you say when you compare these with *The Lion and the Jewel* 
you ... you ...

**Zodwa:** You can’t really think they come from the same writer.

**Ricard:** Exactly! Ya!

It is easy for a Western-oriented interpretation of Soyinka’s revues, such as demonstrated in the above interchange, to condemn these writings as lacking in literary merit. However, it is unwise to dismiss something as not commendable just because of the disparity of canons used. When one studies in depth the intricacies of Yoruba theatre, one begins to appreciate what Soyinka intended to achieve through this type of work. Ogbonna (1992: 32-37) provides a rich overview of the history and features of the Alarinjo (also called Apidan) theatre, a theatre, I would strongly argue, Soyinka was using to create the general premise for these sketches and revues. It is a theatre that began in the middle of the sixteenth century but had established a number of travelling troupes by the nineteenth century, Ogbonna (192: 32-33) recounts. These troupes were known for their unrestrained flair for social criticism, an act that would at times lead to their banishment from the city with their performances incomplete. The presence of such a culture in Yoruba land undoubtedly gave Soyinka the impetus to use this kind of medium, that would not be foreign to his compatriots. The elements of the Alarinjo (Apidan) theatre include:

- an open market-square with scenery
- audience involvement
- humorous sketches
- mime
- a chorus, usually of women and children and apprentices of the main actors who, also provide the song and dance.

The whole performance assumed a four-part structure. First was presented the *Ijuba,* a ceremonial opening. The dance formed part two. Part three, called drama, was two-pronged. It comprised firstly spectacle, in the form of episodic stories of myths and legends, and secondly revues, which were primarily comments on the state of society. These revues combined comedy, song, and dance and used abstract sociological and historical sketches to carry their theme. The performance was by means of solo or
group mimes which used caricatures of human foibles and frailties as they satirised Yoruba society (Ogbonna 1992: 36-37). The last part, called the finale, was some kind of enactment which presented the bride and a surprise baby. It appears Soyinka extracted from the Apidan tradition the revue concept in part three and maximised his western-bred theatre skills to protest against an urgent political situation in newly-independent Nigeria. The chosen genre enabled him to perform in open space with very few props and maximal audience participation. The age-old function of the genre, to sensitise society by satire, was also put to good use in Soyinka’s case. His own people’s theatre culture of live performances that aimed to influence society must have made it easier for Soyinka to draw the parallel from Brecht and apply the technique to Nigeria and its sociopolitical situation.

In summary, these shorter and longer works not only painfully record the various moods experienced by the playwright himself, but they also demonstrate the complex path traversed by the post-colonial African state in its developmental course. Soyinka’s wry humour, sarcasm, and sometimes downright anger reads like the rise of mercury in a thermometer in the array of these plays.

Theatrical features that are common in the sketches include the small cast, a relatively bare stage, action presented through music, dance, and mime, and various types of flashback, reminiscent of Brecht’s epic theatre. All themes in both the longer and the shorter plays seem to veer towards the central point that deals with the state and human dignity, freedom and fullest liberty, endorsing the playwright’s own axiom of ensuring that humans receive their liberty (Soyinka 1986).

Despite their nature, certain aspects of these sketches and plays are similar to the British realistic play that came in the wake of the “well-made play”. The newer plays in British drama tend to be embedded in a contemporary scene instead of reflecting the remote past. A similar trend is observed in Soyinka. Sometimes he places a play in the deep past to remind the audience about the present (The Dance of the Forests and The Night of the Hunted). But the past is used strategically to comment on the present, as
well as to depict a certain metaphysical world view of the African where the dead and the living do not belong to two separate worlds, as the case is in societies that hold a philosophy which has been heavily influenced by the Judeo-Christian world view.

Soyinka’s longer plays exhibit certain qualities of the “well-made play” in their endeavour to sustain a coherent plot and statement of theme, as opposed to the sketches and reviews which focus on didactic theme to impart a message in the quickest possible way. Characters in the latter drama display both sociological and psychological depth in their behaviour, reflecting an amalgam of theatrical forms. Soyinka’s drama tends to question the character’s failure to act responsibly in the face of sophisticated cultural acquisitions, as with Lakunle, Daani, and the Boss of the broadcasting corporation. The use of melodramatic stock characterisation, popular in some European drama, is also found in Soyinka. Soyinka must have encountered this form in his studies because this is not the kind of work that was fostered at the Royal Court. Furthermore, it is not easy to simply ascribe this drama to Western influence because such types of characters are the mainstay of African oral lore as well. The devices of dramaturgy in British post-realist drama include: staging the nation as protagonist (for example, Ireland, Scotland, or England), imbuing the drama with some Shakespearean elements, using an admixture of verse and prose for dialogue, and using a theatre-within theatre technique (Cohn 1991: 182-3). Although Soyinka’s concerns sometimes transcend Nigeria and involve the rest of Africa and that part of the post-imperial world which impinges upon the affairs of Africa, most of his works are solidly focussed on the Nigerian nation’s greed, misdemeanour, or folly, which are some of the weaknesses that he holds up to ridicule and for possible correction. Explosive anger in the revues and sketches is unmistakable. At times it is so overt and blunt that it weakens the artistic quality of the drama.

In conclusion I would like to advance the notion that, in England, Soyinka was exposed to various forms of theatre from which he extrapolated styles and techniques, to create his own drama that addressed different needs as they confronted him. For example, when he returned home, Soyinka chose to focus on agitprop theatre, using sketches
and revues to address pressing political needs in Nigeria. In Europe, Soyinka learnt the validity of his own Yoruba tradition as part of a whole world-wide theatre tradition when he came into contact with many artists who were rooted in the theatre profession, effectively using it to voice their opinions and concerns about life. Gibbs (Appendix, B2) also reveals that the playwright acquired the dramaturgy of the *commedia dell’arte* of Italy which, like the Irish lore, beautifully complemented his own Yoruba Apidan theatre. Unfortunately, it is not very clear how and where this knowledge of the *commedia dell’arte* and the forms of the Irish lore was acquired. Mention of O’Casey and Synge is made by both Gibbs and Irele (Appendix B1), but more investigation is still necessary to elucidate this source of influence in Soyinka. As seen above, he also learnt of the absurdist theatre and the social commentary theatre of Brecht and other political writers. Soyinka therefore found himself blending a very complex mélange of theatre traditions to create the sketches that are discussed above.

