend of my race to the sounds
of the high koras.[3]

Here we come to an abiding ambivalence in Senghor's poetry. The poet wants it to be known that he has his own past, a great past; at the same time we see his acceptance of what has been made of him. There is an attempt to reconcile his acceptance of assimilation and the assertion of his own otherness. He espouses the stimulus against which he reacts. The desperate struggle not to feel an assimilado in spite of being one, results in the valorization of his childhood and past. The loud parading of his childhood as glorious is propitiatory, for he knows and accepts that he is now "a shepherd of fair heads," "the good oficial, deferring to his superiors," "the good colleague, polite, elegant . . . with gloves?" (Yes!). This valorization of one's childhood is not a preserve of francophone poets, the anglophone poets, too, engage in this theme,

but with a difference. Whereas the francophone poets, no doubt because of the French assimilation policy, give us the desperate cry, angry and strident, of the dispossessed, the anglophone poets are more sedate because their cultural roots are still more accessible. Okara's "Piano and Drums"[4] can usefully be compared with David Diop's "To My Mother"[5] or Senghor's "On the Appeal from the Race of Sheba,"[6] to illustrate this difference in emphasis. We shall use Senghor's poem, but before that, listen to the opening of Diop's poem:

> When round me rise up the memories
> Memories of anxious landfalls on the shores
> of the gulf . . .
> Then mother I think of you
> ("To my Mother")

and this from Senghor:

> Bless you, Mother.
> I hear your voice when I am given
> up to the insidious silence
> of this European night.
> ("On the Appeal from the Race of Sheba")

What stirs the African sap in the veins of these two poets is removed from them. For Diop it is memory, while for Senghor it is "the insidious silence of this European night." The concept of 'remembering' in francophone poets is a manifestation of their more thorough dispossession and alienation due to the French assimilation policy. That the term "negritude" should have been coined by Cesaire, a black French student amongst other black French students, is evidence of this uprootedness. As seen earlier, the title of his long poem Return to My Native Land is in a sense a way of looking at the whole concept of negritude. Senghor, who took up French citizenship in 1933, here makes an imaginary return. In contrast to this, even though the motivation be the same, the accessibility of the anglophone's cultural roots, the immediacy and urgency of the stimulus should be noted. The whole positiveness of what causes him to react, marks the difference in the degree of dispossession between anglophone writers and francophone writers.

> When at break of day at a riverside
> I hear jungle drums telegraphing

the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw
like bleeding flesh, speaking of
primal youth and the beginning
("Piano and Drums")

The imagery itself brings out this contrast magnificently. In the light of Okara's pulsating lines, "the insidious silence of this European night" is death, is dead. Senghor is responding to the assimilation stimulus which he has also paradoxically accepted. But note the brightness of Okara's "break of day." There is no desperate voice here. Okara is stirred by the living sap of his culture - the mystic rhythm of the drums is "urgent, raw like bleeding flesh," Senghor is later to "remember the days of my fathers" before he is "on the steps of the homestead." Not so for Okara, the mystic rhythm acts in a direct way; it is alive, not remembered, and the sap from his cultural roots finds ready veins.

And the blood ripples, turns torrent
topples the years and at once I'm
in my mother's lap a suckling.
("Piano and Drums")

The rhythms of the two poems are also different and true to the experiences communicated. Senghor's long lines are apt for his reverie - he is in Europe. Okara's short lines create a sprightly rhythm that suggests a live experience. Even when Senghor's heart pounds with the "great gallop of my blood my pure blood" one feels that the line that follows, with its slow rhythm, is truer to the experience, and restores that appropriate tone of reverie to the poem

My head melodious with the distant songs
of Kumba the Orphan.
("On the Appeal from the Race of Sheba")

A question arises: In view of these differences, can we justifiably say that the two poets are on the same path? The answer must be in the affirmative, for although Senghor 'remembers,' while Okara has his blood ripple and turn torrent to topple the years of British insidious assimilation, the sensibility is one - a recognition that those intanct African cultures have been destroyed to varying degrees and a 'no-choice initiation' of Africans into alien ways attempted. Secondly, there is the

response to this dispossession and 'no-choice initiation' into alien ways, which manifests itself in this poetry as the acceptance of African ways as importantly valuable in their own right. In such acceptance, we should of course expect to find differences from poet to poet: from an acceptance that exaggerates the glory of anything African to an acceptance that does not parade itself. So Senghor propitiatorily sings of "summer of the kingdom of childhood", "paradise my African childhood"; so Okara discovers that the sap from the roots that dented the uprooters' spades[7] is coursing through his veins and he is at once in his mother's lap a suckling. In the light of Africa's difficult history under European rule and plunder, the remembered intact African culture is a 'childhood' of Africa; the mother's lap is an image of total peace and security. There is an obvious exaggeration here, coming about by the metaphorical use of childhood. Of course, there was evil and suffering in Africa before European intrusion. There were wars. However, all that the exaggeration does is to underscore the fact that Europe's contact with Africa as an imposed initiation into new ways has not been fully accepted because it was negative. Capitalist-individualist greed as the motivating factor behind Europe's colonization of Africa should be contrasted with the sobering realization that even though Shaka waged raids, his form of exploitation was hardly ever for individual aggrandizement. Instead there was a kind of state capitalism.

> Shaka . . . by conquest built up a great kingdom.. . . But as he raided tribe after tribe and amassed vast heards of cattle, he could not use these to raise his own standard of living: he ate the same boiled beef as his followers and having many cattle he gave most to his subjects for them to eat as boiled beef. He too, like his subjects, lived in a pole-and-grass hut.[8]

There is a sense in which it can be asserted that in Shaka's kingdom everybody enjoyed the same 'high' standard of living. In other words, if at this time in history, the surplus income spent on luxuries was the index for the 'high' standard of living in Europe, in Shaka's kingdom it was the availability of meat for all his subjects that contributed to the good life.

It is astounding what suffering a capitalist-individualist set-up creates through the high status it accords luxuries. Childhood as a time of innocence also means a time when unification or a close link with the mother is possible. Metaphorically, in the poetry before us, Africa's childhood is that time when unification with mother earth, and therefore the seasons, is possible. I do not wish to anticipate the next chapter, but one sees here intimations of the natural / artificial juxtaposition that represents Africa and Europe, respectively, in negritude poetry. Unfortunately, "innocence" carries with it connotations of underdevelopment, which, I am sure, are not intended by the poets. We shall see that this is also paralleled by Europe's failure to understand corporate responsibility and corporate personality vis-a-vis individual responsibility and individual personality in a socialist set-up. However, this is a matter that will be discussed when we come to the theme of the ancestors in chapter three. Now we must get back to the idea of accepting one's past as a take-off ground.

Although Senghor valorizes his past, the acceptance of the past for the other poets does not always take the Senghorian expression. Secondly, not all francophone poets valorize their autochthonous culture. U Tam'si's "Strange Agony"[9] makes this point abundantly clear. Here we find no preoccupation with a glorious origin, but the defiant acceptance of his own past is unmistakable.

> the lightning which shatters the night
> shows me the tree of my origin
> it was written in fire and flames
> that I should have muscles swelling
> like the tidal bore
> and two geysers or narrow sexes
> of honest woman
> instead of eyes
> and be privileged to attend
> at the inventory of earthly springs
> my soul clearer than sap.

One way of stopping an insulting fellow is to say 'Yes' to his insults, for that 'yes' really means "label me what you will, I have come to know who I am and will not be what you would like me to be." The lightning in the lines quoted above refers to

the colonial crisis; night is black and so we see here a white/ black clash. The white man coming across the black man, labels him nothing but muscle, he thinks that the black man is either blind - 'narrow sexes of honest woman,' a virgin - or sees nothing but sex, he is a sex maniac. The black man has never produced any 'civilized' inventions, instead he relies on nature's providence - "earthly springs." Behind the acceptance of all this is the attitude: "I buy that, so what"? and the confident knowledge that his past as it really is, and his own self as he really is, plus the history of "fire and flames" constitute what is unique about Africa. Notice that although we have the question of colour alluded to here in "lightning" and "night," it is not the innocuous contact of white and black that rings out the black cry, but the 'shattering' of the night by lightning. In other words, negritude goes beyond the defence of a black skin. In another poem, runs this line: "If they will just let me be Congolese in peace."[10] Cesaire, too, registers this refusal to feel inferior because his race did not invent nor discover, nor conquer: "Heia for those who have never invented anything / those who never explored anything / those who never tamed anything."[11] Not all acceptance of one's black self carries this defiant note. Bernard Dadie, in a poem talking of "creating me Black," "shape of my head," "the thickness of my lips," is palpably sentimental. The poem addresses God: "I Thank You God." It is not clear whether the God he addresses is the God introduced to him through the European brand of Christianity.[12] F. N'dintsouna's "To L.A."[13] simply traces the inferiorising phrases, "just a nigger," "just a child," "just a savage" and "no good for anything" but to "die for us in the snows of Europe." At this point his patience runs out and he rebels. Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation," to be discussed in a later chapter, reveals a defiant acceptance of what one knows one is. We have, therefore, seen two expressions of the acceptance of what is Africa and her past, her intact past. Firstly a passionate valorization to varying degrees (Senghor and Okara) and secondly, a defiant acceptance, a knowing acceptance of the denigrating terms used by the destroyer. (U Tam'si and Cesaire).

Okigbo and Achebe do in a way, provide the transition belt to Soyinka's unobtrusive stance. Listen to these lines from Okigbo.

BEFORE YOU, mother Idoto,
naked I stand;
before your watery presence,
a prodigal

leaning on an oilbean
lost in your legend.
Under your power wait I.[14]

Like Senghor and Okara, the poet-protagonist's presence before the 'village stream,' has been occasioned by a particular set of circumstances, summed up as Europe's presence in Africa, "the collective rape of innocence and profanation of the mysteries in atonement for which he has had to suffer immolation."[15] Labyrinths is a labyrinthine quest for fulfilment, and although the poem starts with Mother Idoto, the experience communicated in the whole poem is one of arrival before Mother Idoto and departure from Mother Idoto for fulfilment. Senghor, shocked by the insidious silence of European night, 'arrives' at the doorstep of his homestead, his childhood and the 'childhood' of Africa, in a dreamlike fashion. Okara, summoned by the drums' rhythm of early morning, discovers his blood rhythm pulsating in harmony with his Mother's lap - Africa's warm tradition. Both are prodigals to varying degrees, making a rediscovery, an 'arrival' at the original home - the reappraisal of the autochthonous culture after contact with Europe. Okigbo is no less a prodigal. What we have here is a kind of rebirth. Mother Idoto is a mother figure symbolizing the origins, but in being intimately involved in, and in presaging the fulfilment that is to come in the "bridal chamber" of "DISTANCES", she should also be seen as the poet-protagonist's consort. Thus the poet-protagonist can be seen as both a new-born (the prodigal who comes for a rebirth) and as Mother Idoto's consort (because it requires the prodigal's active co-operation if Mother Idoto is to effect this rebirth). In connection with this double identity, Senghor's "Black Woman"[16] compares well with this Mother Idoto section of "Passage." The black woman, who

metaphorically is traditional Africa, is at once the mother and the lover, hence the sensuality in Senghor's negritude. However, to return to Okigbo. As a consort then, the poet-protagonist annihilates ordinary experiential time to participate in the primordial time of creation

DARK WATERS of the beginning.

And the thing he creates is the poem, for from this place and time his movement forward towards fulfilment is the poem; the movement through labyrinthine experiences in the quest for fulfilment is the labyrinth and the poem. As Mother Idoto's consort, the prodigal comes to destroy himself through repentance, and in so doing creates the new-born poet-protagonist whose charted movement we have here as Labyrinths. Thus the image of nakedness sustains both suggestions of intercourse and birth, the naked prodigal being in one sense the naked lover, and in the second sense the new-born poet-protagonist. To ground the foregoing into the argument of this chapter, it is necessary to point out that the mother figure of Idoto symbolizes Africa's intact tradition and culture, and that the poet-protagonist in coming back to his cultural roots is coming to suckle as a baby; but by participation in this culture threatened by Europe, he will be giving it life, affirming it - in short creating. The inversion in the line "Under your power wait I" is usually the kind of thing that someone is likely to point out in arguing that such inversions plus "influences" from T.S. Eliot and other European poets clearly make Okigbo a European / world poet or some such gross conclusion. I therefore take this early opportunity to note one thing about this inversion. It is true that our pioneer poets (under the influence of their European poetic diet) in versifying common observations often twisted the syntax to create rhyme (and, rarely, rhythm) whenever this was possible. In Armattoe's "A Little Child", for instance, the poet is addressing a little child who has

. . . soiled thy smock
Thy nice and pretty frock
And undone thy pearl button!
What odds, I reason
Thy Daddy does not mind

For he was once a child
And played in forests wild.[17]

I quote the first four lines to show how conscious of rhyme the poet is. However, our interest lies in the last two lines. The adjective "wild" qualifies "forests," and conventionally it should come before the noun it is qualifying. Armattoe in his desire to create rhyme has created that inversion. There is no other reason for it other than the supposed musical sounding of "child" and "wild." When we come to Okigbo's inversion, we come to an original thinking. Neither rhyme nor rhythm explain the inversion. Okigbo has created this inversion deliberately to suggest, visually, the humble position the prodigal assumes before Mother Idoto. In terms of our present argument, we see a reverence for tradition, because as we have seen, Mother Idoto stands for the sources. If the poet had written the line according to convention: 'I wait under your power,' that "I" would assume an importance that would surely make us feel a certain presumptuousness and assertiveness on the part of the prodigal. It would totally ruin the humility that should be communicated in the experience. The same can be said about the two opening lines, for the inversion does help us 'see' the prodigal naked and humble before mother Idoto. For Okigbo, it is significant that the 'rebirth' of the prodigal takes place at a local stream - Idoto. The acceptance of his cultural roots for nourishment is a condition for the creation of the poem, and the fulfilment of the quest. This point will be expanded as we pass through "Initiations." In the meantime, we must turn to Achebe.

We have seen Senghor, dream-like, come upon the steps of his homestead - his childhood kingdom; Okara discover himself in his mother's lap, a suckling; Okigbo stand naked, a prodigal, before Mother Idoto. Achebe too, in a dramatic descent comes to his hut, his home, to infuse himself with his "proud vibrant life." The images we deal with in these rediscoveries and affirmations of the authentic selves are all homely images, and homely not in the sense of being everyday, but in the sense of being close to the place of origin. What I am emphasizing here

is that "homestead," "mother's lap," "mother Idoto" (and the villageness of the stream) and now "my hut" from Achebe, all point to a time of "innocence," a time of confident belonging to stable cultures. These images therefore evoke childhood - personal childhood and Africa's 'childhood' (in the sense we have used it in this chapter: Africa before the devastation.) The first three poets more or less evoke this childhood at the two levels. Although Achebe does not do this, what we have in his two poems "Question" and "Answer"[18] reveals a sensibility that is intimately related to what these other poets reveal, namely, a positive reappraisal of the autochthonous cultures in the face of European threat. "Question" communicates the experience of alienation and dispossession, and the shock realization of this fact.

> Are these your creatures
> these crowding specks
> stomping your lighted corridor
> to a remote sun . . .
> . . . Or am I
> sole stranger in a twilight room
> I called my own overrun
> and possessed long ago . . .?

The creatures referred to are like "doped acrobatic angels" trying to divert "a high unamused God." The shock and shame are complete; he breaks, in "Answer," the ancient fascination to seize his "remnant life" in order to salvage it from the effects of British insidious assimilation. The poet discovers that his life has been nibbled gradually to fragments. He takes a firm decision and acts on it, finally

> . . . I made a dramatic
> descent that day landing
> backways into crouching shadows
> into potsherds of broken trance. I
> flung open long-disused windows
> and doors and saw my hut
> new-swept by rainbow brooms
> of sunlight become my home again
> on whose trysting floor waited
> my proud vibrant life.

The "trysting floor" and the personification of life as proud and vibrant suggests some fruitful action. Indeed if the poem were to be recited, it would not be clear at once to the listener

whether he heard "life" or "wife." If intended, this ambiguity does actually add to the richness of the poem. In other words, like Okigbo's poet-protagonist in "Passage" and Senghor in "Black Woman," the poet here comes back to his "vibrant life" on the trysting floor, and in accepting this life and participating in it, adds to its richness through creativity. The image of "hut" is of course significant because it metaphorically stands for the African way of life. The poet's "proud vibrant life" is found on the floor of his hut, not on a sofa in a parlour. What the poet does here is to accept that we lived in huts and our life was meaningful in those huts, that there are aspects of our 'hut-life' that should be salvaged and given meaningful survival in the context of today, instead of allowing strangers to crowd us out by putting us in a trance. If the circumstances of the Nigerian civil war are taken into account, then one can see civil war experience in this poem, Biafra occupied by strangers. However, this poem falls in the section of those poems not about war. This of course is not to deny the possible part civil war could have played in the composition of the poem, for one can see the way in which the Nigerian crisis, as some natural off-shoot of the original disruption, merely focussed more sharply this initial crisis. After the poet has taken decision, he lands "backways into crouching shadows / into potsherds of broken trance." "Backways" here seems to imply a posture that while accepting the past as meaningful, faces the future. The "potsherds of broken trance" suggests both the fragments of our own way of life and of the arbitrarily motley way of life brought about by self-denigration while under the British colonial hypnotism.

The fact that modern African literature[19] is written implies a kind of initiation into this mode of expression. This situation has come about through the whole system of European formal education. European languages have been the medium of teaching; we have written compositions in these languages and emerged people who speak to their brothers and sisters in African languages but write to them letters in English, French etc. I bring in this point to remind ourselves that more often than

not, the exhibition of the African way of seeing in African writing is not as 'natural' as is sometimes made out. Why does not all written African literature deny its essence by losing itself in the European tradition, seeing that the languages, and even some of the forms (e.g. novel) are European? The view that an African writer cannot help but exhibit an African personality or way of seeing forgets that some of the pioneer black writers made it a point of honour to turn out literature that would not betray their black skin. Soyinka, apparently unconcerned with the need to salvage an authentic past, exhibits and affirms effortlessly a vibrant authentic present that has its roots firm in an authentic past. There is a deliberate break with the pioneer poets that will be illuminated with a few examples from Soyinka. Some of the pioneer poets wrote in the nineteenth century European tradition, oblivious of the fact that a number of European poets themselves had abandoned this tradition. Pioneer poetry is easily recognized by the implicit belief that poetry shall first be distinguished by its insistent (not monotonous) rhyme and rhythm, followed by other conventions like diction. The rebellion against this was still to come. R.E.G. Armattoe (who, when Soyinka was born, was in Europe completing his education, having gone there at the age of thirteen) will provide the same poem we have used, "A Little Child," for comparison with one or two of Soyinka's "birth" poems. Armattoe's poem simply relates an encounter with a child who is unhappy because she has soiled her dress. The poet then reasons to the child that her father will not mind because he, too, as "a child / . . . played in forests wild" and then draws his poem to a conclusion with these lines (summing up his inner poetic thought from the experience?)

> Men will be boys, boys men,
> Girls mothers, mothers girls
> And life itself thus renews.[20]

If we place this poem side by side with "Dedication" or "For Piper Daughters" or "Abiku,"[21] the difference, the shift made by latter poets, is very clear. And this shift was made because these latter poets were that much aware of their unique situation in the world as black peoples. We soon discover that some of the pioneer poets were never 'moved' to write the poems they have

written because they were under tutalage, and anybody who copies cannot be said to be exhibiting an authentic creative impulse. Theirs became the easy task of mastering rhyme, rhythm and diction, then engaging in the mechanical assemblage of a poem. "Dedication" on first reading would seem to be a poem that has no immediate cultural context. The first response to it might be one that sees growing up in itself as a risk. A second reading would suggest a prayer or blessing for a new born. But, coming to our particular concern here, we note that this dedication ceremony or ritual moves along lines set by tradition, that the poem has a cultural setting. This is revealed by the proverbial opening

> Earth will not share the rafter's envy: dung floors
> Break, not the gecko's slight skin, but its fall.

Another proverb follows in the third stanza

> . . . for the hoe
> That roots the forests ploughs a path
> for squirrels.

There are also references to the palm and palm oil, the yam and the baobab, which more than just giving the poem its geographical setting, enrich the cultural setting because the palm, yam and baobab feature significantly in the Yoruba way of life. The proverb opening the poem more or less states the problem. There is a fall, but before the falling object comes into contact with another body, say a surface, there is no pain nor any variation in sensation. However, what the impact does is to break the fall and introduce change and variation in sensation. This breaking of falls might usefully be compared to measles and other illnesses which children pass through, and in passing through, acquire immunity. The blessing is for long life: "Be ageless as dark peat." It is also for an active and self-determined struggle where necessary,

> . . . child - your tongue arch
> To scorpion tail, spit straight return
> to danger's threats
> Yet coo with the brown pigeon,
> tendril dew between your lips.

avoiding uncalled for pique. The lines that close this poem come with an inevitability that is drawn from what has

gone on before. They are in this sense very much unlike Armattoe's three lines above. Listen to the close of "Dedication":

> . . . This, rain-water, is the gift
> Of gods - drink of its purity,
> bear fruits in season.
>
> Fruits then to your lips: haste to repay
> The debt of birth. Yield man-tides
> like the sea
> And ebbing, leave a meaning
> on the fossilled sands.

