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Yoruba culture and Brechtian convention : decoding converging traditions in Wole Soyinka's The road for theatre production

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Evans, Mary Ann, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1991

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YORUBA CULTURE AND BRECHTIAN CONVENTION:
DECODING CONVERGING TRADITIONS IN WOLE SOYINKA'S THE ROAD
FOR THEATRE PRODUCTION

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts
San Jose State University

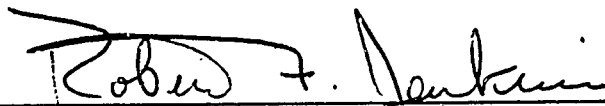
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Theatre Arts

By

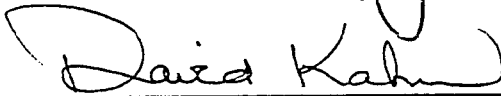
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ABSTRACT

YORUBA CULTURE AND BRECHTIAN CONVENTION:
DECODING CONVERGING TRADITIONS IN WOLE SOYINKA'S THE ROAD
FOR THEATRE PRODUCTION

by

Mary Ann Evans

This thesis addresses the influence of Brechtian theatre theory on the work of Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka. It examines the convergence of Yoruba culture and Brechtian convention, as it relates to theatre practice and literary devices illustrated in Soyinka's play The Road. In addition it examines Brecht's theory of epic theatre. Similarities and dissimilarities are examined from a critical perspective. Comments from theatre scholars are considered in the research.

Research reveals that Soyinka is influenced by Brechtian theatre theory: both men share a common concern with using art to assess and influence the world around them, each man addresses social conditions and political events of the world in which they exist, and although they both arrive at the same end, they achieve that end by what appears to be slightly different means.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I. The Problem

This thesis examines theatre practice and literary devices used by Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka, in The Road. Soyinka, explaining the purpose of his work, states: "A considerable dramatic activity exists already [in Nigeria] but it is chiefly European in content and imitative in conception. What is needed...is a fusion of the two enthusiasms [European and Nigerian]" (Katrak 1986, 7). Soyinka draws upon German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht's, theatre theory, dramatic technique and stage-craft (Katrak 1986, 33). Traditional (Yoruba) and European (Brechtian) influences converge in the creation of a complex work of dramatic art. This implies that Brechtian theory can be applied as a method for decoding Soyinka's The Road (Maduakor 1986, 197).

Theatre scholars suggest that Soyinka is influenced by Brechtian theory. For example, Wiveca Sotto comments in The Rounded Rite: "The didactic character of Brecht's epic theatre, indicating an appeal for social consciousness and responsibility in both actors and audience, has...been a source of inspiration to Soyinka's dramatic art" (1985, 9). Soyinka himself states, "Brecht's kind of theatre which I admire tremendously embodies his complete freedom with the

medium of theatre...its liveliness and freedom" (Peitersen & Duerden 1972, 172). This thesis strives to ascertain Soyinka's perception of Brechtian theatre theory as illustrated in The Road (1965).

The following points, shared by Brechtian and Soyinkan theatre, provide a rationale for using Brecht's theatre theory as an analytical instrument for decoding The Road. First, like Brecht, Soyinka seeks to allow the spectator to recognize the subject, but at the same time make it appear unfamiliar. Second, both men share a common concern with using theatre to assess and influence the world around them. Third, Soyinka and Brecht address social conditions and political events of the world in which they exist. Fourth, the characters represent particular social roles depicting the nature of man in that role. And fifth, a pattern of symbols and relationships is extended to create a sense of allegory.

Selection of The Road, for the purpose of this study, is based on the following criteria. Yoruba festivals in the form of song and dance strongly influence the dramatic action as demonstrated with the Drivers' Festival and the Egungun masquerade. Music in the epic form communicates, sets forth the text, takes the text for granted, takes up a position and gives the attitude (Brecht 1957, 38). The singer becomes a reporter, whose private feelings must

remain a private affair. Chapter IV of this thesis discusses the use of music in The Road as it relates to Brechtian theatre.

The characters created in The Road behave by contradictions and are subject to change and criticism. They are seen as representatives of particular social roles. The setting symbolizes a journey through life's opportunities and dangers (life and death). The literary style combines naturalism with symbolism, comedy with ritual, and political satire with choral interludes (Jones 1973, 72-4).

II. Design of the Study

A. Research Questions

By script analysis the following questions will be examined:

1. Is there evidence of Brechtian convention present throughout Soyinka's work in relationship to dramatic and staging devices?
2. How does the convergence of Yoruba culture and Brechtian theatre theory function in relationship to Brecht's concept of estrangement?
3. How do Brecht's major points of epic theatre, as stated by Katrak, influence Soyinkan theatre as illustrated in The Road (1986, 53)?

4. Does a section-by-section analysis of Soyinka's The Road support Brecht's concept of each scene existing in itself so that the entire drama develops by sudden leaps and not as an uninterrupted chain of dramatic events?

5. Does Soyinka subject his characters to change and to criticism in the course of the dramatic action?

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

I. Method of Investigation

For the purpose of this study, the descriptive research method is used to systematically illustrate the characteristics of the work of Wole Soyinka as demonstrated in his play The Road. First, there is an effort to review the existing research on Wole Soyinka's The Road and Bertolt Brecht's theatre practice and second, to search for new interpretation of the existing research.

A. The following step-by-step research method is outlined and approached from a critical perspective:

1. Search for similar and dissimilar patterns in the dramatic content and staging devices of Brecht and Soyinka.
2. Interpret how the two men manipulate theatre practice to inspire an audience to social change.
3. Show that Soyinka, being influenced by Brecht, uses dramatic form as an instrument for social change.