Furthermore, it is in the Nigeria of the 1960s that we see the culmination of an apprenticeship that started before, but was enriched at, the Royal Court Theatre. One begins to appreciate the writer’s college-day writings as the precursor of the works and activities of the early to mid-1960s. It will be recalled that at Ibadan College the seeds of the culture of using literature as a weapon and a vehicle to structure society were sown. The independent and critical mind that resorted to the use of humour and satire in the campus magazines is sharpened at the Royal Court and it resurfaces even more forcefully in post-Independent Nigeria. The results of the eagerness Soyinka displayed in Ibadan and England, to open himself up to wide-ranging experiences, shows in his works discussed above where Soyinka uses drama to express his views, with the aim of influencing thought in society. By comparison, the challenges of campus life at Ibadan College were very minor, but just as then, so in the 1960s Soyinka continues to stop, question, criticize, and direct the society he lives in. As in the Ibadan works, Soyinka’s subject matter is still presented with forthrightness, outspokenness, and humour. And it still uses the defence of justice as its primary objective. However, Soyinka seems a little angrier now than he was as a college youth. His frustration emanates from the failure of some of the first African-led governments to transit
successfully from colonial to self-rule. His plays expose matters of corruption in the state which frustrate and destroy the society.

One can therefore conclude that the kind of theatre which Soyinka instituted, the type of ideology that informed this theatre -- that is art for protest and social relevance -- and its kind of dramaturgy imbued his plays with multifarious features that derive from a variety of sources. My observation therefore is that this multifaceted nature of Soyinka's theatre came partly from his own personal ingenuity and theatrical idiom, his own African oral lore, as well as from his liaison with the Royal Court Theatre, a relationship that allowed him a hands-on experience with a myriad of European theatrical techniques. It may therefore be surmised that Soyinka's encounter with the "Angry Young Men" did not spark off any new attitude in him; this encounter may merely have emboldened his stance and shown the usefulness of theatre as the proper platform to air one's views about social issues.
End notes to Chapter 4

1. The radio play *Camwood on the Leaves*, and *The Republican* (both of 1960) should be discussed under groups (a) and (b) respectively. However they are not part of this discussion.

2. Moore attests that in 1961, the play was a television play and bore the title *The House of Banigae*, hence my perception that *The Night of the Hunted* is a 1964 revised version of the former.

3. The Royal Court programme for *The Invention* also advertises a forthcoming production, *Sercant Musgrave’s Dance*, which confirms the shared history of Soyinka and Arden at Sloane Square. It is further noted that Section 1 of this same programme which advertised the songs and dance also advertised the production of extracts from *The House of Banigae*, one of Soyinka’s plays that was to be eventually performed some four to five years later, and extracts from *A Dance of the African Forest*, an earlier version of what was later to be known as *A Dance of the Forests*. This 1959 Royal Court programme endorses the plays’ “stage” age so that even though they eventually receive fuller attention after Chapter 3 and are catalogued by the theatre museum as having been created in much later years, they are older than this record claims they are.

4. “Oral Lore: In Search of the Missing Link in SiSwati Modern Drama” is a research article that has been submitted to Juta Publishers to form part of the second volume of a collection of research essays on modern African literature. The editor of the series is Professor Lokangaka Losambe, former Head of English Studies and now Dean of Arts, at Fort Hare University.

5. Hugh Clapperton and Richard Lander give an account of the Yoruba’s Apidan theatre performance of February 22 1826 as the earliest account of Yoruba theatre in Göttrick’s *Apidan Theatre*.

6. In this interview, Gibbs explains that the *commedia dell'arte* is an Italian theatre Wole Soyinka was fascinated with in the late 1950s to early 1960s. However, James Gibbs does not reveal if it was encountered on stage or whether it was part of Soyinka’s classroom experience, as was Shakespeare and Ibsen.

7. The English translation of some of these Nigerian expressions was kindly provided by Dr. Harry Garuba of the English Department at the University of Zululand.

8. Garuba explains that the *atilogwu* is a very athletic and well choreographed acrobatic dance of the Igbo people. It became famous nation-wide in the 1960s when one of the then government ministers took a troupe of these dancers to
New York to perform at the launch of the maiden flight of Nigeria Airways.

9. *Igiripa* literally means a “tough man”, explains Garuba. However, the term *igiripa* is often used to describe hardened criminals and sometimes strong boys on the verge of manhood.

10. Soyinka was once led to resign from his post in the English Department in Ibadan in the mid-1960s when he felt the government was meddling in the freedom of the academic world.

11. Harry Garuba explains that *Ranka dede* is a salutation in Fulfulde, a language found in the Fulani ethnic group. However, according to Garuba, some people assume it is Hausa, which is widely spoken in the northern parts of Nigeria.

12. According to Garuba, *Obugbu of Gbu* is “a pun-demented imagination of Soyinka’s, possibly adapted from a sketch he cites as Ubu Roi”.

13. In this same interview, Soyinka describes “guerrilla theatre” as a theatre in which a group studies a situation within a community and responds to it theatrically (Kreisler 1998). This is the very technique that he used against General Gowon’s government prior to his imprisonment.

14. This interview was conducted by Lewis NKosi in Lagos in 1962 at the height of the young Soyinka’s fame as a playwright. The show Soyinka is referring to here is not any of the sketches but *The Dance of the Forests*, which he had written two years earlier for the independence celebrations.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Theatre and Society

"The man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny" (Soyinka 1972).

5.1 Introduction

This research set out to meet a number of aims, the primary one of which is the exploration of the activities of Wole Soyinka at the Royal Court Theatre in the late 1950s. It has been mainly concerned with bringing to light the nature and extent of the impact of George Devine's Royal Court theatre on the playwright. The full findings of the analyses of data in the preceding chapters are presented in several sub-topics that advance conclusions about the key issues raised in the study as a whole. The main objective of this present chapter is to discuss the relationship between the writer and the political state in which his art is produced and practised. Soyinka's activities as a writer have been, in the main, a reaction to the sociopolitical climate within which people live. Soyinka has used literature as an outlet for his feelings as well as for politically activist purposes. The tiger that upset the campus life at Ibadan University, Leeds University, and the Royal Court Theatre has continued over the decades to challenge unbearable living conditions in the larger "campus"-- life itself. Theatre has shown itself to be a dynamic tool of communication that Soyinka, among many other writers, has used effectively to comment on society.