Naturally from praying for a long life, and a healthy one, we find a hope for usefulness in this life - that other lives may come from it, repaying the debt of birth before the ebbing of the sea - before death. One feels that only after such lines is one poetically justified to append: "And life itself thus renews." A deeper attention paid to Soyinka's poems yields a definite cultural setting. The "dung-floors" of the opening proverb economically place the poem in such a setting. Armattoe's "forests wild" do nothing of the kind; in fact they are there in the poem because they sound "poetic." That "Abiku" is based on a Yoruba belief is to me very significant for it underlines what I mean when I say that Soyinka has an authentic present which he affirms. He does not have to believe himself, but that he uses this Yoruba belief and no other as an instrument of exploration, must surely mean that it makes abundant sense to him. If we can have recourse to that misused concept of "the universal" it will be seen that Soyinka makes it abundantly clear that the only way to the universal is through the particular. Thus his poems of birth and death may be dealing with what may be seen as "universal" problems, but the particular that yields an authentic and deeper insight into these problems, we discover, is African - Yoruba. Abiku, an opening note by the poet, tells us, is a "wanderer child. It is the same child who dies and returns again and again to plague the mother." Once again we find that there is no doubt as to the cultural context of this poem. The stated belief itself goes along way to give the setting. The "goats and cowries," yams, the pouring of libations and those two lines in the third stanza - "I am the squirrel teeth, cracked / The riddle of the palm"

(coming from the folk lore of praisenames) - all work in harmony to give the poem an authentic Yoruba setting. We can therefore come to the conclusion that Soyinka is drawing from an authentic present. Present in the sense that it is readily available to him. He is making no journey to the homestead, for he is in the homestead; he is not about to discover himself in his mother's lap, he is already in there; nor is he about to move "backways into crouching shadows / into potsherds of broken trance," he never moved forward in a trance, never broke his cultural pottery in a trance. However, it is important to stress here that there is no major opposition in the foregoing. The only difference is that of the poets cited in the discussion, Soyinka poeticizes rediscovery and decolonization less self-consciously. But in drawing from an authentic African 'present' for the creation of something new, he is continuing a tradition. What we have here then are degrees of the African way of seeing.

From the totality of the experiences communicated in the poems already discussed, it will be clear that the distinction between poems of birth and childhood as against those of initiation cannot go too far. The attempt to do so has been made purely for the sake of selecting key poems to guide the argument. [We have seen that the beginnings of written African poetry was a kind of initiation period. Not being a rite woven in the fabric of African community life, it had the effect of producing imitative literature as exemplified in pioneer poetry. Negritude as a reaction against the colonial crisis, embraced the poetic practice as well, for this is where it found expression. Chichidodoism[22] is the problem that faced these literary rebels. Apart from the language, francophone poets - Cesaire, Senghor and others - used the European surrealist movement to affirm their authentic selves. Admittedly the paradox is not as acute as it might sound, for those French surrealists were anti-imperialism, but its presence cannot be denied. In the poetry of Cesaire, Senghor and others we find little rhyme and strict rhythm; lines are apparently of arbitrary length and the imagery is all new, fresh and startling. Amongst the anglophone poets we also notice a similar purposeful disregard for European

poetic conventions. What I am driving at is that, implied in this poetic rebellion, or rather going hand in hand with it, is the rejection of the destroyer's attempted initiation (as far as this rejection can go) and a coming back to the sources for more authentic forces of expression.

There is a wide variety of poetry illustrating this rejection of the oppressor's ways, a variety that ranges from an exaggerated passion for black initiation to an elaborate drama of the whole process of going-coming-going. Birago Diop's poem, appropriately entitled "Viaticum," addresses an alien threat, and affirms the resilient spirit of the poet in the face of this threat.

> Then my Mother said: 'Go, go through the world
> All your life they will follow your steps'
> And now I go
> I go down the paths
> Down the paths and the roads,
> Beyond the sea and further, and further still
> Beyond the sea and beyond what is beyond,
> And when I come near to the wicked,
> To the men with black hearts,
> When I come near to the envious,
> To the men with black hearts
> The Breathings of my Forefathers go before me.[23]

Whatever has come after his equipment for the journey through the world is of no significance. The paths and the roads, the seas and what is beyond them can be faced with confidence. Obviously an exaggeration of the power of the 'send-off' rite. But we must remember that this is a response by one who is threatened by total dispossession. He knows better from experience and states his alternative with exaggeration. David Diop's call for the refusal to ape Europeans out of infericrity complex is always explicit. In the poem below, his remarks are addressed to a black Frenchman, one who is thoroughly whitewashed in assimilation - the French soul-killing initiation ritual for Africans. The black Frenchman's teeth flash "in the cant of compliments," his African cultural roots are insubstantial.

> Poor brother in your silk-lined tuxedo
> Chatter and whisper and swagger through
> condescending drawing-rooms.
> We pity you
> The sun of your land is no more

than a shadow
Across the calm brow of a civilized man
And your grandmother's hut
Reddens a face whited by the bowing
and scraping of years.[24]

"The Right Road" that Diop lights up for such men denies that there is "Truth Beauty Love" in European exploitative culture

Truth Beauty Love
Is the workman smashing the deadly composure
of their drawing-rooms
. . . . . .
Is everything they have lost brothers
And what together we will unroll
down the roads of the world.[25]

Here David Diop reveals that other aspect of negritude, that the movement is in effect also fighting a system that exploits; that the blackman is fighting not only as a black man whose culture has been profaned, but also as a man who has been made a slaving worker. The conspicuous lack of 'Truth Beauty Love' in Europe will be emphasized by two quotations from Frantz Fanon: "When I search for man in the technique and style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders."[26] "Let us waste no time in stirile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done of talking about Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them . . ."[27] Senghor, too, complains to "Lord God" that "White Europe" has turned "My household servants into 'boys,' my peasants into wage-earners, my people into a working class."[28] This Marxist ring to negritude will be examined later, note here Diop's call for rejection of European culture and his belief that Africa must eventually offer the solution to the world's problem of destructive competition. Achebe's "Beware Soul Brother"[29] is an argument for "applied art," a call for the earthing of Africa's song in Africa's soil, in the reality of the African's unique situation in the world. The poem is in this sense not very different in intention from Diop's poem. The opening lines of Achebe's poem bring to mind a similar sentiment in U Tam'si: "You must be from my country / I see it by the tick / of your soul around the eye lashes / and besides you dance when you are sad."[30] And Achebe writes:

We are the men of soul
men of song we measure out
our joys and agonies
too, our long, long passion week
in paces of the dance

Achebe's call is that sheer artistic diversion of suffering should be done away with. The day of the spineless negro-spiritual singer should be forgotten. His is a call for commitment in art. The song must be a song embeded in the social reality of the black people, an earthen song, not astral. "Our ancestors . . . were wiser / than is often made out . . . / they gave Ala, great goddess / of their earth, sovereignty too over / their arts." Whatever beauties a foot may weave in the air, it must return to earth after the dance. Even if the black song must soar, renewal and strength must come from the social reality of black history. As seen earlier, Soyinka's stance is in Yoruba culture. He starts as a Yoruba and in this lies his acceptance of his authentic self. Not that the other poets do not reveal such acceptance, but that Soyinka is unobtrusive and less given to prescriptive literature. This is the basic difference between the extreme poles of the African way of seeing: a preaching of the way, and an almost unwitting living of the way. It must be remembered, too, that not all francophone poets preach the way. U Tam'si, for instance, unlike Birago Diop, is sharply aware of the painful history of the black race and shows that the experiences undergone can only be changed not reversed. This is the reality from which he operates in his "Viaticum." In this poem he again resorts to that defiant 'acceptance' of the derogatory description of blacks by whites: "You also are certainly from my country . . . you are cynocephalic." The poem of his life begins with the disruption of Africa, with the colonial crisis

here the poem of his life begins
he was dragged to school
he was dragged to a factory
and saw his way down avenues of sphinxes.[31]

U Tam'si's going back to the sources always recognizes the crisis period and often does not cross the crisis wall to valorize what is beyond it. So in "Communion"[32] the poet refers to the period

when "it was sad to be a man / each colour of the body was a ghetto / . . . wherever I was shadow the whip cracked." "Shadow" stands for the black man in a double sense, firstly, because shadows are dark, and secondly, as desired by the white oppressor, a follower, a man without history, inventions or will, a perpetual imitator - a shadow; for white is the brain and the will, black - the body, the muscle.

Now we turn to Okigbo. Earlier we discussed the opening of the whole poem. From "Passage" the poet takes us to the "Initiations." Of the poets being discussed here, Okigbo alone has a section of his poetry dealing directly with initiation. The closing movement of "Passage" presents the pilgrim, the poet-protagonist, on the road at cross-roads.

SILENT FACES at crossroads
festivity in back.

Either of these roads is to lead him through a series of initiations, but not necessarily to the fulfilment of the quest. The crossroads presents two cultures, European and Ibo. From the experiences communicated in "Initiations" we find that the conflict is not an easy one of choosing either . . . or . . . In fact the battle the poet engages in takes place at the crossroads. "Initiations" falls into three parts, each devoted to one rite of initiation. The first movement presents the Christian initiation, seen as the branding of a crucifix on the breast of the poet-protagonist.

SCAR OF the crucifix
over the breast
by red blade inflicted.

Is there not a hint here that missionaries opened up Africa for much suffering? Although the poet-protagonist is taking us forward towards fulfilment, we can also see this movement as taking us back through the poet's significant experiences. This particular initiation is rejected by the poet-protagonist because it is inadequate and preaches "life without sin, without life." Its inadequacy is made manifest by its fruits: "square yields the moron / fanatics and priests and popes . . . / the rhombus - brothers and deacons . . . / selfish self-seekers - all who are good / doing nothing at all." But the seeker

does not pretend that the scar of the crucifix is not visible, that Catholicism has not had any effect on his life, for

". . . the solitude within me remembers Kepkanly . . ."

Kepkanly is the half-comical primary school teacher who is supposed to have initiated the poet-protagonist into Christianity. In his search for an all-embracing faith, a way of seeing that "denies inhibitions," the poet turns to Jadum, "a half-demented village minstrel," a singer of the protagonist's own folk poetry. But in this initiation too

. . . there are here
the errors of the rendering . . .

for Jadum sings inhibitions: "Do not wander in speargrass / after the lights / Probing lairs in stockings / To roast / The viper alive, with dog lying / Upsidedown in the crooked passage . . ." Jadum is full of injunctions against natural curiosity:

Do not listen at keyholes
After the lights

But Jadum himself sings this "after the lights." The poet-protagonist seeks fulfilment through art, but he can only be an artist by being curious about life itself, jumping the eye, the mind-window. Jadum like John the Baptist reveals a contradiction in his initiation rite, and asks for the impossible - "life without sin without life." Finally we come to the closing movement of "Initiations," where Upandru, "a village explainer," philosopher, challenges

Screen your bedchamber thoughts
with sunglasses,
who could jump your eye.
your mind-window

To which the poet-protagonist responds by saying that poetry can reveal all hearts: "the prophet only the poet." Wilfred Cartey observes that "through his initiation moral man is led to free living, away from sophistry, and saved from 'the errors of the rendering' that distorted logic or religion produce."[33] This is certainly implied in the quest, but the initiations here are full of inhibitions, and are in a sense anti-life. The poet-protagonist is apparently initiated into and, by his own volition, out of these mind-closing 'faiths.' Yet it must be remembered these initiations, since undergone, contribute to the

formation of his sensibility. In many African communities an initiation ritual is performed to make young men and women adults, allowing them to participate in adult rites. Accordingly "Watermaid," the section following "Initiations" has overtones of a meeting of lovers. But because the poet-protagonist's initiations have not been quite successful, "Watermaid" presents the unfulfilled moment. The seeker, like an initiate who has turned out wrong after a circumcision ceremony, must be cleansed, before his next attempt in "Siren Limits": "Queen of the damp half light / I have had my cleansing / Emigrant with air-borne nose / The he-goat-on-heat." So he carries "a new laid egg" and "a white hen" for sacrifice in the hills. This is the burden of "Lustra," and he emerges from here as the "Newcomer" "with my own mask, not ancestral," calling for protection from "them fucking angels." Labyrinths is one long poem and it is always difficult to find an appropriate place to stop . . . but then perhaps this in itself is the best illustration we have of the argument we have in this chapter. For notice in "Passage," a coming to Mother Idoto; "Initiations" - a movement forward through initiations, a going; "Watermaid," an epiphany of the fulfilment that is to come; then "Lustra," a coming back to the hills with traditional sacrificial items for a cleansing in the "palm grove" with "long drums;" and finally "Newcomer," a "going."

In this chapter I have attempted to show that the poets discussed here in reacting to the colonial crisis or its off-shoot problems, move back into tradition from where they advance anew. This movement back into tradition can be seen as a "coming" home; but it is not a coming into tradition to hide from life's problems, hence the movement forward - a "going" - with tradition as the source of resilient and creative forces. Admittedly the pattern is not crystal clear in all cases, but even for a poet like Soyinka - who seems to present nothing but a "going" - his use of Yoruba tradition (a "coming") for the exploration of current national and "universal" problems (a "going") can be seen in this light without distortion. The difference in emphasis should, however, be noted. Senghor's

enthusiastic coming back to the roots has the psychological explanation that the enthusiasm has within it a desire for forgiveness, it is a propitiatory coming back, since it is the cry of one more thoroughly dispossessed and uprooted than Soyinka, for instance. Thirdly, reference to U Tam'si has shown that Senghor is not representative of francophones in all respects, just as Soyinka is not of anglophones. In given aspects, Okara's poetry will be found closer to Senghor's than to Soyinka's. My concern here has been to examine the "coming" (and "going") pattern well acknowledged as negritudist, but then seen as a francophone preserve. The discussion has not come to an end, but in connection with birth and initiation (in their metaphorical sense) let it suffice to note that the coming is not a "coming" to hibernate, but a "coming" back to the authentic roots for those creative forces needed for a "going." In the "coming" and "going," are implied the affirmation of the past and a gradual impoverishment of it through the creation from it of new songs.

> The new star appears, foreshadows its going
> Before a going and a coming that goes on for ever . . . [34]

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE AND DEATH

"Before a dead man is reincarnated an emaciated man will recover his flesh" - Igbo saying.

Africans have for a long time believed that the dead never completely leave us; that no one ever quite dies to disappear. Death is a kind of rite of passage; beyond death there is the other life of ancestral spirits. But though there is this belief in life after death, the death rite stands aside from other rites because it is not a social institution, the way initiation and marriage rites are, for instance. Life as we know it from day to day is held sacredly in spite of this belief in life after death. We shall discuss in the third chapter how the reality of the ancestors is only meaningful this side of the grave. The prevalent belief in witchcraft and protection charms, not to mention the highly ordered sacrifices and pure superstition, all testify to the importance and sacredness of the now-life to the African. Death will be dealt with in this chapter in its real as well as metaphorical sense. The crisis, slavery and colonization saw both the death of peoples and the "death" of cultures - religions, gods etc. However, an important point to bear in mind is that the "death" of cultures had a direct hand in the death of peoples. Christianity with its promise of heaven as the after life of passive martyrs, obedient slaves and black betrayers of black peoples, contributed to the devaluation of the now-life. It also weakened the belief in action in this life for this life, by preaching "action" (servile obedience) in this life for the after-life.

In this chapter, therefore, I discuss poetry dealing with

those life-denying aspects of European culture as juxtaposed against the life-affirming values of the African way of life; all this against the background of Europe-Africa contact. This juxtaposition is not intended to be an equation of Africa with life and Europe with death; and, therefore, the purgation of Africa. All that this juxtaposition intends to do is to delineate what negritude reacts against; furthermore, we shall see that most of the poetry to be discussed here justifies such a juxtaposition. On the other hand this attempt at a balanced view does not pretend that death at the hands of foreigners was not a traumatic experience for the black people,[1] Sharpeville is a reminder. It should be fairly obvious that such a chapter dealing with the devaluation of African life is very closely linked with the alienation process that was seen as a no-choice and alien initiation in the previous chapter. For the sake of analysis, I once again try to select certain poems for this discussion. Obviously the poems communicate much more than a mere juxtaposition of values, and it is not my intention to speak of them as if they were nothing more than an insipid juxtaposition of Europe and Africa. Behind the said juxtaposition lies a black awareness that is negritudist. This black awareness, it must be remembered goes beyond colour in embracing the awareness of one who is exploited. Here lies the reaction against the double scourge of slavery and colonization with their offshoot problems. Christianity as an agent of the black man's inferiorization also comes under attack. The assertion that the black man has a history and culture is at once the protest and offer of an alternative.

The devaluation of African life, not in spite of, but because of European Christian conscience, and the resilient life-affirming African values, constitute the burden of "The Vultures."[2]

> In those days
> When civilization kicked us in the face
> When holy water slapped our cringing brows
> . . . . . .
> In those days
> There was painful laughter on the metallic
> hell of the roads.

And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster
Drowned the howling on the plantations.

European civilization, because self-seeking in its expansion came as a destructive force accompanied by the Christianizing mission that, as its conscience, worked hard to make docile converts: "holy water slapped our cringing brows." Understanding the roads to suggest development and progress, this European civilization used painful means, introducing "painful laughter," while the church, on her part, shut her eyes and ears to the plight of her converts and would be converts: the Lord's Prayer, chanted in Latin "drowned the howling on the plantations." The desecration of love between man and woman was also committed by the European. There were "exorted kisses / . . . promises broken at the point of a gun / of foreigners who did not seem human." One can see a logical development from promises broken at the point of a gun to promises broken at the sight of money. Enslaved by money in a capitalist system, the enslaver was later to introduce the enslaving power of money by setting up the same system in colonized lands, a process in the devaluation of human life. But the poet asserts an alternative. The resilience built in the black man because of his unique history is the repository of this hope:

But we whose hands fertilize the womb
of the earth
In spite of your songs of pride
In spite of the desolate villages
of torn Africa
Hope was preserved in us as a fortress

The four lines spring from a common stance stated by negritudists and 'non'-negritudists: "Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth."[3] The first of these lines is richly ambiguous in its suggestiveness. The African is in a better position to save himself and Europe because of several factors. The first one takes an instrumental view of suffering: because the African has suffered much under an exploitative system, he alone is capable of taking on the burden of reshaping the earth. Secondly, the African is still in close proximity with earth's creative forces, he still responds to the natural seasons, he is still natural and can, not only do something to avoid becoming artificial

and dehumanized, but also wake Europe from her dehumanized trance. Lawino expresses similar sentiments in her argument; only that she primarily wishes to liberate Ocol.[4] Thirdly, the African is a proletarian, working the earth, and, viewed from a Marxist angle, he will inevitably, as history grinds on, rise to overthrow the dehumanizing capitalist system that is epitomized in European colonialism. We find similar sentiments expressed by Senghor.

> Senegalese prisoners darkly stretched
> on the soil of France
> In vain they have cut off your laughter,
> in vain the darker flower of your flesh,
> You are the flower in its first beauty
> amid a naked absence of flowers
> . . . . . .
> The great song of your blood will vanquish
> machines and cannons
> Your throbbing speech evasions and lies.[5]

Senghor addressing his brothers "all along the roads of disaster." The suffering of the black man is present here; the resilience, the hope invested in him, is also to be 'heard' in the lines quoted above. However, the poet concludes by calling on the "Black Martyrs immortal race" to let him "speak the words of pardon," and this I would like to use as a springboard to making a few comments on Senghor's stance. He seems to believe that the resilience, the hope, in its passivity is what the black man wants. The protest tone in the whole poem unconvincingly lacks militancy and bitterness. The tone is that one of a martyr. One wonders from where the "great song of your blood" and the "throbbing speech" will come. It is a glorification of the suffering of the black man for the sake of glorification: "No hate in your soul void of hatred, no cunning in your soul void of cunning." One can 'hear' echoes of that propitiatory valorization of his childhood in this loud glorification of Africa's suffering. He uses 'martyr' with approval, and in this should be seen an acceptance of the devaluation of African life with promises of a better after-life. Senghor's obsession with the forgiving of Europe always introduces an uncomfortable dislocation in the negritude stance of one who has said so much about negritude. His many pronouncements on, and definitions of,

negritude, a black awareness that was not created but spotted and named "negritude," could be seen in a sense as efforts of one who compromises a movement because of his own ambivalent stance. But more appropriately his loud sermons on negritude fall in the propitiation vein already indicated. Senghor can rightly be accused of duplicity. There is a facile dualism in his appraisal of Africa and Europe that does not explain how, for instance, anything African could have had so meaningful an existence for so long without Europe's intellect. Once asked about the "strain of eroticism which runs not only through his poetry but also through his broadly political statements on negritude he was anxious to distinguish eroticism, which was body and mind, from sensuality which was body and soul. Europeans were erotic, and sometimes made a game of it, while Africans were instinctively sensual."[6] Seeing Africa and Europe ("and Europe too where we are joined by the navel") as desired complements, he likens the two to yeast and flour, and then goes on to give Africa's role:

> For who would teach rhythm to a dead world
> of machines and guns?
> . . . . . .
> We are the men of the dance,
> whose feet draw new strength
> pounding the hardened earth.[7]

The attitude here seems to be that Europe should remain as it is, with its destructive machines and guns (signs of an unjust economic system and social order, we learn even from Senghor) and merely get rhythm from Africa. The closing line above is as devoid of meaning from the view-point of the social reality of black history, as Diop's "we whose hands fertilize the womb of the earth" is full of meaning in the same context. But the ambivalence in Senghor persists:

> I have chosen my toiling black people,
> my peasant people
> the peasant race through all the world.[8]

so that his poetry in general sustains a Marxist colouring. One feels that his generosity, for instance, in "Prayer for Peace"[9] does not tie up with the sentiment above - "Peasants of the world unite!" a call for the unification of all the downtrodden in a bid to fight a system that inferiorizes man

for exploitation. In the previous chapter we noted that it is in this poem that the poet laments about the change "white Europe" has brought about in Africa, turning "my people into a working class." However, his generosity demands: "Lord God, forgive white Europe" and says nothing about redressing the balance, the decolonization process, knowing well that negritude is an attitude of decolonization. In this poem Senghor's ambivalence almost irritates, and definitely produces tasteless prosaic lines

> . . . I have a great weakness for France.
> Bless this people who were tied and twice able
> to free their
> hands and proclaim the coming
> of the poor into the kingdom
> Who turned the slaves of the day into men
> free equal fraternal
> Bless this people who brought me
> Thy Good News, Lord,
> . . . . . .
> I know many of your missionaries have blessed
> the weapons of violence and come to terms
> with the gold of the bankers
> But there will always be traitors and always fools.

To some, ironically that last line suits the poet in his duplicity as regards the movement he espoused. Although the ambivalence we note here is an ambivalence regarding a relevant black problem, it needs to be said that here Senghor does the movement a disservice by implying that prayer by itself can decolonize a people. David Diop is much more consistent in his view of the black man as an exploited black man. Europe as an embodiment of a capitalist system, the capitalist, has no truth, beauty or love, for "Truth Beauty Love / Is the workman smashing the deadly composure of their drawing-rooms."[10] That "smashing" alone tells us the difference between Senghor and Diop. Senghor would rather pray. For Diop, however, the moment of truth, beauty and love lies in the live and physical process of decolonization, in the actual changing of an inhuman system.

As we move from francophone poetry to anglophone poetry, we notice less and less of the surface juxtaposition of Europe/death and Africa/Life. But this should not lead us to the conclusion that this distinction is absolute. Okara and U Tam'si defy such a distinction. The patterning of ideas and propositions in Okara's "The Snowflakes Sail Gently Down."[11]

is very much in the francophone vein. The poem opens with a stanza on European winter. The similes and images used give it a macabre atmosphere: the snowflakes fall on "winter-weary elms," whose branches are "winter-stripped and nude" and bow "like grief-stricken mourners / as white funeral cloth is slowly unrolled over deathless earth." This is the poet's response to his winter experience. The heater he has in the room then yields "dead sleep" in which he has a dream.

> Then I dreamed a dream
> in my dead sleep. But I dreamed
> not of earth dying and elms a vigil
> keeping. I dreamed of birds, black
> birds flying in my inside, nesting
> and hatching on oil palms bearing suns
> for fruits and with roots denting the
> uprooters' spades. And I dreamed the
> uprooters tired and limp, leaning on my roots -
> their abandoned roots
> and the oil palms gave them each a sun.

The dream in dead sleep is about the tropics, it is about Africa. He dies to Europe in order to experience life. Sharply in contrast with the experience in the first stanza, the experience here is of life - "birds flying in my inside, nesting / and hatching on oil palms bearing suns." The pun on suns is obvious. What must be emphasized here is the blackness of the birds. The poet wishes us to make no mistake about this: "I dreamed of birds, black / birds . . ." The contrast is deliberate, but notice that Okara gives it a psychological exigency in that the opening stanza which relates what the poet is actually seeing is to act as a stimulus on his subconscious and produce within his first few minutes of sleep a dream, giving a preference that pales what he has just seen in his waking hours. The paling is complete as seen in white snow-flakes against black birds. It is imaginable that one could argue that what we have here has no bearing on social reality, for it is merely a poem about nature. My response is that passive nature does not produce poetry; that the line "and with the roots denting the uprooters' spades" springs from a tangible social reality. The very ordering of stanzas, the contrast made, implies this social reality in the background. The "death" in the first stanza is reinforced by "the uprooters' spades,"

for the uprooters are the white (like winter snow) slave trader and colonizer who attempt to uproot and exploit. However, the resilience in the African cultural roots is such that the uprooters give up in the end, and they themselves being uprooted, find support in Africa: "leaning on my roots / their abandoned roots / and the oil palms gave them each a sun." I have already stated that there is an obvious pun on sun, but taking "sun" first, let it be observed that winter outside the tropics is the absence of the sun's warmth and light. The sun is a source of energy and life, winter is therefore death. The absence of human life in the first stanza is conspicuous while the "I" of the second stanza immediately 'peoples' the dream, giving it life and activity. The third stanza, I suggest, is here to add credibility to the dream by its surreal nature. But surely there is an allusion to Europe's enslavement to money in this stanza: "for they reached not the brightness of gold." The second stanza offers life, Africa offers life, but the European devalues that life in pursuit of gold. The poet wakes up to see "the earth lying inscrutable / like the face of a god in a shrine." There is a very strong suggestion here that the dream is the authentic self of the poet, while the observed reality, winter in Europe, is the surface result of the attempt at his roots by the uprooters' spades. Although working more subtly than Diop in "The Vultures," we find the same elements of black awareness in both poems. "The Vultures" are "the uprooters"; the black "hands (that) fertilize the womb of the earth" has correspondence in "black birds flying in my inside, nesting and hatching." In fact Okara's poem, for the sake of contrast and comparison with Diop's poem, especially in the assertion that Africa is resilient and can save herself and Europe, this poem could end with the second stanza: "and the oil palms gave them each a sun." However, Okara is less given to poeticizing merely ideas, and produces neat structures for the experiences he communicates. Consequently in the poem studied here, he passes us through the third stanza that not only rounds off the dream in the second stanza, but gives that dream credibility by its surreal nature; in the fourth stanza, he minds to wake us up to

the "silently falling snow," the snowflakes of the first stanza. In "Piano and Drums"[12] too, we come across a similar neat structure. Here we have almost the reverse of "The Snowflakes," although the theme is much the same. "Jungle drums telegraphing the mystic rhythm" wake the poet to his authentic self, then he finds himself in his "mother's lap a suckling," then he is "at once . . . walking simple paths of no innovations / rugged, fashioned with the naked / warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts." Here it is not the winter-death of Europe occasioning a dream of what is authentic for the poet, and yet

> . . . I hear a wailing piano
> solo speaking of complex ways
> in tear-furrowed concerto,
> of far-away lands
> . . . . . .
> But lost in the labyrinth
> of its complexities, it ends in the middle
> of a phrase at a daggerpoint.

Once again the European life-denying way of life is alluded to. That macabre atmosphere is evoked here in contrast to the jungle drums, full of life "like bleeding flesh." The piano is "wailing," "speaking of complex ways in tear-furrowed concerto." The complexities of this way of life are destructive of the same life: "it ends in the middle of a phrase at a daggerpoint." The last stanza as in "The Snowflakes," brings us back to the "morning mist" and the mystic rhythm of jungle drums of the first stanza. It is significant that the poet does not pretend the concerto out of existence. However, the warmth with which he speaks of the jungle drums, the simple paths, clearly charts out his preference. This ambivalence is not Senghor's type; what Okara recognizes here is that the simplicity of yesteryear with all its sweetness must accommodate the concerto. His is not an unrealistic call to return to petrified traditions.

The theme of Europe as death has its variations and emphases. Diop's "The Vultures" within its historical setting largely deals with Europe's actual destruction in Africa, Europe as death's agent. "The Dead" too, treats Europe's actual killing of the black people - "the martyrs," as seen by Senghor. Okara gives us a much more complex experience. The theme being discussed here is certainly prominent, but first we see Europe as a place of death. Later in the dream stanza Europe is the

agent of death trying to uproot Africa. In "Piano and Drums" the poet has a variation on this theme and Europe is inherently destructive, because European exploitative culture is seen as self-destructive.[12] Another variation on this theme of death, in the context of negritude, emphasizes the victim, the man who is uprooted and dead or is in the process of being uprooted, dying as a result of accepting European culture. This variation obviously will imply the presence of death's agent. Okello Oculi's Orphan[13] emphasizes the "wild cat" from the west, while Song of Lawino concentrates on the 'dying' black man, Ocol. Ocol is like the sell-out of Diop's poem of that title, discussed in the previous chapter. Europe's general assimilation of the black man (a stated policy in French Africa, but an insidious process in British Africa) is seen as white death for the black man. To find out how this is so, it is necessary to look at the alternatives open to a "sell-out" as a living man, bearing in mind that it is impossible "for a man to develop except within the framework of a culture which recognizes him and which he decides to assume."[14] An assimilated black person can imitate foreign ways to perfection, but this in effect means a shadow-like existence. Secondly, his acceptability by the white community remains at best a dream, for they cannot see him as other than a black inferior, aping the ways of a superior culture. As an imitator of white ways then, what new thing can he add to these ways? Finally, as an imitator of alien ways he rejects his authentic culture, thereby indulging in an exercise of self-mutilation, cutting at the basis of his contribution to development. It is beyond argument that he cannot be creative beyond imitation, the result of which is "living death." He is not recognized by those he admires, and is alienated from his proper place. The castration and death images in Song of Lawino underscore this. What is significant for the argument in this chapter is that the agent of this 'death' ultimately turns out to be Europe. Note that Song of Lawino is not a facile juxtaposition of Europe/death and Africa/life, but a serious look at the process of uprooting and its consequences. In Ocol's lack of an authentic framework of reference, lies his sterility,

his death. Lawino does actually call upon her kinsmen to come and help her mourn Ocol. Let it be restated here that although shifts and emphases on given aspects of black awareness have been pointed out, more often than not our poets give a gestalt of reactions to Europe's presence in Africa. The experience communicated is thus more complex than such an analytical dissection would imply. We have, for instance 'heard' the paternoster drown "the howling" in "The Vultures"; the presence of the paternoster also implies the killing of African religion and gods, another 'death.'

Awoonor-Williams[15] has chosen the telling Easter setting for his poem dealing with the death of African gods because of the presence of Christianity in Africa. The imponderable question seems to be: Christianity is in Africa because Christ was betrayed, killed and, we are told, resurrected; the African gods were betrayed and 'killed' through Christianity, why cannot they be resurrected?

> the gods are crying, my fathers gods are crying
> for a burial - for a final ritual -
> but they that should build the fallen shrines
> have joined the dawn marchers
> singing their way towards Gethsemane
> where the tear drops of agony still freshen the cactus

The cactus is a desert or semi-desert plant without leaves. Seen as Christianity, there is an implication that African tears, representing African converts, have done much to keep Christianity going. By the same token, their tears denied to their gods, have helped the slow 'killing' of these gods. The "dawn marchers," Christians going to the Easter Sunday service sing "Christ has risen," but

> the gods cried, shedding
> clayey tears on the calico
> the drink offering had dried up in the harmattan
> . . . . . .
> and the fetish priest is dressing for the Easter
> service.

The harmattan, a moistureless wind that comes from the desert up north, reinforces the cactus image. This wind kills the "drink offering"; coming from the north, the harmattan stands for the European missionary, coming south to kill the African religions. The gods finally demand why they are not renewed as

Christ is every Easter, and seek vengeance upon "those who refused to replace them / In the appropriate season."[16] The irony in the death of betrayed Christ against the background of European evangelism in Africa is not really a separate theme from the death theme. It is a mere variation on the theme, emphasising religion and the gods. Okigbo is explicit about this in his note on "Fragments out of the Deluge." This particular section of LIMITS "renders in retrospect certain details of the protagonist and his milieu - the collective rape of innocence and profanation of the mysteries."[17] The irony in the death of betrayed Christ comes about thus: He is used by Europe to betray Africa into a suffering greater than Christ's passion, which passion should have made Africa's suffering non-existent. The "man out of innocence" clearly stands for Africa and the poet-protagonist. Notice that the poet here uses Christ's passion to relate Africa's passion that in a way eclipses Christ's passion, thereby underscoring the said irony. Listen to Africa's passion during the scramble for Africa.

> And they took the hot spoils off the battle
> And they shared the hot spoils among them:
>
> Estates among them
> And they were the chosen,
> mongrel breeds,
> With slogan in hand, of
> won divination . . .

Of course these lines sustain, at another level, the post-independent African era of grab-and-get-rich-quickly. Nevertheless this interpretation does not run counter to the discussion here, when it is remembered that independence was largely the Africanization of the colonial systems - "the collective rape of innocence and profanation of the mysteries" has continued. "Limits X-XI" relate the desecration of religion and the gods. The destroyers descended upon the twin-gods of the forest, dividing "the ornaments of him / and the beads about his tail / and the carapace of her / and her shell . . ." The devastation of a people's way of life, the devaluation of that life out of pure greed is what is lamented here. Later we come to the dead gods, killed and abandoned

> AND THE gods lie in state

And the gods lie in state
Without the long-drum.

Christianity's equivocal presence in Africa is perhaps nowhere treated with as great a passion as in U Tam'si's poetry. As pointed out in the previous chapter, U Tam'si hardly ever goes beyond the crisis wall to describe what it was like before the crisis. Nevertheless in responding to the reality before him, as he searches for his authentic self, variously seen as the river or the tree of his life, he reveals a bitter awareness of the destruction brought about in Africa by Europe. Christianity as brought by Europe not only betrays Africa, but also Christ. To this irony in Christ's death, U Tam'si comes again and again. That telling image of the tree, not only stands for his family tree, but also for the tree of suffering, the cross; and the cross itself stands for both Christ's suffering and Africa's suffering. Even in this the irony can be felt. Africans as a race belong to one family tree. The whole of this family tree has suffered under Europe, in fact this people epitomise suffering. Their history, their tree, is a cross of suffering not only because of the suffering, but also because the cross in the white man's hand facilitated the infliction of suffering on the black man. So U Tam'si states what happened in these words:

On the necks of black crows I read my lost joy
lightning scorched the harsh bark of a tree
whose fruit were plundered in vain
a drunken eagle permitted the nightingale to sing
and later plundered him in vain[18]

These five lines from "The Hearse" tell the history of the black man's suffering. The whole poem cannot of course be adequately summarised, seeing that U Tam'si developes his imagery over long stretches of poetry. What can be given here therefore, will only be a sketching of the context of the lines quoted above. The title of the poem, "The Hearse," suggests death. I feel that the death referred to here is not the actual death of a tree, nor is it the death of a river, a people's history, but the death of continuity at a given apposite tempo. Africa's history was and is because Africans were and are. However, the crisis introduced a turbulence in this river, this history, hitherto unexperienced by Africans. The hearse in movement, therefore,

stands for this history of suffering. Having said this, it is necessary to explain two important images in the poem before further comment is made. These images are the storm and the sea. The storm obviously stands for the violence of the crisis. The sea stands for death and 'international civilization' - a 'universal' that spurns all particulars. This idea is clearly brought out in these lines: "then the centuries groaned / from the source to the sea / . . . see his mortuary bed / the estuary where a river meets the sea." The images of tree and river, storm and sea, are central to most of U Tam'si's poetry. In the five lines quoted above, the lightning referred to should be recognized as an attendant of the storm and thunder. Lightning is particularly effective here in reference to the turbulent history of black peoples. It takes over from the image of the black crows. Black crows usually have a white band of feathers around their necks. Therefore, here we find reference to Christianity, because of the priest's black robe and white collar. There is also the suggestion of a black person with a white hand round his neck. Africa is the dark continent, white Europe comes to 'lighten' Africa. This lightening turns out to be a striking of thunder, and a scorching of the 'black' tree. It is scorched by European Christianity and civilization. That scorching makes 'audible' those lines of Okigbo's, met in the previous chapter

> SCAR OF the crucifix
> over the breast
> by red blade inflicted.

But even in this painful line of suffering: "lightning scorched the harsh bark of a tree," we have a clear allusion to resilience, for it is only the bark that is scorched, scarred. I am not suggesting that U Tam'si minimizes the consequences of the colonial crisis. All I am trying to record here is the unmistakable note of hope in this sad poem. The said resilience is even more explicit in the line that follows: "whose fruit were plundered in vain." Here we have probably a specific reference to the shipment of black people into slavery across the Atlantic; but there is no reason why we should not be aware of other

suggestions. For instance, an allusion to sell-outs and converts to European Christianity is very well sustained by this line, and supported by the lightning of the previous line, seen as a whitening, a whitewashing. The lines quoted find a variation towards the end of the poem:

> Sometimes in the night
> the lightning showed its joy
> in scorching the tree
> vainly plundered by the storm

The night is Africa and her people are the tree. Europe's destructive spirit is to be seen in the joy that the personified lightning reveals. In these short lines we discover another suggestion that ultimately yields the double scourge of slavery and colonization as their meaning. Lightning can stand for both the European colonizer and missionary in Africa, while the storm stands for the slave trader. In this poem we see Europe as death's agent in Africa. But once again the resilience of Africa is referred to here in "vainly." It has been necessary to dwell on this poem and the point it makes because it not only establishes the context of almost any U Tam'si line, but also because his principle images take root here. The poet, as "The Scorner,"[19] more or less states that Africa's Passion under Europe has paled Christ's mission as the Saviour, because both have been ill-used, one to betray another.

> Christ I laugh at your sadness
> oh my sweet Christ
> Thorn for thorn
> we have a common crown of thorns
> . . . . . .
> I count more than your one Judas on my fingers.

Europe has used Christianity, and therefore Christ, to become Africa's "more than . . . one Judas" who betray Africa and create an identity of Passion between Christ's suffering and the black man's suffering. Consequently, Christ's suffering for mankind is rendered meaningless to Africa: "Am I only your brother / They have already killed me in your name." The whole poem is punctuated by such challenging statements: "to betray you who have betrayed me / They have already killed me in your name / betrayed and sold." The poem ultimately explores the problem to the submission that the Christian message in the light of what

has taken place on black soil has been ineffective. U Tam'si does not question Christ's ideas. What he questions is the Christianity he sees, the reality of it in crisis-torn Africa, especially the 1960-Congo. He sees its manifestations in certain cultural trappings and questions: "You have given me a people who are not distillers of gin / what wine shall I drink to your Jubilate / In this country which has no vines." He observes that Christianity has become a European bourgeois activity, a pass time: "But you soil yourself by mixing with the bourgeois / Their luxury is a golden calf on the necks of their wives . . .

> You do nothing
> The Congo divides its pain
> Ah Christ you are soiled by contact with
> the bourgeois
> Christ Christ of my Saint Anne.

The identification of Africa with Christ goes further. The poet as one with Africa's history of suffering is a black Christ with a unique passion equal or more intense than Christ's. U Tam'si, in this sense, is more that Christ's brother. His stay in Paris during the Congo crisis by soiling his effectiveness in the struggle against that strife ironically identifies him even more with ineffectual Christianity in Africa ("the conscience of the world is silent with me over the drama of Leopoldville - I spit into the Seine like all honest poets").[20] He, too, is soiled by bourgeois contact.

> The wine weighs on my heart I suffer with joy
> Christ I hate your Christians
>
> I am emptied of joy by loving all your cowards
> I spit at your joy
> Having to right and left of me
> these bourgeois women.

For U Tam'si the passion he suffers as a leaf on the tree that the black race is, does not mean a mental reliving of that history of suffering. The crisis in the Congo is brought into focus through the initial devastation of Africa by Europe. He suffers his passion of contradictions - commitment to events in the Congo while safe in Paris because of this initial crisis. That is U Tam'si, affirming that the authentic self is the leaf on that tree, scorched and scarred by lightning, but nonetheless a tree that has resisted the plundering of her fruit.

The snake-cult, although rapidly dying out, seems to have enjoyed wide popularity in Africa before Christianity came. In some places it verged on worship, while in others it was merely the respect that would be given to any totem animal. In some parts of Iboland, the python was a deity. We have heard Okigbo relate the desecration of the "twin-gods of the forest," the tortoise and the python, and therefore the devaluation of a people's religion. Before discussing Achebe's treatment of this theme in "Lament of the Sacred Python,"[21] I must make it clear that those Ibo people who revered the python did not do so because they 'lacked' principal deities. Ala, goddess of the earth, and Chukwu the supreme being, are the Ibo principal deities. Polytheism must be accepted as the general rule in most African communities before the Christian impact. However, getting back to Achebe's poem, there is an unmistakable lament of the Ibo ethos, the African ethos, in this lament of the python. The poem is a straightforward one, the persona being the python himself. The first two lines briefly establish the python's old ancestry: "I was there when lizards / were ones and twos." This is an important point to establish in view of what is to come later:

> But of late
> A wandering god pursued,
> It seems, by hideous things
> He did at home has come to us

This god pitches his tent beneath "the people's holy tree" and follows this with an introduction of "revolts, scandals and false immunities." He is an ally to death in contrast to the python who came with no poisonous fangs and brought no terror to man. Now, in spite of this obvious difference, the worshippers of the python run away from him. These betrayers of the African ethos are

> . . . empty men
> Suborned with the stranger's tawdry gifts
> And taken trussed up to the alter-shrine turned
> Slaughterhouse for the gory advent
> Feast of an errant cannibal god
> Tooth-filled to eat his fellows
>
> And the sky recedes in
> Anger, the orphan snake
> Abandoned weeps in the shadows.