5.2 Wole Soyinka and The Royal Court Theatre

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Even though there are many factors that shaped the theatre of Soyinka, his connection with the Royal Court Theatre has been a major point in the sharpening of his theatrical adeptness. At the Royal Court in Sloane Square Soyinka tested his skills as a producer, a playwright, and an actor in the real world outside a university campus. It was also at the Court that Soyinka was exposed to the innovative theatre of many gifted new dramatists. These forms he sought to emulate and fuse into his own later African drama. At the Court, Soyinka showed Western Europe some of his most important plays, like *The Lion and the Jewel*, thus introducing a brand of English drama that was hitherto not widely known. During this period of working at the Royal Court his works were subject to intense criticism and evaluation, like all serious drama that has gone beyond the dilettante phase. Soyinka’s stay at the Court may be viewed as a rite of passage for his performance art.

In their own way, the directors of the Royal Court, George Devine and Tony Richardson, had a very noble project in mind. They “... wanted above all for the Royal Court to be a house for new plays, ... a venue for modern classic works that had influenced contemporary playwrights” (Doty & Harbin 1990: 1). Seemingly they had not expected the participation of the so-called English minorities, but they accommodated them all the same. However, the Court and the theatre-going public were little prepared for the African theatre that people like Soyinka brought. Because of this self-focused programme of the Court, England had to wait for half a decade before viewing some of his classics, like *The Lion and the Jewel*.

### 5.2.1 The Role of the Angry Young Men

It has been alleged that Soyinka’s association with the “Angry Young Men” brought some conflict between himself and the “school authorities” at Leeds University. The conflict alluded to here is the incident when Soyinka obtained a mere pass at the end of his B.A. studies at Leeds. He is reported to have refused the degree, opted to repeat the final year, and thereafter gained an Upper Second Class pass (Ogbonna 1992: 69). Ogbonna's view of the relationship between Soyinka and the “Angry Young Men”
displays two issues of concern about Ogbonna’s own perceptions and conjecture. In the same way, records show the opposite about Soyinka's alleged feeling of embarrassment about the Royal Court. To begin with, in a live interview with the BBC, recorded during his reception of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1986) and in his acceptance speech of the same prize, Soyinka openly acknowledged his close association with the Angry Theatre. Reflecting on this liaison with the Royal Court, Soyinka says:

The days at the Royal Court were marvellous; it was good to experience this change in theatre -- a move toward social realism for rising playwrights like Osborne, Wesker, Bond and so forth. The Royal was a theatre of ferment, the evenings there offered writers the time to do experimental theatre. The directorship of George Devine, the most brilliant manipulator of talent, is most unforgettable. This was a wonderful creative family and ... eh -- eh ... when I left, I missed it (BBC Video material: "A Combative Soul": 1987).

It may be true that in earlier times Wole Soyinka was reluctant openly to associate with the "Angry Young Men". Perhaps the passage of time has toned down whatever feelings may have made him stand aloof. In many ways Soyinka has emerged more positive toward the Royal Court and its entire team than have other playwrights. Although playwrights do not deny this experience, they are loath to acknowledge any sense of strong camaraderie among their fellow participants. Soyinka is an exception to this, as he is ready to accept that there were associations within the group which were seemingly too weak for his liking.

Furthermore, in Findlater’s book on the history of the English theatre, young Soyinka is proudly photographed with The Aldermaston March group of protesters from “The Court” (Findlater 1981: 16). The second point is the innuendo in Ogbonna's remarks that Soyinka's anti-establishment and combative attitude was fostered by this “unfortunate” liaison with the “Angry Young Men.” Ironically, Ogbonna's chief assumption is that, despite his reticence, Soyinka’s anti-establishment attitude was instigated by that one group of English theatre makers of the fifties to early sixties, the “Angry Young Men”. As has been illustrated, it is not the exclusive influence of the Royal Court that injected anger into Soyinka; it was rather the times, the person of
Soyinka, and the general English environment plus the other areas of the world in which he had travelled and had found fraught with injustice, irrespective of colour and culture.

To what extent can one therefore confidently talk of the negative influence of the “Angry Young Men”? Perhaps we may, to some extent. To view protest as negative is relative to the interpreter. It is true that Devine’s theatre is associated with protest and anger. It is also true that the general culture of using art to express strong views about life in general was rife at the Royal Court Theatre, but Soyinka was not necessarily groomed into this by the “Angry Young Men”. Their culture of using theatre as an instrument for correcting ongoing social maladies merely endorsed an ethos which Soyinka already had from his student days, as well as from his Yoruba background. Keeping in mind the writer’s own keen sensitivity to social injustices and readiness to express his views on critical matters, one can only conclude that the “Angry Theatre” found itself a willing follower in Soyinka. Hence it is very possible that the so-called “Angry Young Men” did not create any attitude that was not already latent in Soyinka. Their brand of theatre merely fanned a fire that had long been kindled in the writer, a fire that was obviously fuelled, *inter alia*, by the sociopolitical system of 1950s England. In the foregoing research it has been shown that the kind of warm camaraderie that Soyinka yearned for was not to be found at the Royal Court Theatre. It is therefore difficult to imagine how one neophyte writer would influence another.

### 5.2.2 Soyinka’s Plays in England

Performances tested the waters of this foreign audience, Soyinka won some awards, but there was a general spirit of rejection of his productions by the reviewers. Interestingly, Soyinka was first accepted officially into the serious world of books by Oxford University Press’s publication of *The Lion and the Jewel* and *The Swamp Dwellers* before the theatre audience took him seriously.