The last three lines unwittingly, yet appropriately echo Okigbo's

relevant lines: "And the gods lie unsung / Veiled only with mould / Behind the shrinehouse."[22] But more than this, the lines in evoking the myth of Sky's recession because of man's ill-behaviour in primeaval times, suggest the beginning of strife. In Okigbo too, the desecrator causes the twin-gods to break apart, ushering in a period of strife and chaos: "And the beasts broke / Malisons, malisons, mair than ten / And dawn-gust grumbled."[23] Since Achebe's poem was written after the civil war, it is conceivable that "the gory advent" could be a specific reference to this Nigerian war. However, even if that were not the case, "gory advent" offers itself to other interpretations. First of all, bearing in mind that the poem is about the coming of Christianity, the empty men who are taken trussed up to the alter-shrine are the converts. That "trussed-up" is an allusion to the incapacitating effect of Christianity in the face of an unjust colonial rule. What we have here, in other words, is the cliched story of the missionary-cum-land-grabber, who asked the natives to close their eyes in prayer and then proceeded to take their land. The gory advent could be seen as the colonial era in which the native finds himself a slave and servant in his own house. Neo-Colonialis can also be seen as this gory advent. Years of colonialism create "trussed up" men by insidiously creating a dependent mentality in the ruled. The post-independent coups and wars, the Nigerian one being a prime example, constitute the gory advent - the gory second coming of the erstwhile masters through technical aid, military routine exercises and arms. They arm two brothers and come in later to rehabilitate them, thriving on the spoils. Third the gory advent could be interpreted as the general idea of martyrdom; that new comers to the Christian faith get so drunk on talk of heaven that they come to accept any 'unjustified' death as it is supposed to lead to heaven. This idea takes a more concrete form in the next poem "Their Idiot Song."[24] Achebe's note on this poem sums up what the poem is about: "The christian claim of victory over death is to the unconverted villager one of the really puzzling things about the faith."[25] The offending hymn is the well-known "Abide With Me." "Although the Ibo people admire courage and valour, they do not glamorize death,

least of all death in battle," writes Achebe, illustrating this assertion with an Igbo saying: "a person who cries because he is sick what will they do who are dead."[26] Death is that much certain to the Ibos and is not taken lightly, for it should not be.

> Behold the great
> and gory handiwork of Death displayed
> for all on dazzling sheets this
> hour of day its twin nostrils
> plugged firmly with stoppers of wool
> and they ask of him: Where
> is thy sting?

It follows that any religion that minimizes the "gory handiwork of Death" helps to devalue the now-life. This is particularly the case in Africa where "although there is a firm belief in a spirit world, and indeed belief in a life after death is one of mankind's oldest and most universal religious beliefs, yet that life is not regarded . . . as preferable to this one on earth."[27] In another short poem, "Dereliction,"[28] Achebe without any overt juxtaposition of Europe and Africa makes it abundantly clear that cultural alienation is akin to death. The poem in three short stanzas presents an enquirer, a mediating diviner and the oracle. The enquirer is not exactly Diop's "sell-out", nor is he an Ocol, though he has quit "the carvel stool / in my father's hut." He has quit it because there are termites in the wood, raising a "white-bellied stalagmite" in its pith. The diviner's general statement of the problem is very clear and prefigures the oracle's answer. "Where does a runner go / whose oily grip drops / the baton handed by the faithful one / in a hard, merciless race?" He also compares the enquirer to "the priestly elder who barters / for the curio collector's head / of tobacco the holy staff / of his people." The answer from the oracle is: "Let them try the land / where the sea retreats." And where is it that the sea retreats? Nobody knows. It is the unknown land to the living. It is significant that the stalagmite being raised in the wood is white-bellied. There is surely that suggestion of white Europe in black Africa. The stalagmite is being raised in the pith of what makes a carved stool what it is, for the pith is its heart, as it were. The termites doing this job are "sabre-tooth," while the stool

they have attacked is in "my father's hut." As we observed in the previous chapter, "hut" stands for traditional African way of life. "Sabre-tooth termites" introduces a similar ambiguity to the one we noted in "gory advent." Once again beginning with a particular incident to bear up the interpretation, let it be noted that "the sabre" is sometimes a reference to military rule or force. In this case, therefore, we get a direct allusion to the Nigerian situation. The military cadre since the first coup has continued to eat away the people's aspirations and hopes, while avowing that they were guiding them into better futures; dependence on white Europe continues, and the military works to the glory of the former oppressor. Narrowing this interpretation further, we see in the first stanza an allusion to the presence of Federal troops in Biafra and the untold suffering this brought to the heart of Iboland. The stalagmite could be seen as a divisive element in a people's life, being carefully tended by those wishing to gain from such division. In this case the "sabre-tooth termites" are generally the high-ranking officers who helped to create ground for the civil war. A more general interpretation would see in this poem Europe's dismantling of the African ethos to create a "white-bellied stalagmite," like the proverbial white elephant, in its place. The second stanza being an amplification of the first, bears the same results. The baton is African tradition and culture. The race becomes hard and merciless with slavery and colonization, for these dictate an alien tempo to the flow of African tradition and culture. Achebe's attitude here seems to be that the baton - tradition and culture - as an important element in the race must be held firmly at the handover. The oily grip of the baton should be blamed on the runner. The use of "oily" here suggests a certain clumsiness and carelessness, a glibness and corruption that offers no resistance. The priestly elder wilfully barters his people's holy staff for a harmful luxury. One is reminded of certain African rulers who sold their people into slavery for tawdry gifts. True, the slave trader had a superior technology. However, Achebe's point seems to be that there must at least be some resistance to

being enslaved to either this technology or more precisely to being enslaved to the exhibitor of such technology; that a people's holy staff must not be bartered for tobacco, that a people's ethos must not be compromised by baited aid. The juxtaposition of the curio-collector's head of tobacco against the holy staff of a people is more than an innuendo and reinforces the juxtaposition of white-bellied stalagmite against the curved stool. I notice here a clear preference of African tradition and culture in its regard for human life, and a condemnation of Europe's 'murderous' colonization of Africa and the after effects of this. Let me qualify this preference. I am not suggesting that Achebe thinks there is a static African tradition and culture that is immutable and can be taken whole. It is indeed unimaginable. Achebe, it should be emphasized, does not minimize the reality of the Europe-Africa clash, for he sees the resultant race as "hard, merciless." Rather what I am underlining here is his implied belief in the resilience of African ways, his condemnation of oily grips of the baton and call for some resistance within the dynamics of culture change.

So far it has been relatively easy in some of the poems discussed above to spot some form of juxtaposition of Europe/death and Africa/life. It will be remembered that a gradual change from naked juxtaposition in, for instance, Senghor's "The Dead" to a much more subtle juxtaposition in, say Achebe's "Dereliction" has been noted. My argument, however, rests on analysing the focusing of the crisis from whatever view-point and discussing the reaction to the crisis.

> And who says it matters
> Which way the kite flows,
> Provided the movement is
> Around the burning market.[29]

These lines in their context and in the context of the present argument can be taken to mean: it does not matter which form the crisis takes, so long as it still threatens our authentic self. The kite, as the crisis, could have flown in a clockwise direction as colonialism. Independence was supposed to do away with the kite all together, but this did not come to pass, so now the kite merely flows in an anti-clockwise direction,

still around the burning market, as neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism is no significant change from colonialism. It has been necessary to restate this because when we come to Soyinka it is almost impossible to spot any overt juxtaposition of Europe and Africa as death and life. And yet Soyinka more than most other African poets is fascinated and moved by the problems of suffering, death and life. Even "Telephone Conversation,"[30] Soyinka's most 'negritudist' poem to those who would narrow negritude to a matter of colour differences, is itself no facile juxtaposition of white against black. The poem is a satirical dialogue 'reported' by one of the participants, who stands above the flimsy hitches of colour bar. We witness a telephone conversation between a black student and a white landlady, the subject being accommodation. Above this there is the economic reality of white landlady, not worker, with economic power and black student, a 'peasant' back in his own homeland. This situation outside Africa, in a white environment, still reflects the situation back at home: foreigner ruler, native ruled. Apart from colour and the implied economic differences, the general question of cultural differences is raised in the poem. So the poem begins with the assertion not only of colour differences but cultural differences too, both captured in "I am African." The artificiality of European culture comes into focus through the "pressurized good-breeding" and the "lipstick coated, long gold-rolled cigarette-holder pipped" voice. An attack on the sometimes childish hypocricy of whites is neatly captured in that new collocation, "hide-and-speak," which echoes the children's game, "hide-and-seek." It also elevates the satirist above this drama of trivialities in which he finds himself. We can 'hear' his laughter at this game in the last lines. After "accepting" this childish game, he (presumably with a put-on naive grin) goes on to describe himself in a number of colours. He does not forget his raven-black bottom which is followed by a plea that the landlady sees for herself. But this 'rude' description of himself to the landlady is hardly the answer he is giving to a naively colour conscious society. All he is stating is that he is man, and then shows how ridiculous it would be to try and define man

by colours. He is neither wholly black, nor wholly brunette. The human self alone is what should define man, the black man especially.

> My question, however, is when are we going to stop justifying our existence in terms of the colour of others and not in terms of our own HUMAN SELVES? Of course, there is no denying the existence of racial solidarity; we have to admit, however, that this solidarity has not prevented the assassinations, the illegal detentions, the political imprisonments practised by the dynaties reigning in Black Africa.[31]

An anti-negritude sentiment according to narrow definitions of negritude. Of course colour consciousness by blacks is negritudist, but it is not negritude. In "Telephone Conversation" then, there is the clear jab at European artificiality and hypocricy, against the background of their avowed good intentions towards Africans. We do not, definitely, get passive black martyrs and promises of future black resistance; what we notice in this satire is a current black resistance, a living of negritude as opposed to a sermonizing of it. It is negritudist because it is a black reaction to part of the crisis negritude reacts against. Only Africa's history of slavery and colonization can account for the roots of this poem - the presence of a poor black student in London. I might have played down the question of colour in the poem; if this is so I feel the poem demands it. However, I am aware of the importance of "blackness" in this respect: Ambi manufactures who run many 'free' calendars with the advert: "Ambi people look great - Use Ambi. You'll look great." make a profit from white-inferiorized blacks. Consequently I think that as long as there is danger of white skin worshippers, a symptom of a most sickly attitude, even simple negritudist literature on colour should find room on the decolonization menu.

"Song: Deserted Markets" is another of Soyinka's few poems in which there is a faint juxtaposition between life-denying Europe and life-affirming Africa. There are two levels of interpretation to this poem. Since the poem is composed "To A Paris Night" one could see the woman in the poem as Paris. The poet is not totally involved, for he can judge her, or if he is, his cultural background is opposed to this Paris one. He observes

that "seeds fill your gutters," seeds of life. Paris, like other western cities and those in other parts of the world that take on this pattern, is part of the cultural life of this civilization, and denies the poet true expression of life.

> A night for a life
> Dawn hastens in vain
> A white bird she comes
> And gobbles the grain

Notice that the bird which comes to gobble the grain of life is white. But bearing the closing lines of "Dedication" in mind (". . . haste to repay / the debt of birth. Yield mantides like the sea / and ebbing, leave a meaning on the fossilled sands"), "Song: Deserted Markets" operates more fully at the personal level and contrasts well with "Psalm" a poem that is a sacred song to an expectant mother. There is perhaps an attack here on women who prostitute themselves in Paris nights. Behind such an attack would be an indirect attack on a system that makes prostitution necessary. These women, then, have grown up but unnaturally avoid paying the debt of birth.

> And the dew leaves no mark
> Where my head has lain.[32]

Barrenness in Africa is still considered one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a woman. Evidence of this is echoed all through this section of poems - "for women," with "Psalm," "Her Joy is Wild" and "To One in Labour" standing out as sacred praise songs that laud self-perpetuation. Although there is a hint of guilt and regret on the part of the man,

> the ever eager thought is chaste
> at the ruin of your corn-stalk waist[33]

or

> . . . and I denied her
> Nothing maimed on her vision of the blind.[34]

The positive note on life is dominant. The guilt is an inevitable contradiction that merely underlines the dialectic unity between destruction and construction. There is no construction without destruction. However, because destruction and construction are socially-speaking "value terms," it must be noted here that there can be conceived a destruction which does not entail a construction, on this social plane. War, for instance, can be seen as a pure destruction, which does not

at the same time mean a kind of construction, although it is arguable that there is 'construction' accompanying war. As we shall see later, Ogun often symbolizes this unity. It is obvious from the foregoing that Soyinka is unobtrusively affirming the African world-view. That life is sacred, and is the natural state, as opposed to death and war, and any connivance in the face of war, is made abundantly clear in his powerful "Malediction." It is a cursing of her who rejoiced during the Nigerian civil war. The curse is that

> a sky of scab-blacked tears
> glut but never slake
>
> those lips
> crossed in curse corrugations
> thin slit in spittle silting
> and bile-blown tongue
> pain plagued, a mock man plug
> wedged in waste womb-ways
> a slime slug slewed in sewage
> orogbo egan gege l'eke arugbo . . .[35]

I am surprised that Gerald Moore quotes these particular lines to show that the "deeply impressive group of poems of 1966 is marred only by the inclusion of . . . ("Malediction") . . . which displays Soyinka's occasional tendency towards an excessive violence of expression . . . Here the energy of Soyinka's response has betrayed him into an excess of hatred as ugly as the emotion he attacks. The result is bad poetry."[35] There is no diplomacy in cursing, language has to be violated to produce the desired psychological effects. 'Unpardonable' gestures and the utterance of the 'unmentionables' constitute the decor of a curse, giving it its essence. To have impact, a curse must shock. The alliteration and assonance in the centre-piece of this curse add to its emotional power. The woman is cursed never to give birth to other children and never to be mourned when she finally dies. Life is sacred, and anybody who takes life or devalues it deserves this curse. Achebe's "poems about war," like Soyinka's, are a deep desire for the natural state, which is life. War is death. "Refugee Mother and Child," like the others in the section, reveals a hunger for food and normalcy of life.

> The air was heavy with odours
> of diarrhoea of unwashed children

> with washed-out ribs and dried-up
> bottoms struggling in laboured
> steps behind blown empty bellies[37]

In such a situation "Christmas in Biafra (1969)" turns out to be a sad painting, questioning the relevance of the Christian message at times such as these. The good nuns who "had set up a manger of palms to house a fine plastercast scene at Bethlehem"[38] remind one of the "laxative bodies" (token Christian organisations and the Red Cross) that "move in the constipated savannahs"[39] of the 1960 Congo, wiping evidence of carnage rather than its cause.

The equivocal presence of Christianity in Africa, against the background of European missions in Nigeria and the Congo has been discussed as treated by Okigbo, Achebe and U Tam'si. What strikes one as odd is the fact that Soyinka seems to be apparently not bothered by this. It seems paradoxical that one who is, no doubt, aware of the foreign machinations in Nigeria during the civil war, should write this of a Yoruba myth, and particularly Ogun, his favourite god.

> Idanre lost its mystification early enough. As events gathered pace and unreason around me I recognized it as part of a pattern of awareness which began when I wrote A Dance of the Forests. In detail, in the human context of my society, Idanre has made abundant sense. (The town of Idanre itself was the first to cut its bridge, its only link with the rest of the region during the uprising of October '65). And since then, the bloody origin of Ogun's pilgrimage has been, in true cyclic manner most bloodily re-enacted. Still awaited is that postscript image of dawn, contained even in the beginning, the brief sun-led promise of earth's forgiveness.[40]

In this we come across what may be termed the essential Soyinka in two senses. First, his leaping beyond the particular to the "universal," but solely so because that particular is his springboard; in this case the reading of the re-enactment of Ogun's cyclic pattern in the particularity of the Nigerian crisis. Secondly, Soyinka's apparent despondency always has a "postscript image of dawn," of hope. Only through the mysteries of Ogun, then, does Soyinka explore the universal human cannibalism.

One could easily imagine other poets communicating a no less valid experience of the Nigerian strife, but chances are that their response would take off from the colonial era and the post-independence period of corruption. Soyinka goes beyond this to the mythical time, using Yoruba myths to explore humanity's inhumanity, using Ogun as both man, therefore ancestor, and god, to show the contradictions in man. It is at such moments when he is dangerously close to giving us the incapacitating concept of the original sin, that Soyinka adds a postscript image of hope. Ogun in the hands of Senghor, would probably lose his essence in Senghor's lard of glorification. Soyinka does not absolve his favourite god, Ogun, from playing part in the strife because it would not make sense to do so. It only makes sense when this Yoruba god is brought in to explain that "pattern of awareness" which sets off Soyinka from other African writers. He is in a way the most negritudist of African writers in the sense that he, more than these other writers, digs deep into primordial time, the mythical time, to salvage that which helps him explore modern suffering and the recurrent problems of life and death. In thus doing, he emerges on the "universal" plane, having gone through those particular Yoruba myths, those particular Yoruba gods, that particular Yoruba god, Ogun. It is only when we understand this that we realize that his statement on humanity's rampant cannibalism does not make him less African, less Nigerian, less Yoruba:

> In A Dance of the Forests, I was very much conscious of all the potentialities of existing theatrical idioms in Nigeria, and I only know that there was one thing which motivated, maybe, guided the form and the shape of the play or the eventual fate of the characters. I use this word 'motivated' quite cautiously because I do not think I consciously tried to preach or bring, you know, a series of symbolisms at all, but the main thing was the realization that human beings are just destructive all over the world . . . I find that the main thing is my own personal conviction or observation that human beings are simply cannibals all over the world so that their main preoccupation seems to be eating up one another.[41]

I am inclined to believe that this is the "pattern of awareness"

the poet-dramatist refers to in the introductory note to "Idanre". If it is not, it is at least part of this pattern of awareness. Soyinka is really a poet of bitter laughter and despondency, not because he gives in to these, but that his writing with bitter laughter and despondency implies "visionary hopes." He acts, he writes, because "acting . . . channels anguish into creative purpose which releases man from a totally destructive despair, releasing from him the most energic, deeply combative inventions which, without usurping the territory of the infernal gulf, bridge them with visionary hopes."[42] The "infernal gulf" is the gulf between man and the gods, which makes the two incomplete, thereby bringing about tragic situations. Humanity's cannibalism is evidence of that infernal gulf and the poet's constant 'acting' in the greys of human suffering, the pointing out of humanity's inhumanity, is the resolution of the tragic moments for the poet, the exorcising of the demon that makes him a sensitive poet, aware of the infernal gulf. Writing for Soyinka, "means above all honesty. It means recognizing reality but not necessarily accepting it. If Madmen and Specialists is regarded as bleak, a statement of negativism, it is a recognition of the occasional feeling of hopelessness which by writing about it I can exorcise."[43] Soyinka seems to be very certain that

> For merriment
> our planet
> isn't well equipped.
> One must
> tear
> happiness
> from the days to come.
> In this life
> to die
> has never been hard.
> To make new life
> is more difficult
> by far.[44]

After going through half Soyinka's poetry one gets convinced that suffering is the grim reality of this life, and that often dying is its logical outcome at any given moment. Yet this is not to say that Soyinka does not affirm life; indeed this

preoccupation with death merely means that he is that much conscious of life. He regards life as sacred and as the undenied right of every individual. However, coming back to the argument in this chapter, we find that in spite of the many deaths in his poetry, Europe, seen by other poets as an agent of suffering and death, is but a secondary reality. Yet this does not make him less African, for through Ogun he faces the universal problem of death and life. The road is an important image in the works of Soyinka. He has written a play entitled The Road and has a group of poems under the heading "of the road." The road stands for life in its continuity; and as a physical indication of economic development, it stands for progress and generally western civilization in Africa. Paradoxically, it also denotes death and destruction. Dawn is another significant image to be found in Soyinka's poetry. In the section, "of the road," "dawn" features in four of the five poems. There is a clear connection between the road and dawn in "Death in the Dawn." The experience of coming across a fatal accident early in the morning, elicits this conclusion from the poet.

> . . . who would dare
> The wrathful wings of man's Progression
>
> But such another Wraith! Brother
> Silenced in the startled hug of
> Your invention - is this mocked grimace
> This closed contortion - I?[45]

This death in the dawn is inauspicious, coming as it does in the dawn, a time of new life, new hopes, and new energies. This dawn could be seen as the dawn of technological advancement in Africa. The use of Progression with capital P implies a deification, a permanency of a given pattern of movement. It has power over man and has for its exaction the death of the inventor: "silenced in the startled hug of your invention." The blame is not laid on exporting Europe, because the inventor is I, Man. This death finds ultimate explanation in Ogun's essence. Ogun is not only god of the road and guardian of the forge, he is the creative essence. In this case, the essence behind inventions. Cars, mainly iron from his ore, kill men on the roads he guards. We

> Have honeycombed beneath his hills, worked red earth
> Of energies, quarrying rare and urgent ores and paid
> With wrecks of last year's suppers, paved his roads
> With shells, milestones of breathless bones
> Ogun is a demanding god.[46]

But this is a pattern that must go on for ever, because creativity implies the destruction / construction contradiction: ". . . growth is greener where / Rich blood has spilt; brain and marrow make / Fat manure with sheep's excrement."[47] The faint cynicism here, also to be noted in "Postmortem" should not bar us from observing that Ogun in these poems begins to emerge as the epitome of the dialectic unity between destruction and construction, for "in his redemptive action," Ogun, "from earth itself extracted elements for the subjugation of chthonic chaos."[48] The depiction of dawn in "Around Us Dawning"[49] is the depiction of a false "linear flare of dawns"; false because they are in reality mere potholes in a plane. They are also false and contrary to what dawn should be, promise of abundant life, because they serve to halo passengers seen as "passive martyrs," thereby presaging their inevitable death should the rotors fail. Man's invention of "jet flight" facilitates much suffering and death. The closest Soyinka gets to naming an imperialist power as a destroyer, is perhaps to be seen in "Luo Plains."[50] This is another poem in which dawn is alluded to and has within it an element or elements of the contrary. The dawn here is the dawn of independence, as seen by Eldred Jones.[51] The opening stanzas describe a plundered land

> Plague
> Of comet tails of bled horizons

This could be seen as a purely physical description of the land, but the last three stanzas demand a social context. The "sunset spears" could be interpreted to mean "spears" that were used to bring the colonial era to a sunset, making it possible for seasons quills, pens, but also the spears, to sign the independence documents: "seasons quills upon her perchment." In this can also be seen the suggestion that the stamp on Kenya, the signature on her parchment is a signature in blood.

> . . . yet
> The hidden lake of her
> Forgives!

The fourth stanza given the one word "forgives," expresses incredulity and amazement at what is going on after independence because of this philoscphy of forgiveness without redress. The plains become swift again on "migrant wings / And the cactus / Flowers the eagle sentinel." The eagle being America's emblem, one finds here an apposite allusion to American imperialism. It will be remembered how a certain Kenyan politician from the "lakemists" is said to have been making enormous political strides under the aegis of the American advice and dollar. Many Kenyan students found places in American universities during his time. Such allusion to neo-colonialism is much more explicit in Okigbo and Achebe.

(For he ate the dead lion,
& was within the corpse -

If we take the lion here to be an allusion to Britain (the lion is the national emblem of Great Britain) then what the two lines express is the hollowness of paper independence, an independence that is not free from the explcitative system it avowed to fight. Although the former British colonies appeared to 'kill' the lion, appeared to get rid of colonialism, what they did with the corpse was to eat it. They Africanised colonialism by getting indocrinated with a dependent mentality. Secondly, they remained within the corpse - the British Commonwealth, at one level, and at another, the whole capitalist-individualist ethos that had terrorised them for years. Consequently, it matters little what we label our present situation, colonialism, neo-colonialism or 'independent' so long as that terror is still above us. The nations of the world are inter-dependent, and it makes little difference whether or not democracy in England works beautifully in that island, so long as it thrives under a capitalist-individualist ethos. Power alternation between Conservative and Labour parties (a manifestation of democracy?) ensures the perpetuation of strife in some other parts of the world. Harold Wilson, to one party, is loving because "he gave me a gun to shoot my rebellious brother," while Heath hates me because he promises guns to his brothers in "white Pretoria." Later when Heath's brother kills Wilson's friend, Wilson and Heath meet urgently over him and send "post-haste Sir Alec to Africa for the

funeral."[53] Here is reflected that cannibalism the world over, of which Soyinka is so keenly aware. He borrows "seasons of an alien land / In brotherhood of ill . . . To stay the season of a mind."[54] That is the closing of "Massacre, October '66," a poem written in Tegel, Germany, during the Nigerian civil war. The autumn landscape and that country's recent history evoke the situation back in Nigeria. The "October flush of dying leaves . . . flew in seasoned scrolls lettering the wind," and the poet:

> Swept from painted craft
> A mockery of waves remarked this idyll sham
> I trod on acorns; each shell's detonation
> Aped the skull's uniqueness.

The leaves' seasonal lettering of the wind, seasonally presages winter and 'death' of the tree from which they fly. As for the poet, the "painted craft" is the ship of state. It is Nigeria, an "idyll sham" as witnessed by the waves of uprising which began in 1965. The poet, like autumn leaves urgently flees Nigeria, an indication of the pogrom in that country. The German massacre of Jews merely brings into sharp focus the massacre of Ibos in Northern Nigeria. So, he finds himself borrowing seasons of an alien land in brotherhood of ill. He stays the season of a mind not because he discovers a cure in Germany, but because he underlines humanity's problem once more. As the autumn season is cyclic, so is humanity's inhumanity, and hence: "since then, the bloody origin of Ogun's pilgrimage has been, in true cyclic manner, most bloodily re-enacted."[55] In this exorcism lies the staying of a mind's season. What must be remembered as well is the affirmation of life that underlines this proding of life's areas of suffering. It is precisely this reverence of the now-life that makes him write with such sardonic humour of his "first white hairs"[56] and "postmortem."[57] This sardonic humour is not purely stuffy cynicism, for from the imaginable view-point of the dead man, post-mortem is a mockery of his dead flesh. Neither him, nor those cutting him to bits, can escape death.

> . . . masked fingers think from him
> to learn, how not to die.

The pattern we observed in the first chapter repeats itself in this theme of Europe/death and Africa/life with slight variation. Generally, we get more of the stark juxtaposition of Europe/death and Africa/life in francophone poetry, than in anglophone poetry. But as observed the concern is one, a questioning of the devaluation of human life at the hands of Europe, especially. And not Europe just because Europe, but as the origin of the colonial crisis that brought negritude about. This questioning has taken the form of a general comparison of cultures, for instance in "Piano and Drums." We have also noted a general appraisal of Europe's impact on Africa ("The Vultures"). Specific aspects of the impact have also been discussed, for instance Christianity's devaluation of the now-life through the preaching of a better after life and a flouting of Death (in "Their Idiot Song"). However, what should be clear from the argument in this chapter is that the treatment of this theme is a comprehensive whole, because specific reference to Christianization echoes enslavement, desecration of a people's religion and gods, finally revealing the forces of alienation that cut across a people's ethos. Since this cannot take place and leave the traditional social structures intact, where does renewal lie?

Where is there for us an anchorage.[58]

CHAPTER THREE

RENEWAL AND PERPETUATION: THEME OF ANCESTORS AND CORPORATE PERSONALITY

"I participate, therefore I am."[1]
"I smell, I dance the Other. I am."[2]

The previous chapter dealt with the death/life theme as treated against the background of white-black contact. We noted the assertion of African cultural resilience and affirmation of life as part of a gestalt reaction to Europe's slave-trade and colonization. In this chapter I intend to deal with the actual seat of resilience and renewal, 'ancestor-worship' and corporate personality. What has come to be known as 'ancestor-worship' has much to do with this broad theme. This so-called 'ancestor-worship' is in effect a ritualized filial respect. The reality of the ancestors, and therefore of the after-life, is to be seen in the life of the living to be believed. We observed at the beginning of the previous chapter that the after-life, though believed in by Africans, is not preferred to the life here on earth. The cultural function of this belief in the ancestors within the social set-up of the living cannot be doubted. From the child to the father, to the father's father. . . to the original ancestor, we observe social structures of increasing inclusiveness, from family to 'house' (a group of closely related families with a common grandfather) to the clan, to the tribe . . . Ancestor cults are culturally functional in ensuring the cohesiveness of a given people. It matters little whether a particular African community has a matrilineal descent or a patrilineal one; what is significant is the recognition of the ancestor as the focal point of the descent-group

organization. Meyer Forte's work on the Tallensi[3] reveals much that is common not only amongst the West African peoples in connection with ancestor cults, but amongst other African peoples also in general. Geoffrey Parrinder's treatment of the Yoruba "Egungun" (essentially a representation of the dead) and Ibo ancestral ceremonies amongst others,[4] makes the foregoing generalization incontestable. For the purposes of the present argument, therefore, what needs to be noted here is that the element of racial solidarity in negritude literature is not a forced conception. Colour consciousness merely widened the family, the descent group in the face of a non-black threat.

Let what has been said about ancestor-worship be remembered as we come to the treatment of the theme of ancestors and corporate personality. Ancestor-worship implied a certain social structure that came to be threatened by European extremist notions of individualist independence and Christianity. Amongst the things Christianity will do for "the Bantu," Smith says, is to "make for a healthy and progressive individuality" -

> It will develop the sense of the individual, as against corporate responsibility. A pagan Bantu hardly realizes his own personality. A man is a member of a clan, of a tribe, of a family, and as such shares responsibility and privilege with others. Social bonds of this kind are a good thing, but they are not altogether good, when they prevent the growth of individual responsibility. A man does not think for himself; he has no sense of being accountable for his actions except to members of his own group . . . Men will not long endure such communism. They will inevitably become individualists. The necessary evolution (sic) is not without its perils; Christianity will step in to give a sense of responsibility to the individualist, and will preserve what is best in the clan system - the brotherliness, the corporate feeling and the sense of obligation to the common good.[5]

The temptation to concentrate on proving the foregoing as regrettable utter folly (seeing that irresponsible individualism thrives even because of Christianity) must be avoided, as it is the intention of this paper to let the African poetry being discussed here do that job. That Christianity, as brought from Europe, facilitated capitalist greed and helped to

institutionalize exploitative social systems in place of more socialist traditional ones is clear, even in the above quotation. The author of the above, we are told, was born in South Africa, the son of a missionary, and was for seventeen years a missionary of the Primitive Methodist Church in Africa. His use of 'evolution' is very telling, but rather than dwell on that, here is Soyinka on the categories of past, present, and future.

> The belief of the Yoruba in the contemporaneous existence within his daily experience of these aspects of time has been long recognized but again misinterpreted. It is no abstraction. The Yoruba is not, like European man, concerned with the purely conceptual aspects of time - they are too concretely realized in his own life, religion, sensitivity to be mere tags for explaining the metaphysical order of this world. If we may put the same thing in fleshed-out cognitions, life, present life, contains within it manifestations of ancestor, the living, and the unborn. All are vitally within the intimations and affectiveness of life, beyond mere abstract comprehension.
>
> And yet the Yoruba does not, for that reason, fail to distinguish between himself and the deities, himself and the ancestors, between the unborn and his reality, or discard his awareness of the immense gulf which lies between one area of existence and another. This gulf is what must be constantly diminished by the sacrifices, the rituals, the ceremonies of appeasement to the cosmic powers which lie guardian to this gulf.[6]

These two views are pertinent to the discussion of the theme of ancestors and corporate personality. It is for this reason that they are quoted at length. Soyinka asserts that manifestations of ancestor "are vitally within the intimations and affectiveness of life." Echoes of this can be heard in this desperate cry.

> Give me back my black dolls
> that I may play with them
> . . . . . .
> to feel myself myself
> the new self of the self I was yesterday
> yesterday
> without complication.[7]

One usually finds that in a poem such as this one, "yesterday without complication" is taken to be the centre piece. I find, however, that the central sentiment of this poem lies in the

search for the authentic self, and that "yesterday without complication" comes in as a mere qualification. The poet is only too aware of the fact that what has happened cannot be reversed. Here he wishes to have intimate knowledge by himself of himself as a new self of the self he was yesterday. In other words, he must have the free will to accept or reject any changes, if not have the freedom to initiate such changes. As it is, this change is imposed from outside. How does this echo the vital manifestation of the ancestor in the living? It does not, and this is the cause of that cry. The self of yesterday is threatened with annihilation. The ancestor as the focal point of this people is threatened by Christianity's call for "individual responsibility." The ancestor being an ancestor of not one but many, cannot manifest himself vitally in a fragmented people. This is not to argue that today shall not become the past of tomorrow, and therefore manifest itself in the tomorrow that shall have become today. This must invitably come to be the case. But the vital question here remains, what quality of manifestation? The destruction of the past, the ancestor, and therefore ancestor-worship, meant a destruction of a certain social order without the consent of those who perpetuated that order, and a replacement of it with a social system and religion that put the invidual above society and preached individual salvation. It is beyond understanding how Christianity, after such destruction of "brotherliness, the corporate feeling and the sense of obligation to the common good," "will step in to give a sense of responsibility to the individualist." The creation of individualists complements the destruction of ancestor-cults, finally culminating in the splitting of a descent group's focal point. Europe's impact on Africa widened the gulf between ancestor, living and unborn, and in the process, introduced secondary gulfs between individuals. As we have seen Soyinka assert, the individual does of course distinguish himself from other members of his community. Corporate personality must be understood as it shows itself in corporate responsibility, which itself implies a socialist kind of order. Corporate personality survives

through cultural bonds, not biological, although of course these communities usually have a common ancestor. Any kind of approach that abstracts the idea of corporate personality from the live social structure, thriving on corporate responsibility, must surely also assert that man and woman lose their personalities on marrying. Yet this is not the case, the Christian church does not literally believe that man and woman become one flesh. Many West African tribes, the Yoruba and Ibo included, believe that one is given freedom to choose one's 'destiny' before one is sent by the Supreme Being to be born. This is clear indication that the individual has a sense of his personality, and has a certain latitude within the social set-up to attend his destiny - he is within this latitude accountable as an individual. What the notion of corporate personality underlines is that because an individual is an individual only against the background of a society, the assertion of individualism must be done in a social way. It is this in African social structures that is being pitted against alien threat to these structures. Of course there were evils within such structures. Many slaves and wives to certain traditional rulers, amongst the Fon, Yoruba and Ganda, for example, were killed to accompany and serve their lord when he died. But it is not individualism that saved this situation. It would be equally wrong to blame such cruel practices on ancestor cults, for there are many other African communities which were based on ancestor cult organization, believed in a life after death, but did not find it exigent to have their dead accompanied.

It has been necessary to emphasize this point because the exaggeration in "Yesterday without complication" usually draws the unnecessary accusation, and to the exclusion of all else, that even African traditional societies had evil practices. This is not denied here. All I am underscoring is that the corporate responsibility principle in ancestor-cult organization is the element that seriously questions the reordering of these communities along capitalist-individualist lines, and the preaching of individual salvation. Birago Diop's "Vanity"[8] questions the wisdom in the abandonment of the ancestral patterns for new and alien patterns.

If we tell, gently, gently
All that we shall one day have to tell,
Who then will hear our voices without laughter
Sad complaining voices of beggars
Who indeed will hear them without laughter?

Clearly etched in this is a warning about the price which will have to be paid for the abandonment of authentic ways. "Beggars" carries the warning. Diop's concern here is not to point a finger at some destroyer, in fact the European is here only by implication, but to assert that there are signs of redemption left by our ancestors,

For us, blind deaf and unworthy Sons
Who see nothing of what they have made
In the air, on the water,
where they have traced their signs.

Ancestors are present only to those who acknowledge them, but can also punish by refusing to listen to the cries of posterity, once wronged. The paying of homage to ancestors, being in reality a ritualization of filial respect works towards the stabilization of the social system, just as much as the respect given to a father ensures a harmonious family. The punishment the ancestors sometimes give is not unlike that a parent might give to a child who desires not to behave as one of the family - essentially a withdrawal of recognition and support, ultimately creating an outcast. The redress consists in one's coming back into the fold. In this lies renewal and perpetuation, a renewal of the self and the order, ensuring perpetuation. In the situation that obtains in Africa today, a coming back to the fold would have to mean a coming back to those structures within which the ancestor is the focal point, structures within which an individual's worth is valued because of the corporate responsibility that exists. Because the modern African state comprises many national communities, a meaningful return to the fold, one taking its twentieth century context into account, would consist in the turning of the whole nation socialist. In the field of the African novel, because of the novel's wider scope, intimations of renewal by way of changing the obtaining social systems are more cogent than in poetry. This partly explains why there is the apparent 'death' of negritude as a movement seeking the total liberation of the black man. But this change is only apparent and

relative to the novel. So long as negritude is not limited to colour consciousness three areas of identification in the face of capitalist-individualist threat - black man, third world man and worker - need not be mutually exclusive. After all, it would be limited and limiting to assert that negritude arose out of a harmless white-black contact; that blacks wanted to assert their blackness because there was white. The essence of racism is that it is essentially exploitative. Colour cannot be asserted. For those who define negritude by the accident of colour, it must indeed be strange that the few albinos around did not occasion negritude. It was the political and economic questions focused through overt racism that caused that negritude awareness. The foregoing constitutes a central point of the argument here, and will find its proper place in the conclusion, where it will be amplified upon.

Renewal, perpetuation and corporate personality or responsibility go together. I have already stated that the evocation of the ancestors is in a sense an evocation of a closely-knit social structure. It is this kind of structure that ensures corporate responsibility. As with previous themes, the treatment of the ancestor theme is not uniform amongst all the poets. Senghor's evocation of the ancestors falls within his belief that what is required is a forgiving of Europe and what she stands for, a protection of her until she wakes to the essence of humanity. "Prayer to Masks"[9] is a prayer to ancestors, who are represented by masks

> Masks! Masks!
> . . .
> In your own image, hear me!
> The Africa of empires is dying, see,
> the agony of a pitiful
> princess
> And Europe too where we are joined
> by the navel.

The poet is very certain of the presence of the ancestors. He is alive because of them, but now comes to them with a problem. The problem is that Africa is dying, her empires are being snuffed. The immediate cause of all this is Europe's colonization of Africa. Then follows Senghor's usual magnanimity

towards Europe. In the same request to the ancestors the poet mentions that Europe, too, is dying of machines and guns. This kind of contradiction may find acceptance from a reasoning that says that even the capitalist himself is chained in his capitalist greed and inhumanity, that he needs salvation too. However, it is the attitude of the oppressed to the oppressor that concerns us here. We note that although in Europe's colonization of Africa can be seen symptoms of her inhumanity and death, the evocation of the ancestors by the poet, an oppressed, would lead us to expect that they are primarily called upon to safeguard their own from the intruder. Senghor treats this differently, the black people in their suffering should first of all, because of this very fact, recognize that the author of their suffering is in need of much salvation; he possibly is under greater suffering than that which he inflicts. This attempt to reconcile the aspirations of the oppressed with those of the oppressor is, to many, the grit upon which one ruins one's teeth in Senghor's poetry. The martyr-posture of the poet is central to his treatment of the Europe-Africa clash; so in "New York"[10] Harlem by being what it is, is seen to be contributing to New York's otherwise 'dead' life. The poet would have the black people remain thus, for he does not seem to understand the sheer suffering in the blues. This treatment of the ancestor theme merely reveals the unreality of a son calling upon his father to protect him together with the boy from the neighbouring house, who has whacked him proper. There is a variation on this, if Lord God in "Prayer for Peace"[11] is seen as the God of European Christianity. In this poem then, the black son goes to the father of the neighbouring bully and asks that the bully be forgiven. This is of course explained by Senghor's Catholicism. But what if for Senghor the ancestors and the Christian God are one and the same power ruling over the whole of mankind, the grand ancestor? Then neither they nor God take sides. But here lies the basic contradiction in Senghor. Ancestors as we have seen imply a certain social order, the Christianity preached in Africa implies a different order. Even if it is granted that

Senghor sees the Christian God as the great ancestor of mankind, a question to be asked is: what right has one child got to introduce the father to the other child and assert that the latter is inferior? This is but one question of the many that Senghor resolves in prayer and martyrdom. Listen to a different kind of evocation of the ancestors:

> Agosu if you go tell them,
> Tell Nyidevu, Kpeti, and Kove
> That they have done us evil;
> Tell them their house is falling
> And the trees in the fence
> Have been eaten by termites;
> That the martels curse them.
> Ask them why they idle there
> While we suffer and eat sand,
> And the crow and the vulture
> Hover always above our broken fences
> And strangers walk over our portion.[12]

A less romantic evocation of the ancestors by Kofi Awoonor. Here the vital presence of the ancestors is not felt, in fact they are accused of idling while their own suffer. They are directly accused of the evil that has befallen the descent group. But notice the clear indication that their vital presence means a firm social structure, no falling houses and no trees being eaten by termites. The use of termites, white ants, is significant in being an allusion to white invasion of black Africa and in suggesting clearly that the fence is falling not because of an internal weakness but because of an external agent. There is, however, the other faint idea that the ancestors are indirectly responsible for the present suffering because of their weakness. If this is not an over-reading, then here lie the roots of the following statement by Kofi Awoonor on the earlier African writing:

> That old kind of writing, the setting up of a false myth in response to another false myth, was of course, false. Our ancestors were as barbarous and as cruel and as devious as anybody else's ancestors. And there was no Golden Age in Africa any more than there was anywhere else. The corruption of Africa is an aspect of its humanity. To deny that corruption - that we sold people into slavery and did all the usual horrible things, is to suggest in a way that we were not human.[13]

This cannot be denied as we have already noted. However, to talk of the past as if it was a past in a vacuum, in other words, to see the evocation of the past in negritude poetry as mere glorification, is to fail to realize that a certain social order is implied in the call to ancestors, a social order to contrast with the present one. I have already pointed out that for the thoroughly dispossessed, the discovery of his inferiorization exacts a valorization of his autochthonous culture that can be explained psychologically. No wonder this kind of reaction to the colonial crisis is termed romanticism, for the poet is only imaginatively realizing that 'glorious' past. No doubt a kind of escapist indulgence can crop into such an expression of the reaction to the colonial crisis. As we have seen, the less dispossessed give a different expression to their reaction to the crisis, to their negritude. However, let me not anticipate the conclusion, but make further comments on Awoonor's statement. The statement raises such a question as: What if the Africans were barbarians, was that a licence for other barbarians to come, colonize them and exploit them in the name of civilization and Christianization? The central issue is not the evocation of a black golden age, but what triggers such an evocation. Of course romanticism is no answer to the crisis. The importance of the romantic brand of negritude lies in its being a thesis in a kind of dialectical rejection of the past. Such a rejection, as we saw in the first chapter, is never total for in bestowing a recognition on the past, it affirms it and takes off with aspects of it. A newcomer to Senghor's poetry is usually first enthralled by it then works against it into more revolutionary kind of poetry which nevertheless still has the centre of its concern, like Senghor's, the black man's plight. The statement quoted above also calls for a counter-response that simply states that the evocation of ancestors as ritualized filial respect can be, in a very real sense, an evocation of a 'golden' age. Remember that ancestor-based social structures ensured a corporate responsibility which is the kernel of decent humane living. Finally, a more cynical response to

that statement would ask: What standard does he use for measuring golden ages? If humanity is to be defined by "the usual horrible things" that man does, then all that negritude does is to say that African social structures, because of the corporate responsibility in them, were, Yes, less human. However, this is the later Awoonor. We have seen that in his "Songs of Sorrow" the blame he levels against the ancestors springs from the fact that the social structure has crumbled - white ants have eaten the trees in the fence.