Another issue of concern is the alleged poor workmanship and the theatre life-history of *The Invention*. Did he learn anything from this experience? When one considers the
views of James Gibbs and Lionel Ngakane on this play, one may be persuaded to believe that this play was bad. It has become clear that Soyinka himself was instrumental in having the play buried. My assertion that Soyinka played a major role in the stopping of further productions is based on the playwright’s own professed views on good theatre. Talking to Nkosi, Soyinka says:

... my prime duty as a playwright is to provide excellent theatre ... I have one commitment to the public, and that is to my audience and that is to make sure they do not leave the theatre bored (Duerden & Pieterse 1972: 173).

This belief must have made the task easier for everybody involved, not to produce the play anymore. Besides, _The Invention_ is not the only Sunday-night-without décor play that was premiered and never given a full-scale production by the Royal Court. Findlater explains that only:

Six out of 22 Sunday plays in this period were later given full-scale production. [And] the main objective was not to score a bull; it was to let the author see his work in performance ... [it was an] educational bonus (Findlater 1981: 42).

Thus it can be confirmed that _The Invention_ did not do well on stage. Even though my own assessment of _The Invention_ as a drama, especially as a thesis play, advances the argument that it bears valuable subject matter, unfortunately a good idea does not necessarily make a good play. Because _The Invention_ does not seem to work well on stage, its value is lessened.

### 5.2.3 After the Royal Court

When he returned to Nigeria, Soyinka aspired to create a theatre. He explains his ambitions in one of the interviews he gave after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature: “The first goal I had was setting up my own theatre company [so as] to practise all the theatre idioms I had acquired both abroad and at home” (Appendix C1). He goes on to explain that the research he conducted on Nigerian ritual theatre was not toward an academic degree but was meant to enhance his envisioned theatre company. It appears
Soyinka modelled himself on both Brecht and Devine by encouraging writers and also by setting up an identifiable group of actors that was not confined only to the orthodox theatre, but could move around the country as did Brecht’s Berliner Ensemble. Soyinka’s “moving theatre” was a theatre of relevance in that apart from staging regular plays it also performed the sketches, that were largely political in nature. Evidently, Soyinka’s was not a theatre of art for art’s sake but he used theatre as a medium for both entertainment and for correcting social ills, as some of the playwrights he admired, like Brecht, had done. From this it can be deduced that the ethos of the Court, to make society confront itself through theatre, was acquired by its protégé. Therefore Soyinka’s interaction with the Royal Court stimulated an already existing ethic of drama of commitment. It is not only from the Court alone that Soyinka benefited. The Royal Court also acted as a conduit that enabled him to encounter and later emulate some of the writers that were associated with the theatre itself in the 1950s. For instance, it has been shown that Soyinka’s type of theatre reflected an amalgam of the “theatres” that he had encountered in his sojourn abroad and at home. This is reminiscent of Brecht, who is said to have been influenced by:

... a wide variety of sources including Chinese, Japanese and Indian theatre, the Elizabethan (especially Shakespeare), Greek tragedy ... the Bavarian folk play and many more... [And] Brecht [still] had the uncanny ability to take elements from seemingly incompatible sources, combine them, and make them his own (http://www.imagination.com/moonstruck/else15.html) 6 March 2000, “Bertolt Brecht: 1891-1956”)

In addition to instituting a performing group, Soyinka’s focus was also on supporting creative writing in general, like his mentor, Devine. A brief catalogue of his projects after Nigeria’s independence illustrates this. Still committed to fighting injustice through theatre, Soyinka accentuated his formal drama writing with sketches and revues that were designed as protest vehicles. He devised a workshop for writers called Mbari Artists and Writers’ Club, which also accommodated black South African artists like Dennis Brutus and the then Ezekiel Mphahlele. The living theatre that he formed did not only produce his plays but those of other writers as well, since Soyinka concerned himself with the general promotion of African literature. It is such evidence that
persuades one to take the view that the playwright was on a self-styled apprenticeship in London.

In summary, it can be argued that Soyinka’s stay at the Royal Court Theatre benefited him in several ways. It brought to a practical test the theoretical knowledge of drama he may have previously acquired as a student of literature.

Furthermore, Soyinka also participated in the Royal Court’s workshops for writers. This practice he continued when he returned home to Nigeria, where he did not merely confine himself to academic life but took drama, and literature in general, beyond the classroom and lecture-halls. In an interview with Lewis Nkosi, Soyinka explains the nature of the writers’ club thus:

\[\text{At the Mbari Artists and Writers' Club in Ibadan, this school of writers ... there is a group of young writers who seem to be very much in contact with each other's works; have you [always] known these people, and who are they?}\]

\[\text{Well, there is Christopher Okigbo, whose poems are going to be published very shortly by Mbari ... There's J.P. Clark who wrote this very successful Grecian tragedy ... we performed at Ibadan. There are poets like Gabriel Okara ... [and] painters like Demas Nwoko ... (Duerden & Pieterse 1972: 175).}\]

In brief, the projects that he implemented in Nigeria, such as founding the Orusin and the 1960s Mask Theatre troupes, the writers’ club, and the “moving theatre” -- although this idea was not exclusively European -- all attest to his benefiting from the culture of performance art and creative writing which he studied in England. This positive effect should not overshadow the subtle racism that the playwright, like many blacks at the time, experienced in England.

5.2.4 Other Sources of Influence and Inspiration

Devine’s “Angry Theatre” is only one of many facets of the arts that inspired Wole Soyinka. One can therefore safely speak of a variety of influences that encouraged him
to express forthright criticism of society. These influences include the various European traditions of theatre as well as his own oral Nigerian lore. This wide-ranging exposure made Soyinka's own theatre idiom a mélange of theatrical traditions. His output of both formal and informal plays back home is evidence of this rich medley of art.

Soyinka was in England at a time in history when there was world-wide unrest in politics and, inevitably, in literature. He had his own convictions that drove him to react to life around him. This is why he was also seen participating in such political issues as the Hola Camp improvisation, the poem he wrote against the French installation of an explosive in the Sahara, and the protest against the Suez Crisis. It is thus difficult to accept the view that England's "Angry Young Men" alone could instigate the dramatist against England and the rest of the world.

Can Soyinka's experience abroad be viewed as influence, incitement, or mutual sharing?

To perceive the European dramatists as having influenced Soyinka can be somehow condescending. Making Europe the reference point tends to undermine the ingenuity and creativity of the artist and reduces him to a mere receptacle that happened to be in Europe at the right time and was awakened by the theatrical blizzard of the century. The interviews held with James Gibbs, Abiola Irele, and Alain Ricard testify to Soyinka's previous alertness, talent, and scholarship. It is a pity that the people behind the British theatre did not feel it necessary to learn from him as well as imparting their own experiences at the time. Influence in art is seldom causal but, rather, mutual. Had Devine's programme been more open to allowing the natural process of cross-cultural sharing to take its course, perhaps the history and the theatre ideals of the Royal Court would have been recorded differently.

All works of art have parents. It is thus disturbing to read commentaries that insinuate Soyinka's undue influence by European literary sources. If dramatists like Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, and many others across the world continue to dominate the focus of study in their own right, not as having been undeservingly influenced by one mentor or
another, it is not clear why Soyinka cannot be evaluated and accepted as a playwright whose perceptions and techniques are reminiscent of certain of his contemporaries and forbears, without insinuating lack of originality as did the English media. Consequently, it is the condescending stance which creates a problem with Ogbonna’s assertion about the “Angry Young Men”s perceived influence on Soyinka (Ogbonna 1992: 69). Even more inadmissible is the claim of certain English reviewers to have found influences of Wesker and Pinter in Soyinka’s plays. Summarising this view, Eldred Durosimi Jones observes: “English reviewers of [Soyinka’s] plays have seen influences on his work ranging from Ben Jonson, through Wycherly, Ibsen, and Chekhov to Wesker and Pinter” (Jones 1988: 19-20). The perception of Soyinka as a mere receptacle is the source of concern. By implication, the Western world has remained immune to anything that came from African artists, allowing the process of influence to go only in one direction, from others to Soyinka. This concern is raised even as late as 1986, when Soyinka received his Nobel Prize for Literature. Emory Magazine records Los Angeles Times critic Stanley Meisler as asserting, “His drama and fiction have challenged the West to broaden its aesthetic and accept African standards of art and literature” (1997: 3). One hopes that the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to a writer of African literature in English was indeed a turning point in the attitude of the West towards other types of English literature.

5.3 Declamation / Affirmations of Hypothesis

This study posited the hypothesis that very little is known about Soyinka as an “Angry Young Man” in the same vein as Osborne, Wesker, Bond, or Arden because the Royal Court Theatre perceived him as an outsider, part of a minority in England. The treatment of his first play, the reception of his performances in 1959, as well as Soyinka’s own affirmations expressed through certain media, like Maren, his alter ego in Ibadan, provide support for such an hypothesis.
5.4 The Writer, the State, and Commitment

Committed writers find it difficult to ignore the challenges of life around them. Their responses often get them into trouble with the powers that rule the state, powers they may respond to in their writings. This has been the case with Soyinka from his boyhood days as an undergraduate in Ibadan, through Leeds University, and beyond the Royal Court theatre to the independent state of Nigeria. The findings of this study have revealed that many of the “Angry Young Men” of the late 1950s to mid 1960s -- Soyinka, Arden, Wesker, Edward Bond, for example -- have been inspired by sociopolitical experiences in their communities to respond in protest theatre. Very few of them have been humbled by the passage of time. Soyinka’s manifesto “the man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny” (Soyinka 1972: 13), from his prison autobiography, The Man Died, seems to sum up his true feelings on this point. Although this book was written during his first imprisonment, in 1967, more than three decades later Soyinka is still openly challenging the civil injustices that beset and ravage society, his country Nigeria included.

The hostility of the challenged state toward such forthright artists can be seen, sadly, in the unfortunate death of writers like Ken Saro Wiwa and the continued self-exile of Soyinka himself. As Katrak aptly notes, according to Soyinka it is the individual and his courage, and not the masses, who can correct social injustice. And in the four decades of his writing there can be traced an essential thread of continuity in the preoccupation with social justice, and the belief in the ability of the individual to direct community’s future (Katrak 1986: 9). This suggests to me that the writer is the conscience and the radar of society.

This has been so since the beginnings of literary art, as can be seen in various phases of literary history such as in the works of Homer, John Milton, William Shakespeare, Emile Zola, and Anton Chekhov. I acknowledge that literature plays an aesthetic role, but even more, it has a profoundly functional value that impacts on man and society in a similar way to other disciplines. Over the years, writers in society have found themselves pitted against ruling authorities; the relationship between the writer and the state has not always been harmonious. Some writers have even lost their lives as a result of the art they
produce and the effect it has had on their societies. In our times we look at artists like Salman Rushdie (England), Jack Mapanje (Malawi), Arthur Miller (United States of America), Ngugi wa Thion' o (Kenya), Ken Saro Wiwa and Wole Soyinka (Nigeria) as well as numerous others whose lives as citizens of their homelands have in one way or another been grossly affected by their art, which is their voice-box. Such incidents make one believe that there must be some more fundamental function of literature in society than just the sheer fantasy and laughter offered by most works of art. Literature performs a function that goes beyond mere entertainment and simple moral lessons. Literature can shake the conscience of society and redirect human behavioural patterns. Against this backdrop I conclude by taking a brief survey of the ways in which Soyinka has related to society through his art. In this way one can make certain projections about possible areas of further research in this field of study.

Gibbs points out that while Soyinka was still at Leeds, one of his plays attracted the attention of the Royal Court Theatre; "...for the first time, the young playwright saw drama as a social force in action" (Gibbs 1980: 12). Gibbs probably meant this was one of the Soyinka’s “early” experiences with performance drama outside of Africa where we would expect the playwright to have had many encounters of drama as a social tool meant to address socio-political matters.