The theme of death in the previous chapter was seen in its metaphorical as well as real sense. The destruction of Africa by Europe. The destruction of the African ethos meant that death now took on a finality that threatened to annihilate the dead, the ancestors. Although the new religion - Christianity - also talked of life after death, this could not salvage the destruction of the immediacy of the ancestors. It will be remembered that at the beginning of this chapter, reference was made to the destruction of corporate responsibility in African communities, and the promise that Christianity would "step in to give a sense of responsibility to the individualist." Extremist notions of the individualist are anti-ancestor and corporate personality. This is the background from which we are discussing the theme of the ancestors. It receives different treatment from different poets. We saw that while the ancestors are present to Senghor ("Prayer to Masks"), they are absent to Birago Diop ("Vanity") because of the descent group's vanity in adopting new ways. To Kofi Awoonor the ancestors are absent and they are to blame for the suffering of their own. To Lenrie Peters, their vital and meaningful presence is absent, that is all:

> There at the edge of the town
> Just by the burial ground
> Stands the house without a shadow
> Lived in by new skeletons
>
> That is all that is left
> To greet us on the homecoming
> After we have paced the world
> And longed for returning.[14]

Peters, like Cesaire, but unlike Senghor, comes back to a

disenchanting surrounding. However, while Peters, in his short poem confronts us with the implicit question: where from here? Cesaire in his long poem Return to My Native Land[15] works through to a point of resolution. His 'homecoming' is recorded in these words

> My far distant happiness which makes me aware of present misery: a lumpy road . . . scatters a handful of huts . . . is brutally drowned in a stagnant pool of dwarfish houses . . .

His road of return is smothered almost completely in untold squalor and suffering. However, there is the "distant happiness," which in making him aware of present misery holds hope for a fighting spirit. And this is what must awaken the latent revolutionary spirit in those emasculated by suffering, seen as

> a crowd without concern, disowning its own true cry, the cry you'd like to hear because only that cry belongs to it, because that cry you know lives deep in some lair of darkness and pride in this disowning town, in this crowd deaf to its own cry of hunger and misery, revolt and hatred, in this crowd so strangely garrulous and dumb.

The poet then accepts all this and the history behind it: "I accept. I accept." It is only after accepting this, identifying with those he would fight alongside, that he begins to work to resolution. The culture he accepts is a fighting culture. His negritude is actively revolutionary, changing to grapple with changing realities: "Hurrah! little by little the old negritude is turning into a corpse." Cesaire's "far distant happiness," like the ancestors, serves to show how unacceptable the present social set-up is. The new skeletons in Peters' poem are like the squalor Cesaire comes to. They occupy the territory of the ancestors, and are at one level the foreigners. At another, they are the deculturated blacks, torn from their roots and without a shadow. Yet at the level of social structures, we should not fail to see that because the ancestors are kind of dispossessed of their territory, that social structure descending from them is lacking, hence "the house without shadow." Peters, therefore, merely ends with showing how unacceptable the present set-up is.

Okigbo's disenchanting milieu is treated in "Fragments out of the Deluge." But SILENCES,[17] the exploration of "the possibilities of poetic metaphor in an attempt to elicit the music to which all imperishable cries must aspire,"[18] is in many ways a continuation of "Fragments" because the exploration of the metaphor is a direct result of the disenchanting milieu. There are two laments to SILENCES, "Lament of the Silent Sisters" and "Lament of the Drums." The dominant motif seems to be: how does one make any meaning out of the chaotic fragments of what was Africa and what has been added to it; how does one avoid drifting culturally?

How does one say NO in thunder . . .

Although the drums of the second lament very clearly stand for the ancestors, a brief examination of "Lament of the Silent Sisters" in giving the setting for the discussion of the ancestor theme is not out of place. This first lament does in fact introduce images that also stand for the ancestor. "Anchorage" and "native earth" are such images. We have already seen the implications of the absence of the ancestors as regards social stability. We get more of this in the lament of the silent sisters. The storm-tossed ship at mid-sea in the opening stanza can be seen as Nigeria. The problem facing those aboard is how to be saved from a ship that is adrift.

For in breakers in sea-fever compass or cross
makes a difference: certainly makes
not an escape ladder . . .

Hope and despair are mingled to suggest that even in times of distress the individual must know himself, a society must know itself. I read in this a positive rejection of the defeatist view that if any given economic system of new African states is a satellite of a multi-national capitalist concern then any search for a different political and cultural direction is of no impact. The solution, for many, lies in some form of socialist ideology. But

Where is there for us an anchorage

Where is the basis for the establishment of socialist institutions in the modern African states? Corporate responsibility in traditional African communities did in a way prefigure what

an African socialist state might come to be. But where is there for us this corporate responsibility? Problems of the attendant exactions of advanced technology, coupled with the fact that any given African nation is really made up of different national communities, are starkly present. It is not surprising, for instance, that the Chagga should present a problem in the implementation of Ujamaa at the national level. The mourners in the lament of the silent sisters are adrift because they do not have a base on which to build. This poem is in tone close to Birago Diop's "Vanity" for it places the blame on the mourners, or rather it suggests that the ultimate solution must be forged by the oppressed themselves. The mourners have no memory, no historical sense, and therefore no anchorage, no base. They are cut off from the ancestors

> DUMB-BELLS outside the gates
> In hollow seascapes without memory, we carry
> Each of us an urn of native
> Earth, a double handful anciently gathered
> consequently
> We carry in our worlds that flourish
> Our worlds that have failed . . .

Because culture is dynamic, "without memory" we are rootless and have no anchorage. Memory being the essence of tradition and history, what the European tabula rasa myth of Africa meant to achieve is obvious. One aspect of negritude seeks to restore the historical sense to the black man. We are Africans, Yes. But do we know that? The African of to-day is not only defined by the present, but more precisely by his history. "Lament of the Drums" ostensibly opens with an invocation of elements of the drum - the cedar wood, antelope-hide, canebrake and iron steps of detonators; but it really is an invocation of the ancestors. Without suggesting any cross-fertilization between this lament and Senghor's "Prayer to Masks," I wish to point out that there is a similarity in tone and rhythm to some extent. However, the two poems are different in intention, especially as Okigbo writes in the introduction that the drums are released from their confinement "not to rejoice but to lament"

> AND THE DRUMS once more
> from our soot chamber
> . . . . . .

> Liquid messengers of blood
> Like urgent telegrams
> We have never been deployed
> For feast of antelopes . . .
> . . . . . .
> And to the Distant - but how shall we go?
> The robbers will strip us of our tendons!

The ancestors complain that they, like urgent telegrams, are remembered only when there are tragic events; that they have not been used as they should be used. The vanity of the descendants in leaving their way has brought trouble, and it is only in this emergency that they now attempt to have the ancestors "go to the Distant." These ancestors are like the dead in A Dance of the Forests, who come to expose the folly of the living. The lament of the drums builds up through various myths to the myth of Tammuz; "the personages of the earlier sections together become fused with that of Tammuz, and consequently with the movement of the seasons."[19] Tammuz, in the Babylonian myth, is child/husband who makes the goddess Ishthar content and fertile. It is he that she mourns and seeks. I am tempted to see Ishthar as Ala, the Ibo earth goddess. After knowing the following about Ala, the wonder is that, unlike Soyinka in his use of Yoruba gods, Okigbo decided not to bring Ala into this lament.

> (Ala) is both the spirit of the earth and also queen of the underworld, ruling the ancestors who are burried in the earth. In addition she is the giver and administrator of moral laws, and priests are guardians of public morality in her behalf. Oaths are sworn in her name and she is invoked in lawmaking. Crimes such as murder, theft, adultery and poisoning, and mishaps such as giving birth to abnormal children, cripples and twins are offences against Ala and must be purged by sacrifice to her. 'Ala is in fact, the unseen president of the community, and no group is complete without a shrine of Ala. The common possession of a shrine of Ala is, indeed, one of the strongest integrating forces in Ibo society.'[20]

Although the final movement of "Lament of the Drums" presents Ishthar's lament only slightly varied by Okigbo, the lament in the context of the poet-protagonist's milieu is very apposite. Seeing Ishthar as a personage of Ala's proportions helps to

delineate the magnitude of the calamity, so that "the movement of the seasons" becomes important socially because there is man trying to understand this movement and adjust his rhythm to it. The political in "Lament of the Drums" is not lacking

> Her pot-bellied watchers
> Despoil her . . .

Okigbo himself admits that "there might be some political tinge in the message of the drums."[21] The drums, who are "the spirits of the ancestors, the dead" are elected to carry the political message. The influence of the ancestors is acknowledged here. It is also proved by the tragic civil war in Nigeria. Ala, whose shrine is a common possession amongst the Ibos, and who rules the ancestors must indeed be a vital integrating force in Ibo society. Only an integrated community could dare a secession and its consequences. Numbers of course also matter. The El Molo of northern Kenya, until recently integrated to the extremity of inbreeding which in part explains their paucity, would not dare secession however rich the resources of Lake Rudolf. Tribes, that is national communities within the nation, partly react as such because there is more corporate responsibility within the national community than obtains within the nation as a whole. However, with the destruction of ancestor-cults and the introduction of capitalist-individualist modes of activity, the vestiges of corporate responsibility that are seen are of a changed nature. The motivation is no longer the common good. Vertical differences are to be seen in these communities. In reality corporate responsibility now features only during crises, personal crises branded communal. It is a sham corporate responsibility because the many are used as a shield by the few. That is why after the Nigerian civil war the question was: who was doing all that dying, if nearly all the army and other bosses reported 'present' after the war? The problem is not only how to create corporate responsibility at the national level, but also how to forge a meaningful corporate responsibility at the national community level, for these national communities will not die easily.

The central motif in SILENCES, "the problem 'How does one say NO in thunder,' is finally resolved in silence. For the ultimate answer is to be sought only in terms of each poets' response to his medium."[22] And this from Achebe

> I will sing only in waiting
> silence . . .
> . . . ready
> for the return someday of our
> banished dance.[23]

"Love Song" is a song of silence because of adverse circumstances summed up as "thunder" by Okigbo. The air is "criss-crossed by loud omens," while "song birds," for fear of reprisals do not sing. The song bird is the poet, the artist, who can "jump your eye, your mind-window"[24] for true art reveals all hearts. Instead of true art, instead of the song bird, there is a "choir of squatting toads," hollow sycophants praising a corrupt state. The "purple-headed vultures" which stand sentry at home are the army or police. "Purple-headed" carries two meanings that do not conflict: purple-headed, as a reference to the red fez that the British colonial askaris wore, reinforces the idea of a blood-mad, blood-thirsty force. Like Okigbo's silence that warns of "pot-bellied watchers" despoiling her, Achebe's silent song does not in fact wait for the return of some day, it reveals all the disenchantment that is around. The silent song does in fact seek to protect the land where

> a man's
> foot must return whatever beauties
> it may weave in air, where
> it must return for safety
> and renewal for strength[25]

He bases this on the wisdom of the ancestors, "wiser than is often made out," for "they gave Ala, great goddess of their earth, sovereignty too over their arts." One sees in Achebe's recourse to ancestor wisdom an advocacy for an integrated social system with an all-pervasive ethos. The importance of 'ancestor-worship' lies not in the amount of sacrifice given, but in the ritualized filial respect itself; nor does the reality of this link with ancestors lie in the act of 'worship,' it is to be found in the harmony that results amongst the living. Strong ties with the ancestors is not the goal but

the means to strong ties amongst the living. This is what can be concluded from "Those Gods Are Children."[26] After saying that the Igbo ambivalent attitude to their gods arises from a world view which sees the land of the spirits as a territorial extension of the human domain, and after showing that the act of 'worship' consists in ensuring a reciprocal continuity, Achebe adds that "in such a reciprocal relationship one is encouraged (within reason) to try and get the better of the bargain."[27] This last comment on the relationship between the ancestors and the living should not detract us from the expressed Ibo world-view that the land of the spirits is a territorial extention of the human domain. For it underlines what has been said above, that what is being sought is not harmony between the dead and the living, but that such ritual harmony between the living and the dead makes for real harmony amongst the living, by ensuring a stable social structure. The poem opens with what sounds like proverbial admonitions.

> No man who loves himself
> will dare to drink
> before his father's presences enshrined
> by the threshold have drunk
> their fill. A fool alone will
> contest the precedence of ancestors
> and gods; the wise wisely
> sing them grandiloquent lullabies
> knowing they are children
> those omnipotent deities

The poem then develops through two humorous instances which show how it is not the amount of sacrifice that is important. The old man pouring libation makes sure that it is a single drop, "ant-hole-size in earth," before he invites the ancestors with "no need to scramble there's enough for all." The second instance is of a naive child who, taking his father's words literally, brings the biggest yam he can find for sacrifice. The second part of the poem shows how the elders, though condemning fratricide and passing a sentence of death, concern themselves more with the quality of life this side of the grave and allow the guilty man to raise his "orphans," "till evening came and laid him low." Ritualized filial respect or ancestor worship, is the surest way of continuing a tradition. Since

tradition is always a social force, never an individual one, it is clear how the ancestors, as a focal point of a given descent group, occupy the centre of this force. "Dereliction"[28] then, can be interpreted as the battle between the individual force and tradition. This poem was discussed exhaustively in the previous chapter. All I do here is to note that the "I" who quits "the carved stool in my father's hut," the runner who drops the relay-race baton, the priestly elder who barters the holy staff of his people, asserts an individual force against tradition. The oracle's answer is that any one who pits his force against corporate responsibility should thin into nothingness, "try the land where the sea retreats."

There is a paradoxical truth in the clash between the individual and tradition or the individual force against that of the corporate personality of the community. While a capitalist-individualist society, by stressing the intrinsic independence (especially economic) of the individual, seems to value the worth of an individual, it ultimately reduces it to nothing by creating what can be rightly seen as a 'man-eat-man' society. The individual who cannot economically make it up in life, is of less worth than the one who can. It becomes possible for an individual to ruin his own life. In traditional African societies initiation ceremonies confer upon individuals social roles, not individual, though they may be performed individually. The individual who ruins his own life, therefore, ruins communal life. The paradoxical truth here is that by subjecting the individual to society, his worth is that much more important in the advancement of the community. It is failure to appreciate this socialization into corporate responsibility that results in high-brow conclusions which suggest that corporate personality is the causation of corporate responsibility, and that the African is, consequently, hardly aware of his individual personality. Admittedly this kind of social set-up has a slow tempo of change, but change there definitely is. Without crises there would be no change. However, crises have always been there and during these times individuals have asserted their individual force against tradition and either destroyed themselves or benefitted the community. Epidemics must have not only established new

medicinal herbs, but new herbalists as well. There are stories of how certain foods came to be considered edible. A Luhya story tells of how an old woman, to save her off-springs during famine, discovered the sweet potato against the will of her husband and the elders. Probably this root was taboo. There are costly consequences of the capitalist-individualist set-up that can very easily encourage the attitude: better a slow tempo of change than a fast and bloody change. I am not for a moment advocating: Let sleeping dogs lie, for there is a sense in which there are not any sleeping dogs to be found; instead there are only chained dogs - the oppressed. This is an important distinction to make in relation to negritude because it helps to distinguish between romantic negritude, which tends not to recognize that the sleeping dog is in fact chained; and the more positive negritude which recognizes that the dog is chained and that the least that can be done for it is to unchain it and leave it a sleeping dog as opposed to a chained 'sleeping' dog. This point will be expanded upon in the conclusion. It cannot be disputed that even in 'sleeping' traditional African societies, assertive acts by individuals brought about changes in the imperceptable tempo of life.

> Rather, may we celebrate the stray electron, defiant
> Of patterns, celebrate the splitting of the gods
> Cannonization of the strong hand of a slave who set
> The rock in revolution - and the Boulder cannot
> Up the hill in time's unwind.[29]

It is not any assertive act of any individual that Soyinka celebrates. His lone figures pit their assertive acts against tradition and change the tempo of the whole life of the community. When this is not grasped, 'a basic contradiction' in Soyinka's belief in some form of socialist ideal and his celebration of individuality is apparently seen. Listen to him on humanity and ideology.

> The ultimate purpose of human striving is humanity. The moment we deny this, we grant equal seriousness and acceptability to any and all ideology. We become victims of dogma and verbalization for their own sake. This is the current disease of our so-called Marxists and Leninist-Marxists and Maoist-Marxists and whatever other combination happens to be fashionable at the time of their

> opportunism. I happen to believe and accept implicitly what goes under the broad umbrella of socialist ideology, a secular socialist ideology, believing this to be the logical principle of communal organization and true human equality. . . . One of my definitions of humanity is a state of being within which the diminution of any other beings is a diminution of and an assault on one's own being.[30]

It will immediately be clear that the second half of this quotation, especially the definition of humanity, succinctly complements what has already been said about that paradoxical truth on the individual's worth in a capitalist-individualist set-up and in a socialist set-up. Without repeating the argument here, I would like to develop it further by a brief comment on the assertive act of the individual. This is in a sense the burden of Soyinka's long poem, "Idanre." Atunda, a slave to the first deity rolled a rock down onto his master, splitting him into several essences. This assertive act not only created diversity, but in doing so, made it possible for Ogun to clear a path to mankind, an act of creative redemption. It is Atunda's "strong hand" that is referred to in the lines quoted above. One can create much Marxist capital by introducing class differences between the first deity and Atunda the slave, and the fact that the slave's act releases hope of redemption. However, what I want to point out is that it is the dare in the act, the inevitable force of change in it, that Soyinka celebrates, not the mere individuality of the act. Ogun is released by this act, to dare the chthonic chaos, from which he fashions out an implement to clear a path to man. Once again one could parallel the contradiction in this act with that of using capitalist resources to defeat capitalism. For Soyinka, it is the quality and force of the individual act that matters. Eman of The Strong Breed does, in a sense, stand in line with Ogun and Atunda. Only in a sense because his act is not revolutionary in the same way in which Ogun's and Atunda's acts are. The contradiction between the individual act and corporate responsibility is only overwhelming when the individual's act is by himself, for himself and does not change the tempo of the communal life as a whole. Soyinka recognizes that an assertive act by

the individual for the sake of the many is often called for, hence his 'lone figures' and heroes. Russia and China needed the assertive acts of Lenin and Mao.

We have seen that corporate responsibility, often reflecting a kind of corporate personality is the key element in ancestor-based social structures. Corporate responsibility must also be the centre of a socialist society. It is evident from this that one entry along which negritude pours itself into a socialist movement is this. 'African Socialism' is therefore not as meaningless as is sometimes thought to be. It is from such considerations that I feel negritude does not have to espouse Marxism first; that Africanization of Marxism, like its sinification, is perhaps the better solution as there is already a base for socialism. Ocol's cynicism is adequately answered.

> Tell me
> You student of Communism
> And you Professor of History
> Did Senegalese blood
> Flow in the veins
> Of Karl Marx?
> And Lenin,
> Was he born
> At Arusha?[31]

Let not the above be understood to mean that traditional African societies had 'arrived' and that Europe came and set regression in motion. But of course this was partly the case, for here was a basis for socialism, "the logical principle of communal organization and true human equality" that came to be swept aside by European capitalist-individualist set-ups, aided by European Christianity. This, in my view, is what the ancestor theme is all about. Soyinka has not treated this theme significantly in any of his poetry. However, "the dead" in A Dance of the Forests,[32] taken as ancestors, reveal a fresh treatment of this theme. Soyinka himself says that the past "is vitally dependent on the sensibility that recalls it," "it is not a flesh pot for escapist indulgence."[33] Characteristically, therefore, the dead he summons come as accusers of the living. In this can be seen the realization that even if corporate responsibility existed in traditional African communities, the

whole of this past cannot be used as a base for the socialist state of today. Negritude as a meaningful going back to the sources must be selective. The warrior, who is the dead man, emerges as Joseph in a poem of that title in A Shuttle in the Crypt,[34] while Madame Tortoise emerges as Mrs. Potiphar. The Genesis story (Genesis Ch.9) tells of how Joseph suffers unduly for refusing to consort with his master's wife. In Mata Kharibu's court, the warrior is castrated for refusing to satisfy the whims of Madame Tortoise. A Shuttle in the Crypt stands as an accusation of Nigeria by Soyinka, emerged as 'the dead man' from detention where he was thrown for refusing to consort with a corrupt state. The dead in A Dance of the Forests come to expose the recurrent folly of humanity. We have seen that Soyinka sees the solution to capitalist greed in socialism. But even this "logical principle" requires an assertive act by an individual. "Ujamaa"[35] is thus appropriately dedicated to Julius Nyerere - "for Julius Nyerere"

> Your black earth hands unchain
> Hope from death messengers, from
> In-bred dogmanoids . . .
> Ujamaa
> Bread of the earth, by the earth
> For the earth. Earth is all people.

This is the solution to the problem raised in "Capital."[36] The problem, paraphrased in more than the one word greed, human greed, is: Why should capital, capital which earth herself exposes to man, be owned by a few people, who through this capitalist greed unleash much suffering upon the many? The devaluation of human life in a capitalist economy is raised here:

> It cannot be
> That policy, deliberation
> Turns these embers of my life
> To ashes, and in polluted seas
> Lay sad beds of yeast to raise
> Dough
> On the world market.