The love-and-hate relationship between the writer and the state is supported by John Osborne’s statement that “we socialists are not going to achieve anything by being polite ... the monarchy is the gold-filling in a mouthful of decay” (1961), and 36 years later his central character in Déjàvu (1994), a sequel to Look Back in Anger, is still highly critical of the establishment. The angry Jimmy Porter of 1956 is now middle-aged and "... still looking back, but now with with a kind of humorous melancholy and poignance" (Dixon 1994: 524). Still dissatisfied with the establishment, J.P. continues to raves:

J.P. A national campaign must explain to the public the causes and dangers of ... the horrifying spectacle of the incest crisis about to shatter our English obsession with class (Osborne 1992: 16).
Seemingly complaining about the unchanging circumstance of the ordinary person under the uncaring establishment, J.P. grumbles:

J.P. I still am, after thirty years, a churlish, grating note, a spokesman for no one but myself; with deadening effect, cruelly abusive, unable to be coherent about my despair; uncomfortable and awkward. (Osborne 1992: 97).

Evidently the passage of time has not changed Osborne’s anti-establishment views. Even his very last play, Déjàvu, it seems Osborne still feels that he was right to attack the Tories in the early years of his writing.

I wish to conclude by presenting my observations that Soyinka uses long established traditions of theatre from both Europe and Africa to laugh at, criticize, or protest against issues of concern in society. These conventions are fused together and applied with all their formalities such as the in Yoruba Apidan theatre, the agitprop, the commedia dell’arte, the Brechtian, the Shavian, and even the absurdist theatres. This way, Soyinka validates James Gibbs’s statement that “grafting is an ancient art”. The playwright himself endorses this view in a recent interview with Harry Kreisler thus:

**Kreisler:** Finally, how would you recommend that student[s] prepare themselves to be a writer, whether as a playwright, a poet, or whatever?

**Soyinka:** Well, everything requires some craft. And I believe that the best learning process of any kind of craft is just to look at the work of others. It doesn’t mean you’re going to be influenced by them. I believe that there is a kind of osmotic process whereby one intuitively absorbs the various strands that went into the making of a play, a poem, etc. ... The important thing is just to consume as much as possible and then forget everything you have consumed, because in the process of consuming you have already begun to evolve your own distinctive creative pattern, even without knowing it (http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Soyinka/soyinka-con.html. 8 March 2000, “Writing Theater Arts, and Political Activism: Conversation With Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka”).

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His remarks validate my view that Wole Soyinka has created his theatre by drawing from the rich tradition of his predecessors across historical, ethnic, linguistic, and geographical boundaries. In his drama he brings Africa to the West and the West to Africa. His sojourn in England, especially at the Royal Court Theatre, was the major phase that enabled him to acquire a wide spectrum of styles that he has blended in his art. This is the unique Western-African dramaturgy that Wole Soyinka -- the tiger -- has transported to the West, as well as brought back to Africa.
APPENDICES

6.0 Introduction

This section encapsulates the bulk of the reference material such as textual data, interview transcripts, opinionnaires and correspondence. The various subsections have been divided according to content.

6.1 College Compositions

A Textual References

Appendix A1

_The Gallant’s Prayer_

Let me be by
When a lady’s scarf doth lie
   Fallen to the ground.
Let me be nigh
When, engine stalled, she gave a sigh;
I’ll push her car around.

Or, when some coarse untutored imp,
Some boorish cad insults her;
Let me be by to make him limp;
   To make him cry ‘Mercy,’ a man much wiser
And when some lettered gent,
Some thing that bears the name of student,
   Maligns her under a pseudonym;
O, let me find him!
I’ll teach the coward
Such pranks are wayward.

O for a damsel in distress!
O for a return to King Arthur’s days
   Ah! Times have been
When men drew swords for women --
O for a lady in burning house!
I’ll rescue her, her blouse
Untouched by flame.
Yes, for a lady’s smile, I yearn
To pass my Mediate, and earn
A gallant’s name.

by The Gallant Captain [i.e. Wole Soyinka’s alias] [Eagle, 13 April, 1954:6].

Appendix A2

Oh Decency
Thou art locked in an iron chest
And men have lost its key
Bear with me,
My heart lies in degradation
there with Third Hall
And I must pause till it comes
back to me. 'Wole Soyinka [sic]

Appendix A3

Exercise your risible faculties
Without losing critical power:
The “Eagle” has all specialities;
Come, taste both sweet and sour [Eagle, 3,3 13 April, 1953: 7]

Appendix A4

Do some people know that it [is] sheer common-sense to let students inside a classroom come out before they begin to crowd the door? Or is it the thirst for knowledge that turns students into Rushians? [Eagle, 3,1 1953:6].

Appendix A5

I’ve just had a most hectic, exhilarating, exhausting etc., etc., Christmas week at one of the most beautiful country-places of England—the Great Park, Windsor. It was exhausting physically, mentally and in several cases — emotionally. Ahem! It was a Xmas Party arranged for International Students, and take it from me boys, the female section of that party was a hundred percent what Father Christmas ordered.

In such company, you soon discover that life is very full of ups and downs. I noticed one evening that one of these belles kept stealing glances at my dusty face. But I didn’t jump to any conclusion. When she repeated this performance
the following day however, I assured myself that I’d made a hit and began to expand myself. On the third day, during a dance, she hardly took her eyes off me and I decided that I must bring things to a head. So I asked her why she kept looking at my charming face. She looked embarrassed and said, “Oh, I’m sure you’ll think me impertinent.” “Oh no, not I,” I quickly assured her, “say whatever it is.”

“Well, I was just wondering...” and there she hesitated. Goodness, I thought, was she going to ask me if I was married? Had she really fallen for me that hard? She took another look at my face and completed her sentence--

“I was just wondering,” she said, “how many average-sized noses can be made out of yours.” (Lindfors 1982:85-86).

Appendix A6

Telephone Conversation

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. ‘Madam,’ I warned,
‘I hate a wasted journey -- I am African.’
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.

‘How dark?’ ... I had not misheard ... ‘Are you light
Or very dark?’ Button B. Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and speak.
Red booth. Red pillar-box. red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It was real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis --
‘Are you dark? Or very light?’ Revelation came.
‘You mean -- like plain or milk chocolate?’

Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,
I chose. ‘West African sepia’-- and as afterthought,
‘Down in my passport.’ Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. ‘What’s that?’ conceding
‘Don’t know what that is.’ ‘Like brunette.’
‘That’s dark, isn’t it?’ ‘Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused --
Foolishly madam -- by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black -- One moment madam! -- sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears -- 'Madam,' I pleaded, 'wouldn't you rather

Appendix A7

HIAWATHA

The behaviour of students during the performance of Hiawatha last Sunday was,
quite frankly, disgraceful. Unintelligent and rude laughter, clapping and similar
"pit" reactions are out of place in a University. They exasperate the few who are
prepared to appreciate great works of art in a sober manner.
Those who cannot show proper response to art need not be blamed. But they
should not disturb those who can. If a Shakespeare play is "caviar to the
general" to them they should keep away from it. Fortunately, Film companies
provide "slapstick" for their boisterous taste.
NB. I understand that King Kong will be shown this week.

A C. Achebe

Appendix A 8

ANONYMOUS
The Vicar of Bray

In good King Charles’s golden days,
When loyalty no harm meant;
A furious High-Church man I was,
And so I gained a preferment.
Unto my flock I daily preached,
‘Kings are by God appointed,
And damned are those who dare resist,
O touch the Lord’s anointed.’

And this is Law, I will maintain
Unto my dying day, Sir,
That whatsoever King shall reign
I will be Vicar of Bray, Sir!

When royal James possessed the Crown,
And Popery grew in fashion,
The Penal Law I hooted down,
And read the Declaration:
The Church of Rome I found would fit

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Full well my constitution,
And I had been a Jesuit
But for the Revolution.
And this is Law, etc.

When William our Deliverer came,
To heal the Nation's grievance,
I turned the cat in pan again,
And swore to him allegiance:
Old principles I did revoke,
Set Conscience at a distance,
Passive Obedience is a joke,
A jest is Non-Resistance.
And this is Law, etc.

When glorious Anne became our Queen,
The Church of England's glory,
Another face of things was seen,
And I became a Tory:
Occasional Conformists base
I damned, and Moderation,
And thought the Church in danger was
From such prevarication.
And this is Law, etc.

When George in pudding time came o'er,
And moderate men looked big, Sir,
My principles I changed once more,
And so became a Whig, Sir:
And thus preferment I procured
From our Faith's Great Defender,
And almost every day abjured
The Pope and the Pretender.
And this is Law, etc.

The illustrious House of Hanover
And Protestant Succession,
To these I lustily will swear,
Whilst they can keep possession:
For in my Faith and Loyalty
I never once will falter.
But George and my lawful King shall be,
Except the times should alter.
And this is Law, etc. (Gardner (ed.) 1972: 425-427).
Appendix B
Appendix B1

Interviews
Conducted at the University of South Africa Pretoria: 24 July, 1995.

Interviewer: Zodwa Motsa
Respondent: Abiola Irele

Accession Number still to be supplied by the University of South Africa Library.

Zodwa: Professor Irele, it is indeed my pleasure to talk with you this morning. May I thank you for your willingness to share with me what you know about Wole Soyinka.

Irele: The pleasure is mine.

Zodwa: I believe you have worked with Wole Soyinka for quite a long time. What are your impressions of him as a dramatist as well as a visionary artist?

Irele: It is difficult to sum up someone of Soyinka’s stature in one statement but, over the years that I have known him and his works.

Zodwa: What in your opinion would you say have been the major shaping forces or influences on Soyinka’s drama?

Irele: Wow! That’s a very wide question! Both Europe and Africa, specifically his Yoruba background.

Zodwa: And to what extent would you say the Angry Young Men of the late 1950s to early 1960s England affected Soyinka?

Irele: Yes. -- Ya, but you see there is also the influence -- the -- so we are talking about the Royal Court Theatre, -- I presume?

Zodwa: Yes.

Irele: Ya, there is the innovative aspect of the Royal Court Theatre which produced some of the early plays -- some of the most important modern theatre in England in English. But I also want to add two more influences at the time and that period. One was the Irish theatre.

Zodwa: O.K. Yes, the Irish.

Irele: You see, -- Synge, O’Casey and even Yeats. The interesting thing about the Irish theatre for Soyinka is this that there would be certain parallels between an Irish writer using English and a Nigerian writer using English. Parallels in relation to the language [use] you see. In the case of the Irish writer, there was the poetic use of English deriving from their sense of
Irish heritage and so on — a sense of Irish folk life, the Irish environment and so on. That was a very important influence; look into that and see what you can make of it.

Zodwa: *Quite interesting common folk background to draw from. In so far as you know, does Soyinka ever acknowledge such kinds of influences, because there is a prevailing perception that he does not want to acknowledge his liaison with the Angry Theatre, for instance?*

Irele: Well, he does not have to acknowledge it; you can see for instance in the play — well let’s take a play like *The Lion and the Jewel*. Now that mustn’t suggest any connection with the Irish, but there is no doubt whatsoever, that his encounter with the knowledge of Irish theatre made him look back into his own situation, and culture and then write a kind of theatre that made him employ — a theatre that utilises certain resources [similar to those] from his own background; resources of language, dance and song. So that is the first influence.

Zodwa: *Right. You spoke of two influences, what are they?*

Irele: Of course. The second influence is also very important. That of the discursive Theatre of Bernard Shaw and Brecht, the Theatre of Ideas. People don’t know just how important Bernard Shaw was to Soyinka. Today the influence of Bernard Shaw has waned considerably, but in the 50s Bernard Shaw was the major — he was the leading English dramatist—in terms of the numbers of performances and as a theatre critic. Certainly he was very prominent and his plays were involving plays, see *The Apple Cart* for instance. The important thing is that his plays were very often engaging of ideas, even in their sometimes comical and satirical way they were very engaging of ideas. You can’t believe a play like *Saint Joan*.

Then of course there was Brecht who was being discovered around that time in the late 50s in England. And Brecht is very significant in the works of Soyinka. It’s interesting to see the connection between Brecht and Soyinka in terms also of dramaturgy. Brecht uses a lot of song and dance in his plays.

Zodwa: *That is true, and so does Soyinka.*

Irele: Certainly. Note the circle in Soyinka’s plays.