The remote control aspect of multi-national concern is obviously alluded to here. That "dough" has three meanings: bread, devalued human life, and money. There is, of course, a sense in which the one meaning, money, is the operative meaning, since the human being as a worker is devalued precisely because he can be paid

for in money.

The title of this chapter is "Renewal and Perpetuation: Theme of Ancestors and Corporate Personality." From what has been discussed, it will be fairly clear that renewal and perpetuation depend on the ancestor-corporate responsibility complex. At the personal level, a father feels he is perpetuated through his sons. In most African societies, he is "reborn" and therefore renewed. But at the social level, and this is our main interest, in the day to day life of the society, corporate responsibility, which reflects corporate personality, is the way to solving social problems. Sacrifice given to clan and tribal ancestors before a problem is tackled does not itself solve the problem, but it ensures corporate responsibility in the solving of the problem. On this model, communism need not mean irreligiousness, for the individual is free to send a prayer to the Supreme Being for a very personal problem, for instance barrenness, and this after corporate effort has failed. Socialist revolution finds intimations in the descent group's corporate action in a time of crisis, a concerted effort by a whole group to maintain a structure that ensures corporate responsibility. The reaction to capitalist-individualism as an evil, is not a new theme in literature.

> That independence Britons prize too high
> Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie,
> . . . . . .
> Nor this the worst. As nature's ties decay
> As duty, love, and honour fail to sway,
> Fictitious bonds of wealth and law,
> Still gather strength, and force unwilling awe.[37]

Negritude, as a reaction to a specific crisis whose core was and remains capitalism, has much that echoes the above sentiment. But we must bear in mind that negritude as a literary movement, or rather since negritude is given literary expression by different artists, differences in the expression of it are an inevitable result, complicated by the accident of colour differences, an element in the manifestation of the crisis on the African continent. Yet the search for renewal intimates

> Ujamaa
> Bread of the earth, by the earth
> For the earth. Earth is all people.

CONCLUSION

I

Utalola Nyina vukana: Dada yata vutswa tsing'ombe.

– – :: – –

Who never saw his Mother's girlhood says: Father wasted his cattle.

(Luhya Proverb)

It was stated in the introduction that although negritude as a movement took root in Paris among the black intellectuals in the 1930s, no precise date can be given for the actual birth of the movement. It is necessary to remind ourselves of this fact because negritude in the final analysis is that awareness by the black man of his unique presence in a hostile situation, given artistic expression. Again that last part of our definition is important for it raises the question of style, and therefore differences. The above proverb is of great relevance here because it takes into account time and change, and I bring it in as an answer to those who question negritude's 'narrow' beginnings. They fail to place it in its historical context, and secondly they refuse to see that as a cultural movement it must change. We can discern negritude's 'narrow' beginnings because we come from negritude and are of negritude. The son who despises his mother fails to understand this fact of change. He also fails to understand that he is not called upon to espouse his mother, for that is incest. What is asked of him is the acceptance that, coming from his mother, he is of a different generation, but not therefore self-created. I have had to stress this idea of change because it partly explains why Anglophone poets are regarded, or even regard themselves, as either non-negritudists or positively anti-negritude.

One can understand only too well that the anglophone poets studied here, writing after political independence had come, would give a younger-generation expression to their negritude. Nor is the break as clear-cut as it might sound here. Okot p'Bitek has been referred to as a latter-day negritudist not because his expression of the awareness is ultra-modern, but because he realizes that political independence never changed the core of the crisis, namely, capitalist-individualist threat to more or less socialist societies. However, "latter-day negritudist" is not used by these critics as a praise name, for it is supposed to embarrass any such poet. Another thing p'Bitek realizes is that although the white man, author of the black man's inferiority complex, is no longer 'around,' this complex he has created is still very much alive. Okara, as we have seen, is in many ways closer to the francophone expression of negritude, than he is to the supposed anglophone non-expression of it. Yet he is truly anglophone. Another reason why anglophone negritude has gone unacknowledged has to do with the fact that for many readers, negritude is synonymous with Senghor, so that any expression of the black man's concern that has not been Senghorian has been deemed non-negritudist. I would like to put this straight by building on that definition of negritude in which black awareness is the key element. The movement back to original Africa, physically or in imagination is surely a major aspect of this awareness. In 1788, the Negro Union of Newport, Rhode Island, proposed to the Free African Society of Philadelphia a general exodus to Africa on the part of at least free Negroes.[1] We noted in the introduction that Sunday Anozie believes that the concept itself can be traced back to the famous nineteenth century Liberian writer and nationalist, Edward Blyden. "Intellectuals from British West Africa, after their historic meeting in 1920, sent a petition to King George V asking that a University of British West Africa be established 'on such lines as would preserve in the students a sense of African nationality.'"[2] Yet for those who would still limit this awareness to French black peoples, Etienne Lero was the founder of negritude when he published his historic manifesto, Legitimate Defence, in 1932; Senghor, and Cesaire to some extent, were seen as the highjackers of the

movement. What does all this show? For me, at least, it proves the rather obvious fact that 'negritude' as a term came to designate a certain awareness that preceded the naming; that confusion arises as a result of failure to accommodate the inevitable divergence in the expression of this awareness. Negritude as a literary expression of this awareness demands that we remain aware, all the time, of it as a literary movement, so that we do not make the mistake of expecting literature to usurp the territory of physical and political action. It may, and should work towards changing attitudes, thereby helping in the process of decolonization, but it will never be a substitute for political action. Listen to Soyinka on the nature of literature:

> Where works of literature deal with eternal values, ideals, etc. or the lack of them, they provide merely a testament of the author's own vision - what is, what is possible, what could or should be etc., etc. In one form or another it would be a eulogy of the existing condition or an indictment. The exercise of the literary function may serve the writer - and perhaps a few followers - to keep in view what the ends of humanity are. They may eventually be spurred to action in defence of those ends. In our own society especially it is essential to recognize this. At the moment literature and art can only function as a KEEP-IN-VIEW tray on a bureaucrat's desk. Once this is accepted, the writer does not fool himself into thinking that all is said and all is done that need be said and done. He holds himself in readiness - accelerating the process where he can - when the minutes in that file can be made a live project. No other attitude seems possible to me. The only other choice is to accept the patronizing tolerance of those who offend against those ends, to be a jester in the court of overweening and besotted power.[3]

There is, therefore, no conflict between Pan Africanism and Negritude. Kisogie, in his brilliant report on the Pan African Congress in Dar, 1974, seems to expect too much, the impossible, from literature: "We know why negritude deservedly failed as the answer to European racism. Its roots did not reach into the reality of the African masses. Its birth was elitist, alienist, its 'anti-racist-racism' was a rhetorical contradiction which vainly sought a belated resolution in its extension into a world class-struggle."[4] Without asking how much meaning

'world class-struggle' has for a peasant in Kenya today or why there is consciousness of third world even amongst the broad-visioned instead of just world class-struggle, I will agree with Kisogie that negritude's birth was elitist and alienist. But it was bound to be, for articulators of it were those who had been exposed to plain exploitative racism, but given an outlet, for instance through the conferment of French citizenship. This inevitably created psychological contradictions that found outlet in artistic expression of what was by no means their exclusive awareness. Extension into a world class-struggle (given the accident of colours on the African continent - black/exploited, white/exploiter) cannot but be imperatively gradual. So, his talk of world class-struggle in relation to the reality of the African masses is in a sense as elitist as negritude's birth. Kisogie does not seem to have considered this other statement from J-P Sartre (for that 'anti-racist-racism' is from him). Sartre writes that "the poetry of the future revolution has remained in the hands of the young well-intentioned bourgeois who draw their inspiration from their psychological contradictions in the antinomy of their ideal and their class, in the uncertainty of the old bourgeois language."[5] This position is exactly paralleled by that of the negritudist. The problem the intellectual revolutionary must solve is not a literary one - physical identification with those for whom he speaks must come about, otherwise the contradictions remain. Those who articulate revolution in our African societies happen to be, because of their education, members of the inchoative local bourgeoisie. "In the final analysis, the dividing line between revolutionary intellectuals and non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary intellectuals is whether or not they are willing to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants and actually do so. Ultimately it is this alone, and not professions of faith . . . in Marxism, that distinguishes one from the other."[6]

What Sartre meant by anti-racist-racism, in the light of the nature of literature as outlined above by Soyinka, was that its narrow beginnings would eventually widen into and merge with a world class-struggle consciousness as expressed

in literary terms. It would remain the same thing but grown to be able to define the problem it reacts against much more clearly, grown to be able to delineate the problem. I do not think that an awareness of the world class-struggle makes the African less African; or rather it is necessary to be less African in order to be world class-struggle conscious. What does this mean, in terms of what Soyinka has called "accelerating the process"? All it means is that there are various positions occupied by different poets in the negritude scale. The point was made at the end of the final chapter that the core of the crisis against which negritude reacts is the capitalist-individuali evil. This social evil has not died out even with political independence. Point was also made that the accident of colour in the manifestation of the crisis, brings about some of the differences in the reaction against this problem. There is consequently a solidarity by Africans or black men in their reaction to the problem, there is also the third-world consciousness, and finally the world class-struggle consciousness. These three areas of identification need not be mutually exclusive if the core of the crisis is identified properly. Furthermore, when it is borne in mind that racism is essentially exploitative in nature; that the race which exudes an active racism usually does so in order to exploit the other race, then colour differences assume little importance. Therefore, in the acceleration of the process towards meaningful change, we would expect differences from poet to poet, not only in terms of his style but also in the clarity of the articulation itself. There are those who reveal knowledge of scientific socialism, like David Diop, and those who like Achebe, are not erudite socialists, but socialists nonethe less. Most of the francophone negritudists were Marxists at one time or another. Cesaire resigned from the party in 1956. However, our last chapter does prove, incidentally, that socialism had been in existence before Marx gave it scientific analysis. While both Senghor and Soyinka assert that they see hope for mankind in some socialist ideal, Senghor's reaction to the present capitalist set-up takes the form of romantic negritude, while Soyinka's, without being

ultra-revolutionary, avoids what he himself calls escapist indulgence in the past. This is not to say that he sees the past as useless, or does not feel claims of the past. He has this to say about tragedy: "of all the subjective unease that is roused by man's creative insights, that wrench within the human psyche which we vaguely define as tragedy is the most insistent voice that bids us return to our own sources."[7] It is paralleled at a different level by the truth that during times of crises, a people seek stability in their own roots. David Diop's poetry is more revolutionary and is more suggestive of that territory to which literature does not go, and cannot go: "Truth, Beauty Love / Is the workman smashing the deadly composure of their drawing rooms." A different position in the negritude scale, more revolutionary than even Soyinka in "Ujamaa." Yet notice that both point towards the same ideal. Okigbo accelerates the process by pointing out that the political independence achieved never changed the core of the crisis.

For he ate the dead lion
& was within the corpse

In an interview with Serumaga in 1967, Achebe said this of A Man of the People: "When I was writing A Man of the People, it wasn't clear to me that this was going to be necessarily a military intervention. It could easily have been civil war, which in fact it very nearly was in Nigeria."[8] We know that in fact civil war was just round the corner when this interview was recorded. In his little poem "He Loves Me: He Loves Me Not," already discussed, we notice that Achebe warns of the erstwhile colonial masters' machinations in Africa, a reaction to the still live crisis. If in A Man of the People Achebe offers a pure military coup as the solution, Armah in The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born shows why this cannot be the solution. But the crisis they react against remains the same. Even from the foregoing it becomes clear that,negritude being literary, there is a kind of licence 'given' to individual artists in their selection of what facet of the problem to highlight. Soyinka in praising Nyerere for Ujmaa, gives intimations of the kind of society he envisages, while Diop in "The Right Road" actually

is it the Africa bent in humiliation without hope, but the Africa that in spite of the humiliation grows again patiently obstinately, whose fruit "gradually acquire the bitter taste of liberty." Senghor's poetry, more often than not, though reacting to the same crisis, tends to glory (for glory's sake) in an otherness that is rapidly thinning, or when it faces the reality of the African as a being subjected to systematic destruction, labels this – suffering martyrdom and sees hope for change in the sheer suffering. This is the core of his romantic negritude. David Diop's poetry is more revolutionary because, as we have seen, though acknowledging all that Senghor acknowledges, it refuses to see any redemption in passive suffering, and calls for a redemptive action. We have seen that Okara's poetry is in some aspects like Diop's, though it lacks the latter's revolutionary ardour. We have consistently seen anglophone poets react to the same crisis as Senghor, in some cases react almost in a similar manner. Why have they never been seen as negritudist? From the consideration above, the reason partly lies in the fact that negritude has come to mean, for many, romanticism. Now David Diop's poetry is not romantic, neither is Leon Damas', but because of another error – the identification of negritude with francophone writers, they are comfortably called negritudists without explaining the overwhelming difference between them and Senghor. This surely shows that negritude, although given romantic expression by people like Senghor, is not romanticism; that although identified with francophone writing, negritude, because essentially a reaction against whitedom as felt in the devastation of the whole of Africa and in the introduction of a capitalist-individualist ethos, negritude can never be a francophone preserve. This is what I have attempted to prove by revealing the unacknowledged negritude in Anglophone poetry. I should clinch this point by having recourse to Soyinka again, and say that since literature would be in one form or another "a eulogy of the existing condition or an indictment," and since the crisis against which negritude is a reaction is nowhere eulogized in the poetry studied here, there is much that is common to all African poetry. It only seems natural that while a group of people can together condemn

today, a few will lament how yesterday was good, others will say, dry-eyed, that although yesterday was good, we must plan for to-morrow and wipe off today's evil in the light of what good we saw in yesterday; yet others will condemn today and say that in the light of the great changes of today, even the good we saw in yesterday cannot help us plan for tougher tomorrow, what we need is a fresh start. In spite of all these differences the core of their attitudes remains a dissatisfaction with today. This analogy explains the light in which I have treated the subject of negritude.

Negritude or tigritude? Soyinka is still misquoted on his famous tigritude statement. Although the problem raised by the under-quoted statement has been partly discussed, a tidying of the controversy is called for here. At the Berlin Conference in 1964, Soyinka stated and explained what he meant by that statement. "The point is this that, to quote what I said fully, I said: 'A tiger does not proclaim his tigritude, he pounces' . . . In other words the distinction I was making . . . was a purely literary one. I was trying to distinguish between propaganda and true poetic creativity. I was saying in other words that what one expected from poetry was an intrinsic poetic quality, not mere name dropping."[10] It is very clear here that Soyinka's quarrel was not with the theme, but with the handling of the theme; in a sense, not with negritude as such but perhaps with the romantic expression given it by some poets. It would appear that Soyinka has gradually changed from such rigid artistic evaluation, for in the statement quoted at the beginning of this conclusion he speaks of the artist "accelerating the process where he can," an undertaking close to propaganda. Before Soyinka put the record straight, the following from Mphahlele is a version of the same sentiment: "A tiger does not proclaim its tigritude." Mphahlele says ". . . the only thing that can really be said to be capable of expressing an African personality lies in those areas of cultural activity that are concerned with education and the arts. All this requires no slogan at all. . . . The African artist, because he must deal with African themes,

rhythms and idiom cannot but express an African personality."[11] It is the assumption in the last sentence that I would like to make comment upon. First of all, as in negritude, African personality might be seen in works that romanticise African history, as well as works that dream of a free Africa. This is accepted, but to assert that the African artist will naturally do this demands that a distinction be made between, on the one hand, those African artists (the pioneers, for instance, were they not African?) who under tutelage make it a point of honour to turn out literature that will not betray their skin colour; and on the other hand, those who do not exhibit this inferiority complex. There is the other category of those who like Amos Tutuola are unmistakably African, but then are neither reacting to the present crisis by romanticising the past, nor by dreaming of an ideal future. One suspects that Mphahlele would speak of the anglitude and the francitude of the English and the French. Well, this could be done, but then francitude would not be the same concept as negritude, unless of course negritude were to be identified with Tutuola's category. But for the accident of colour, as pointed out, negritude has very little to do with colour, since it is basically a reaction to a social set-up that transcends colour. This is not to deny racial solidarity. However, racial solidarity, as such, is not the means, even less the goal, sought by way of eradicating the capitalist-individualist evil. One can fight as an African in the world class-struggle and still retain his personality as an African. Here we find that idea of corporate responsibility and corporate personality at a higher level. Racial solidarity must be understood in the light of this statement by Cesaire.

> There are two paths to doom: by segregation, by walling oneself in the particular; or by dilution, by thinning off into the emptiness of the 'universal.' I have a different idea of the universal. It is of a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each 'particular,' the co-existence of them all.[12]

One threat to a people's particularity is language. Without starting a fresh debate on language, I wish to point out that Soyinka is not averse to solidarity, one of his wishes is that

"there should be a continental language in which all Africans could communicate to each other."[13] This is a serious wish in view of the fact that one cannot spread information throughout one African country, let alone the continent, without resorting to a European language. No wonder Soyinka admires the Tanzanian revolution that is being spread at least in an African language.

There is an argument against negritude which states that negritude must be seen as a historical fact that came to a halt around the late fifties. Senghor himself (the argument must erroneously, but characteristically, identify Senghor with negritude) began preaching panhumanism after 1957. I have argued against this in the foregoing chapters by discussing certain central issues that stand out as negritude themes; themes which in the hands of 1960s anglophone poets still find meaningful handling. This is proof that the core of the crisis has never changed in essence. To fail to see anglophone poets reacting against this, because one does not want to brand them negritudist, is to accuse them wrongly of a complacency and naivety that saw and sees flag-anthem independence as all that was ever needed. The first of our chapters centred on the rites of passage, was "Of Childhood: Birth/Initiation." Although Africa, before the colonial crisis, was by no means a land of innocence, milk and honey, African poets, faced with the tragic reality of the crisis, sought stability in their own roots, from which they react. The valorization of the autochthonous culture, in the francophone resort to the sources, is a natural reaction by one more alienated and more thoroughly dispossessed. In this first chapter, we saw our anglophone poets, because less uprooted, more sedately, but unmistakably, return to their sources. The poet-protagonist comes to Mother Idoto, a village stream, before he sets out on his quest. Achebe finds his "vibrant life" in his "hut new-swept." Soyinka begins as a Yoruba, using Yoruba beliefs and myths to explore present day problems. Were this movement back to the sources the sole criterion for judging negritude writing, Soyinka on the strength of "Idanre" would emerge as the most negritudist. But this should not be confused with indiscriminate evocation of the past, for Soyinka does not do

this.

Death in the second chapter was treated in its metaphorical as well as real sense. The inevitable valorization of African cultures by francophone poets takes the simple form of assertion that as Europe is death, so Africa is life. Okara more or less does the same. The other anglophone poets discussed in this chapter, without 'shouting' Africa is life, implicitly suggest this by showing Europe's destruction of African life and way of life. Okigbo and Achebe, especially in the treatment of the destruction of African religion, are more explicit than Soyinka, whose gods do not seem to have been affected. Soyinka, partly avoiding the facile white-death, black-life juxtaposition, but more aptly because of his conviction about humanity's cannibalism the world over, contends himself with the affirmation of life, but still from a Yoruba background. We are later to see his reaction to capitalist greed take on a more definite shape, instead of unwittingly hinting at "the original sin" concept. The attempt to kill the African peoples' religion was a step towards killing a people's ethos and therefore social structures, including ancestor cults. The link between this chapter and the third chapter is therefore not a forced one.

The source of death in Europe's contact with Africa lay in the capitalist-individualist ethos of Europe. The third chapter, "Renewal and Perpetuation: Theme of Ancestors and Corporate Personality," underscores the continued survival of the crisis, in spite of, or in fact because of, the flag-anthem independence. Anglophone writers, writing after independence evoke the ancestors why? The answer has preceded this question. Awoonor, whose country, Ghana, received independence in 1957, treats the theme of ancestors; Okigbo's "long-drums," "the spirits of the ancestors carry the political message. Achebe's "Those Gods Are Children," reveals that the reality of the so-called ancestor worship is to be seen in the harmonious existence of the living. Ancestors as the focal point of a descent group ensure corporate responsibility, the kernel of socialist organization. This corporate responsibility, often reflecting a kind of corporate personality, is what is meant by Ujamaa, socialism. Soyinka's poem "Ujamaa,"

in not creating a break with previous poetry, indicates that the core of the crisis against which negritude is a reaction thrives.

What do these chapters prove, if not that there is negritude in Anglophone poetry that is not acknowledged? The question that should be answered after such proof is whether Anglophone negritude should be named as such or not. I indicated in the final chapter that sensitive African poetry, reacting to the capitalist-individualist crisis, passes through the ancestor theme in search for renewal to socialist themes, the link being corporate responsibility. There is, therefore, in this poetry a definite acceleration in a socialist direction, a goal acknowledged by Cesaire, coiner of 'negritude.'

II

It is obvious from the foregoing that this thesis cannot be complete without a specific reference to Cesaire in relation to the now "discovered" Anglophone negritude. By strange and yet natural enough coincidence, what has been established in this thesis as negritude, notwithstanding the Anglophone expression of it, is best exemplified by Cesaire's Return to My Native Land.[14] Although we should ultimately speak of the individual's expression of negritude if we have to understand the manifestation of this phenomenon clearly - once these individual differences are resolved - Cesaire's poem emerges as the apotheosis of negritude.

> These are mine . . . Haiti where negritude rose to
> its feet for the first time and said it believed
> in its own humanity.

Those are Cesaire's words, the context of which leaves us in no doubt as to what negritude means for him. In 1798 a British occupation force was driven out of Haiti by a black national liberation movement, lead by black Toussaint Louverture. This was negritude, a black resistance and assertion in the face of an oppressive system which happened to be white.