Zodwa: *I just want to ask about his attitude towards life. Some people hold the view that it was mainly after his imprisonment during the reign of the Gowon regime, I hope my pronunciation is correct.*

Irele: *(Corrects pronunciation of Gowon).*
Zodwa: Thank you. Yes, after that imprisonment that Soyinka became more embittered such that this bitterness became more and more pronounced in his latter works. Your comment?

Irele: Well, Zodwa, there is no doubt at all that there was a certain darkening of vision after that grim jail experience. He wrote -- eh -- eh --

Zodwa: He published The Man Died, after that experience.

Irele: And this other play, -- it will come back to me in a minute, the novel Seasons of Anomy [sic] and a collection of poems...

Zodwa: Is it A Shuttle in the Crypt?

Irele: That’s right! And all that reflect that mood of a grim world-view, see the style of poetry the despair. But I’ve tried to argue that a certain critical disposition is already evident in his early plays. This stance merely intensified by the bitter experience [with Gowon]. There is a sense in which Soyinka anticipated some of the events themselves in Nigeria and when they occurred, they confirmed his own pessimism.

Zodwa: Actually, that is what I would like to establish, whether earlier, before he had a brush with the law that landed him in gaol, whether he was always angry and anti-establishment.

Irele: There is that, you know. If you look at Kongi’s Harvest, which I perceive as apolitical play in many ways, you can already sense that stance. Well, I wouldn’t say anti-establishment, but -- what shall I say -- he’s not just merely critical of ...

Zodwa: Perhaps he challenges the injustices ...?

Irele: That is right! The whole idea -- note that there are certain contradictions in Death and the King’s Horseman for instance. Certain sceptical disposition is already implicit in his early work and that includes his comedies and the more serious plays. All this deepened by the encounter with the events and grim experiences of life.

Zodwa: Can you elaborate on the contradictions of attitudes you have just referred to?

Irele: Well, I find the contradictions in the sense that when we speak of Kongi’s Harvest, even The Man Died, there is a sense in which Soyinka might be seen to be defending a liberal western democratic position, the individual human rights.

Zodwa: Mhm! Even in Camwood on the Leaves I see a little of that.
Irele: Yes, *Camwood on the Leaves*. We see some suggestion of the enlightenment ethos, which is a western concept, you see. He posits that in *Death and the King's Horseman*. But what is *Death and the King's Horseman* if not a celebration of the collective at the expense of the individual? Alongside this, there is also the defence of certain traditional values which contradicts the individuality ethos. I perceive that Soyinka contradicts himself by not being overtly mindful of his emphasis on the individual in many of his earlier works. This contradiction still has to be worked out [by Soyinka].

Zodwa: *But would you not say that in this very same play [Death and the King's Horseman] Soyinka is also advocating the break with the enslaving rituals of the past?*

Irele: I am not so sure about that. Well -- that young man--Ulunde and the Resident's wife -- (the play I'd forgotten earlier on was *Madmen and Specialists*)! Ya, the scene between Ulunde and Jane[ the British woman] brings out Wole's viewpoint on the individual [Ulunde] and society [the white woman]. He alludes to the conflict between communal values and the duty of the individual to society. My point is, this emphasis contradicts his earlier stance; he defends the rights of the individual according to western norms and yet uses communal African norms to do that. This is not necessarily a break with the African traditional past.

Zodwa: *He is indeed a child of two worlds! I wonder what your opinion would on this assertion that Soyinka does not write for Africa as the ordinary African finds it hard to access his art; that he addresses himself to a foreign audience who understands his art better?*

Irele: Well, I don’t agree with that at all; I don’t! You see there are two levels of his writing that we need to take into consideration; there is the verbal level, verbal content, the text that is in English. Soyinka’s text can sometimes be very complicated even to the English speaking audience themselves. But you don’t have to separate that from the dramatic movement which is visual, what I would call paratextual.

Zodwa: *Which is the second level?*

Irele: Eh --- the second level, yes. You’ll hear more of that in my seminar on Thursday. Will you be there on Thursday?

Zodwa: *Yes, I will.*

Irele: Anyway, at the level of dramatic action, when you watch a Soyinka play, you have indeed the words, there is so much going on and comes across very well to a Nigerian audience, anyway. At least with a Nigerian
audience — this is very well received. So I would not agree that Soyinka’s plays are targeting a foreign audience. Remember that Soyinka’s plays are not merely written texts, he has a very very lively sense of drama, a rich sense of drama that it is mandatory to do more than just read them, we should see them performed, especially by the well trained group of actors under his guidance.

Anyway, they [plays] come into their own in performance. It is true that the verbal level can be very complicated, see The Road, for instance. But even then, you ought to be aware that he’s drawing on certain ideas within his own social environment, his own cultural background, The Road as a metaphor for the journey of life, progression from life to the other world. The point I’m making is that it is a very African world-view that he presents in many of his plays. They are very rooted in Africa — see the numerous rituals in this very play for instance [The Road]. So that accusation is not at all valid.

Zodwa: I just hope it does not come from the language he has chosen to express himself in — a choice I would never say makes a work non-African, personally.

Irele: He chooses to use English, and he writes in English very, very well. He is obliged to write in English, Soyinka is a very versatile wordsmith and this comes out beautifully in his works. (Pensively) One realises that he is a very versatile writer and that versatile aspect of his writing is also due to his Yoruba background. That, a feature of Yoruba language is that of re-working on a language.

Zodwa: Much like an ironsmith at work! (General laughter). So, you would not say that he is just someone who is cut off from his people because even if he chooses to write in English, he is still writing for and from Africa, would you?

Irele: Certainly not! If you look at Death and the King’s Horseman again, a great deal of dialogue, especially in the trance scene -- I believe it’s scene 3, that dialogue is very much a transcription of Yoruba praise poems of lineage, it is the incantations that are derived directly form the Yoruba oral tradition.

Zodwa: Professor Irele, I just want to go back to theme in the works of Soyinka; particularly the theme of combat. When you look at his drama, do you see a drama of combat — I mean very angry combative drama, or is it a drama of social relevance conceived in a world that continually challenges him to act in an angry way. That is a society that perpetually tip the scales of justice, thus provoking him to react?

Irele: By combat you -- you have to define your terms of combat. Usually terms