The structure of Cesaire's poem - in three sections - lends itself to the form of this thesis. What I will therefore do is to discuss the three sections of this poem, while drawing from our three chapters anglophone parallels in summary. Cesaire's

poem can be seen as the black race's big hope, explained and realized verbally. It opens "At the end of the small hours . . .," at a time of promises of new and better life. The three sections referred to constitute more the internal structure of the poem than the outward ordering of the poet's sensibilities; for at the centre of the whole poem remains the black man, denigrated and humiliated. This is the poet's object of concern. In the last pages we meet the "good nigger" into whose poor brain they shoved "the idea that he could never trick his own oppressive fate." Although the poet here uses the past tense, "he was a good nigger," we know that this being literature, this good nigger belongs to the abiding squalor of the opening pages. However, generally we observe in this poem a coming back to the native land in the first section, a taking of stock of the situation and its history in the second section, and in the third section a revolt against oppression. George Lamming, Cesaire's fellow West Indian black writer, writes in an essay which establishes "African presence" in Caribbea that

> when a people in certain political circumstances try to make a break with the past, they will return to the very past they may have rejected, return in order to seize it consciously, to disentangle it from the myths and fears that once made it menacing. They return because this urgency to discover who and what they are demands that the past be restored to its proper perspective, that it be put on their list of possession. They want to be able to say without regret or shame or guilt or inordinate pride: 'This belongs to me. What I am comes out of this.'[15]

We have here an effective summary of what takes place in the first two sections of Cesaire's poem. The poet's return should be seen in two parts. The first is a return to his authentic present, turned 'past' because of his own cultural alienation. Secondly, from this present there is the historical journey which records the slavery and slave trade, and beyond it "my far distant happiness which makes me aware of present misery." Even here we notice a basic difference between Cesaire and Senghor, for in this first section and the second, Cesaire is more concerned with the disenchanting present than with the glorious past.

> At the end of the small hours: this disowning town and its wake of leprosies, consumption, famines its wake of fears crouching in the ravines, hoisted in the trees, dug out of the soil, rudderless in the sky, piled together. This disowning town and its fumaroles of anguish.

Of course it is the "far distant happiness" which makes him aware of present misery. He is aware of the great African kingdoms, part of his history. However, to act for the betterment of the present he must assert

> No, we have never been amazons at the court of the king of Dahomey, nor princes of Ghana with eight hundred camels . . . I wish to confess that we were always quite undistinguished dishwashers . . .

The anglophone poets studied here exhibit a similar pattern of awareness. Achebe's return to his "vibrant life" in his "hut new-swept" generally parallels Cesaire's return to Martinique. One cannot, of course, compare Achebe's "Answer" with the whole of Return to My Native Land, because "Answer" leaves out the implications of the struggle to regain that vibrant life and the implied revolution in "new-swept," for "new-swept" refers to the getting rid of the strangers and their active presence. However, the return is unmistakable. Soyinka begins as a Yoruba, takes Yoruba beliefs and myths to explore present day problems. He goes beyond this in A Dance of the Forests and shows thinking similar to Cesaire's in relation to the past. We have observed that although aware of the past, Cesaire's wish is to understand the present in its true colours, for it is the present which harbours present problems. The past should only serve to enhance such understanding. Soyinka, too, refuses to hide present yaws under a cover of past greatness. Adenebi, representing Soyinka's object of satire, is shocked upon discovery that the dead who have been invited are in fact a magnifying glass over those ugly yaws:

> Mali. Songhai. Perhaps a descendant of the great Lisabi Zimbabwe. Maybe the legendary Prestor John himself . . . I was thinking of heroes like they.

People like Adenebi obviously kill the impulse to corrective

action in spite of their awareness of social ills. Soyinka's quarrel with Senghor in his essay "And After the Narcissist?"[16] takes off from here. The poet-protagonist in Okigbo's Labyrinths comes back to Mother Idoto, a village stream, before he sets out on his quest. Not only this, in "Fragments out of the Deluge" he notes the disenchanting milieu, the thunder in which he must find a way of saying NO! In our first chapter we saw in this coming back an acceptance of the autochthonous culture as one's past, a sucking of strength from this past to fight the present and future problems. Cesaire's acceptance does not come in the first section of his poem. In this first part, he merely records the present squalor, the true cry of protest that is disowned, and the Christmas' token happiness as a counter-force to change because it contributes to complicity.

The next section comes after the poet has identified himself with all the oppressed - "a Jew man, a pogrom man, a whelp, a beggar." He assumes a fighting spirit, declares what he wants, and says to himself

> 'Beware, my body and soul beware above all of
> crossing your arms and assuming the stirile
> attitude of the spectator, because life is not a
> spectacle, because a sea of sorrows is not a
> proscenium, because a man who cries out is not
> a dancing bear.'

He must believe in his own humanity, he must assume negritude, like "Haiti where negritude rose to its feet for the first time and said it believed in its own humanity." In this second part we come across the Death/Life juxtaposition of our second chapter. Death is white - the white enslaver killing in his exploitation of the black man, the black man who represents life because he sustains the white man

> death, driven mad, blowing in the ripe cane plantation
> of his arms
> death galloping through the prison like a white horse
> death gleaming like a cat's eyes in the dark.

The negation of Western values is very apparent. The poet rejects European reason because it has only served to humiliate the black man and dehumanize the white oppressor. Instead he assumes "the madness that remembers . . . screams . . . sees . . . the madness that unchains itself." It is this madness that makes

him remember the history of slave-trade and slavery: "nigger-smell-makes-the-cane-grow . . . beat-a-nigger-and-you-feed-a-nigger." He admits with self-disgust his having laughed at a fellow nigger who had been made "comical and ugly" by poverty. In the Anglophone poetry studied, we observed that the European destructive spirit manifests itself in the profanation of a people's traditions, the killing of their gods and devastation of their way of life. Cesaire, by virtue of his position as one who has been displanted, cannot sincerely lament the destruction of his gods and way of life, for his immediate suffering is more personal in the sense that he is a man working as a slave in an alien surrounding. The anglophone poet in Africa is, on the other hand, a colonized man in his own village with more than vestiges of his culture still accessible. However, the concern for both is one - decent human life, and this has been noted both in this second part of Cesaire's poem and in the second chapter of the thesis. It is from here that springs the implicit question: where is there for us renewal?

The final section of Cesaire's poem offers an answer to this question. Part of the answer consists in first accepting, not only the reality of the present squalor, but also of the history from which it arises. We, therefore, see Cesaire working towards an acceptance of this background of himself as a basis for the staging of an effective revolution.

> I say that it is well so.
> My back shall make a victory out of its whipping sores.

His prodigious ancestry is of "those who invented neither gunpowder nor compass . . ."

> but those who know the humblest corners of the country of suffering

His negritude takes root in the background of "those who explored neither sea nor sky"

> but without whom the earth would not be the earth
> . . . . . .
> it plunges into the red flesh of the soil
> it plunges into the blazing flesh of the sky

Abiola Irele observes that Cesaire's definition of negritude in these last two lines "is a reference to a Bambara symbol depicting

man in intimate union with the earth and with the sky. Thus in terms of an authentic African humanism what has been denounced as an excessive romanticism becomes in reality a reaffirmation. In other words, Cesaire's Africanism is a genuine rediscovery of the spiritual values of the black continent, and a reappropriation, through his poetry, of a personal ancestral heritage."[17] It was shown in the third chapter that the socialism being pitted against Western capitalist-individualist ethos is in effect a socialist legacy from the ancestors. It is also known that Cesaire belonged to the French Communist Party until his resignation in 1956. Whatever background one thinks informs his poetry most, this socialist ideological framework for his poem cannot be denied. In this final section, therefore, the poet takes cognizance of his unique position in a hostile situation and accepts this unique position as the reality from which he must work.

> I accept, I accept it all
> . . . . . .
> And now suddenly strength and life attack me like a bull the wave of life streams over the nipple of the Morne, veins and veinlets throng with new blood, the enormous lung of cyclones breathing the fire hoarded in volcanoes, and the gigantic seismic pulse beats the measure of a living body within my blaze.
>
> Upright now, my country and I, hair in the wind, my hand small in its enormous fist and our strength not inside us but above in a voice that bores through the night and its listeners like the sting of an apocalyptic wasp. And the voice declares that for centuries Europe has stuffed us with lies and crammed us with plague, for it is not true that:
> the work of man is finished
> . . . . . .

Cesaire uses images from natural violence - cyclones, volcanoes etc. - to speak of the revolution for change. The slave ship reappears in this third section, but with the difference that this time it is splitting. It is as if the black race, for years under slavery, colonialism and generally under the dehumanizing capitalist-individualist ethos; it is as if this race broke free from this slave-ship of an exploitative system

> and they are on their feet the niggers
> . . . . . .
> on their feet
> and
> free

Anglophone poetry through the ancestor theme points to this kind of freedom from an evil system. Achebe's "Those Gods Are Children" reveals that the reality of the so-called ancestor worship is to be seen in the harmonious existence of the living, in their corporate responsibility which is the kernel of socialism; Okigbo's "long drums," "the spirits of the ancestors," are elected to carry this socialist message, while Soyinka's "Ujamaa," socialism, clears any doubt as to the nature of the answer sought. His latest novel Season of Anomy[18] - a tripartite 'discussion' between traditional socialism, scientific socialism, and capitalist greed - suggests that dreaded Marxism already has authentic African roots. "Seminal" Aiyero is a small traditional socialist community, merely needing aspects of scientific socialism (represented by The Dentist) to spread and operate in the context of today. This would appear to be indicative of the direction that African literature is taking. Can this be said to be a different aspiration from Cesaire's? No, for

Lo, it is the same blood that flows . . .

FOOT-NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. S. O. Anozie, Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric, London: Evans Bros. Ltd., 1972, p. 20.

2. O. Taiwo, An Introduction to West African Literature, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1967, p. 45.

3. Aime Cesaire, "Culture and Colonization," Presence Africaine, 1956, pp. 193-207.

4. Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture," ibid., pp. 122-31.

5. J-P. Sartre, Black Orpheus, Presence Africaine.

6. John Reed & Clive Wake (eds), Senghor: Prose and Poetry, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 96-97.

7. Ibid., p. 99

8. Reed and Wake simply see that for Senghor and Cesaire, "negritude was the 'idea' of a culture belonging to Black peoples." However, they improve on this definition when they write, for Cesaire, "negritude because the rejection of western civilization, but a rejection that was positive in its assertion of the values of self-acceptance and revolt. Not surprisingly (though still paradoxically) he found his politics in Marxism and his poetic form in the surrealism of the Parisian avant-garde in the 1920s": for Senghor "negritude is the proclamation of African cultural values, an assertion not only of the blackman's right to a culture of his own, but that he actually possesses such a culture." (John Reed & Clive Wake. (eds), French African Verse, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972, pp. vi-vii).

   A. C. Brench defines the movement as "a call for emancipation and the assertion of African tradition as the inspiration for creative art" (A. C. Brench, The Novelists' Inheritance in French Africa, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 6).

9. Aime Cesaire, Return to My Native Land, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970, p. 75.

10. Frantz Fanon, "op. cit."

11. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Homecoming, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972, pp. 41-42.

12. Frantz Fanon, "op. cit."

13. Aime Cesaire, "Culture and Colonization."

14. P-Kiven Tunteng, "Political Freedom and Mental Colonization," Transition No. 44, Volume Nine (i), Transition Ltd. 1974 pp. 9-16.

15. Ferdinand Oyono, The Old Man and the Medal, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1969, p. 19.

16. P-Kiven Tunteng, "op. cit."

17. Thomas Ekollo, "The Importance of Culture for the Assimilation of the Christian Message in Negro Africa," Presence Africaine, 1956, pp. 182-92.

18. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, op. cit. , p. 33.

19. Thomas Ekollo takes four allegations against the African as regards religion and refutes them: 1) Monotheism is not new to Africa; among the "Bantus" the idea of almighty is everywhere. 2) The personality of the man Jesus as presented in the Bible is nothing new, for Africans had this concept of a mediator between them and God. 3) Lack of morality in African cultural institutions is another allegation upon which Ekollo rather unnecessarily spends valuable energy to refute. 4) Sense of Community - The Africans had it all along and did not have to learn it from Christianity. (Thomas Ekollo, ". . . Culture for Assimilation . . .").

20. J. S. Mbiti, African Religion & Philosophy London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1969, p. 29.

21. Thomas Ekollo, "op. cit."

22. Frantz Fanon, "op. cit."

23. In a lecture, "Towards a National Language Policy," delivered at the Goeth-Institute on 25th July, 1974.

24. Aime Cesaire, "Culture and Colonization."

25. Alioune Diop, "Opening Address," Presence Africaine, 1956, pp. 9-18.

26. S. O. Mezu, The Poetry of L. S. Senghor, London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd. 1973, p. 93.

27. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, op. cit. , p. xvi.

28. Frantz Fanon, "op. cit."

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1. J. V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963, p. 100.

2. "On the Appeal from the Race of Sheba," J. Reed & C. Wake (eds.), Senghor: Prose and Poetry, London: Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 123-24.

3. "For Koras and Balafong," ibid., p. 111.

4. "Piano and Drums," G. Moore & U. Beier (eds.) Modern Poetry from Africa (New, Enlarged & Revised Edition), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963, p. 121.

5. "To My Mother," J. Reed & C. Wake (eds.) French African Verse, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972, p. 63.

6. "On the Appeal from the Race of Sheba."

7. "The Snowflakes Sail Gently Down," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 120.

8. M. Gluckman, Custom and Conflict in Africa, Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd., 1965, p. 30.

9. "Strange Agony," G. Moore (ed. & trans.), Tchicaya U Tam'si - Selected Poems, London: H.E.B. 1970, p. 13.

10. "Viaticum," ibid., p. 67.

11. Aime Cesaire, Return to My Native Iand, p. 75.

12. "I Thank You God," French African Verse, p. 59

13. "To L.A.," ibid., p. 45.

14. Christopher Okigbo, Labyrinths, London: H.E.B., 1971, p. 3.

15. Ibid., p. xi.

16. "Black Woman," Senghor: Prose and Poetry, p. 105

17. "A Little Child," D. I. Nwoga (ed.) West African Verse, London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1967, p. 10.

18. Chinua Achebe, Beware Soul Brother, London: H.E.B., 1972, pp. 27-28.

19. "Modern African Literature" is a misleading phrase. It should always be remembered that there is modern African literature that is not written. The countryside is teeming

with compositions of new poetry and stories, only a few of which reach us through the radio. However, what "modern African literature" has come to mean for many, is that it is that African literature which is expressed mainly in European languages, and is written. I use the phrase here according to this growing convention.

20. "A Little Child."

21. Wole Soyinka, Idanre and Other Poems, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1967, pp. 24, 27, 28.

22. ". . . the chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and you know maggots grow best inside the lavatory," Oyo to her husband, The Man, in Ayi Kwei Armah's novel: The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born.

23. "Viaticum," French African Verse, p. 19.

24. "Sell-Out," ibid., p. 65.

25. "The Right Road," ibid., p. 67.

26. Emmanuel Hansen, "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual," Transition No. 46 Volume Nine (iii), Transition Ltd., 1974, pp. 25-36.

27. Ibid."

28. "Prayer for Peace," Senghor: Prose and Poetry, p. 135.

29. Beware Soul Brother, p. 29.

30. "Viaticum," Tchicaya U Tam'si - Selected Poems, p. 60.

31. "Matting to Weave," French African Verse, p. 93.

32. "Communion," ibid., p. 193.

33. Wilfred Cartey, Whispers from a Continent, the Literature of Contemporary Black Africa, : New York: Random House, 1969.

34. Labyrinths, p. 72.

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1. R. Berger, "Impressions on a Disturbing Book: The Whites Are Coming," Transition No. 47, Volume Nine (iv), Transition Ltd., 1974, pp. 43-47. In this article Berger gives an impression of what it must have been like for people well-used to 'natural' death and tribal war-fare between traditional enemies, in which relatively only a few people died.

2. "The Vultures," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 64,

3. Emmanuel Hansen, "Frantz Fanon: Portrait of a Revolutionary Intellectual."

4. Okot p'Bitek, Song of Lawino, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966.

5. "The Dead," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 52.

6. The Guardian, July 22, 1972.

7. "Prayer to Masks," Senghor: Prose and Poetry, p. 107.

8. "For Koras and Balafong," ibid., p. 108.

9. "Prayer for Peace," ibid., p. 134 .

10. "The Right Road," French African Verse, p. 67.

11. "The Snowflakes Sail Gently Down," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 120.

12. "Piano and Drums," ibid., p. 121.

13. O. Oculi, Orphan, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968.

14. Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture."

15. George Awoonor-Williams has now dropped his European names, to be known simply as Kofi Awoonor.

16. "Easter Dawn," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 103.

17. Labyrinths, p. xi.

18. "The Hearse," Tchicaya U Tam'si - Selected Poems, p. 24.

19. "The Scorner," ibid., p. 72.

20. "The Dead," ibid., p. 48.

21. "Lament of the Sacred Python," Beware Soul Brother, p. 49.

22. Labyrinths, p. 34.

23. Ibid., p. 33.

24. "Their Idiot Song," Beware Soul Brother, p. 51.

25. Ibid., p. 67.

26. Ibid., p. 64.

27. G. Parrinder, West African Religion, London: Epworth Press, 1969, p. 106.

28. "Dereliction," Beware Soul Brother, p. 56.

29. Labyrinths, p. 30.

30. "Telephone Conversation," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 144.

31. E. Makward, "Literature and Ideology in Africa," Pan African Journal Vol. V No. 1 Spring 1972, : Pan African Institute, Inc., New York 1972, p. 82.

32. "Song: Deserted Markets," Idanre and Other Poems, p. 33.

33. "Psalm," ibid., p. 34.

34. "Her Joy is Wild," ibid., p. 35.

35. "Malediction," ibid., p. 55.

36. G. Moore, Wole Soyinka, London: Evans Brothers Ltd. 1971, p. 96.

37. "Refugee Mother and Child," Beware Soul Brother, p. 12.

38. "Christmas in Biafra," ibid., p. 13.

39. "The Dead," Tchicaya U Tam'si - Selected Poems, p. 57.

40. Idanre and Other Poems, p. 58.

41. D. Duerden & C. Piertese (eds.), African Writers Talking, London: H.E.B., 1972, p. 173.

42. Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," D. W. Defferson (ed.) The Morality of Art, London: Reutledge, 1969, pp. 119-34.

43. The Times, Monday, October 9th, 1972

44. "To Sergey Esenin," V. Mayakovsky, How Verses Are Made, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd. 1970.

45. "Death in the Dawn," Idanre and Other Poems, p. 10.

46. "Idanre," ibid., p. 64.

47. Ibid., p. 65.

48. "The Fourth Stage."

49. "Around Us Dawning," Idanre and Other Poems, p. 12.

50. "Luo Plains," ibid., p. 13.

51. E. D. Jones, The Writing of Wole Soyinka, London: H.E.B., 1973, p. 106.

52. Labyrinths.

53. "He Loves Me: He Loves Me Not," Beware Soul Brother, p. 55.

54. "Massacre, October '66," Idanre and Other Poems, p. 51.

55. Ibid., p. 58.

56. "To My First White Hairs," ibid., p. 30.

57. "Post Mortem," ibid., p. 31.

58. Labyrinths, p. 39.

CHAPTER THREE

1. J. V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, p. 50.
2. Senghor: Prose and Poetry, p. 32.
3. M. Fortes, Oedipus and Job in West African Religion. London: Cambridge University Press, 1959.
4. G. Parrinder, West African Religion.
5. E. W. Smith, The Religions of Lower Races. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923, pp. 70-71.
6. W. Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage."
7. J-P. Sartre, Black Orphens, p. 20.
8. "Vanity," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 69.
9. "Prayer to Masks," Senghor: Prose and Poetry, p. 107.
10. "New York," ibid., p. 155.
11. "Prayer for Peace," ibid., p. 134.
12. "Songs of Sorrow," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 98.
13. Kofi Awoonor interviewed by J. Goldblatt, Transition No. 41, Volume Eight (iv), Transition Ltd., 1972, pp. 42-44.
14. "Homecoming," Modern Poetry from Africa, p. 79.
15. Aime Cesaire, Return to My Native Land.
16. Labyrinths, p. 28.
17. Ibid., pp. 39-50.
18. Ibid., p. xii.
19. Ibid., p. xiii.
20. G. Parrinder, op. cit., p. 37.
21. E. Duerden & C. Piertese, op. cit., p. 147.
22. Labyrinths, p. xiii.
23. "Love Song," Beware Soul Brother, p. 25.
24. Labyrinths, p. 9.

25. Beware Soul Brother, p. 29.

26. "Those Gods Are Children," ibid., p. 46.

27. Ibid., p. 66.

28. Ibid., p. 56

29. "Idanre," Idanre and Other Poems, p. 82.

30. Wole Soyinka interviewed by B. Jeyifous, Transition No. 42, Vol. 8 (v), Transition Ltd., 1973, pp. 62-64.

31. O. p'Bitek, Song of Ocol, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1970, p. 84.

32. W. Soyinka, A Dance of the Forests, London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

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6. J. Bowker, Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World, London: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 178.

7. W. Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage."

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14. A. Cesaire, Return to My Native Land.

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16. Wole Soyinka, "And After the Narcissist?", ibid., pp. 53-64.

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