II. Terminology

A. Definition of Terms (In alphabetical order)

1. Converging traditions is defined by the influence of Brechtian convention and Yoruba culture coming together in the dramatic work of Wole Soyinka.
2. Decoding is a method of utilizing known theatre

practice, such as demonstrated in Brechtian theatre, and discovering similar and dissimilar practice in the work of Soyinka to acquire a more precise interpretation of his plays.

3. Dissolution is the separation of soul and body; death (Funk & Wagnalls 1966, 386).

4. Estrangement is a concept defined as the result of Brecht's definition of alienation as a representation which allows its subject to be recognized, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar (Brecht 1957, 192).

5. Lorry is defined as: (a) A low, four-wheeled wagon without sides; (b) A truck [British] (Funk & Wagnalls 1966, 800).

6. Production accounts include research of past productions. This research includes elements of design and staging, dramatic action, mood, and rhythm.

7. Script analysis is defined as a textual scrutiny for elements of convention, theme, language, spectacle, setting, plot, mood, rhythm, and character.

8. Theatre production encompasses all areas of the playwright's work as it is manifested on stage. The interpretation and artistic concept of director, actor and design team merge as they create live representations of reported or invented happenings between human beings.

9. Tout is defined as one who solicits business, especially persistently or conspicuously (Funk & Wagnalls 1966, 1416).

III. Significance of the Study

This study provides an understanding of the dramatic content as well as staging devices used by a Nigerian playwright. More specifically, the intent of this thesis is to establish a basis for understanding a Nigerian playwright writing from both traditional (Yoruba) and European perspectives. This converging of two traditions creates a drama which can affect both theatre communities (Maduakor 1986, 197). The end result is a study designed to assist directors and actors in their preparation for a theatre production of The Road.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I. General Review

This review of the literature provides a briefing on Wole Soyinka and Yoruba culture. A synopsis of The Road is provided for the reader. Theatre theory of dramatist Bertolt Brecht is presented as it relates to this thesis.

A. Wole Soyinka: The Man and His Background

The following biographical information of Soyinka's life and work is not intended as a complete survey. The aim is rather to provide highlighted periods and events which are of particular importance to this study. Significant aspects of this sketch are Soyinka's exposure to different cultures, his ability to integrate his experiences of these various cultures into his art, and his involvement in major political issues.

Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka was born in 1934 in Ijebu Isara, a community where traditional Yoruba culture and Western culture existed side by side. Soyinka attended Primary and Grammar Schools in Abeokuta and was sent to Government College, Ibadan in 1946. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors in English from the University of Leeds in 1957. It was at Leeds where Soyinka became familiar with the work of Bertolt Brecht.

Soyinka's contact with Western literature was further developed during his years at the Royal Court Theatre, London, where he had a position as Play Reader. It was at this time that he manifested himself as a politically committed artist. In his poem, "Telephone Conversation" he expresses his reaction to experiences of racism and prejudice. At the Royal Court Soyinka produced, directed and acted in his own plays.

In 1960, Soyinka returned to Nigeria. At this time, there existed no tradition of Nigerian drama in the English language. The ordinarily perceived notion of English-language theatre was mainly Shakespeare or other Western drama in English translation. The content was essentially foreign and did not relate to the common people's day-to-day reality.

In response to this need, Soyinka established the first English-language theatre company in Nigeria (The 1960 Masks). Later he formed Orisun Theatre. Eldred D. Jones states in his biographical outline of Soyinka that "His [Soyinka's] hope for permanent theatre groups is still far from fulfillment, but as head of the School of Drama at Ibadan University he does have the opportunity of training the right kind of actor" (1973, 21).

Nigeria celebrated its independence on October 1, 1960. Soyinka's play, A Dance of the Forests, written for the

occasion, was performed by the "The 1960 Masks." Soyinka acted Forest Father in this first production, and he also directed the play. Prior to this production, his plays Swamp Dwellers and Lion and the Jewel had both been produced at Ibadan in February, 1959. During his first year back, Soyinka produced The Trials of Brother Jero in March and acted Yang Sun in Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan in May.

After Soyinka's return to Nigeria in 1960, he expressed his commitment to the political development of the independent republic in his writings. His personal involvement in political events is a source for his dramatic work and writing. For example, in 1964, the first election year since the declaration of independence, Soyinka satirized political life in his revues The Republican and The (New) Republican, produced in February and March of that year, and Before the Blackout, produced in April of 1965. His play Kongi's Harvest also came out of this event and belongs to this period. Here, Soyinka pictures personality cult in African dictators.

Very early in Soyinka's dramatic work, he recognized that the themes of African drama derive from ritual stories. In 1961, at the age of twenty-six, Soyinka undertook a conscious study of Nigerian traditions and culture. He traveled all over the country witnessing and participating in festivals of the gods and in community rituals.

Since Yoruba religion and ritual were late acquisitions for Soyinka, Ketu H. Katrak speculates that he "could analyze them artistically at a distance and adapt them more easily for his creative work" (1986, 6). Much of the material and experience gathered throughout this year of research was later incorporated into his drama and theatre practice, as is evident in The Road (1965).

In May of 1962, a state of emergency was declared in the Western Region due to violent political antagonism. Soyinka's Civil War experiences are recorded in a number of works published between 1970 and 1973: Madmen and Specialists, first produced in New York in 1970, A Shuttle in the Crypt (1972), a collection of poetry containing "Poems from Prison," The Man Died (1972), and an autobiographical account of his months in detention, Jero's Metamorphosis (1973), a satirical play, Season of Amomy (1973), and The Bacchae of Euripides, commissioned by the British National Theatre in 1973.

Soyinka satirized and criticized political life in his writings to the Nigerian press. After a number of incidents involving Soyinka's outspoken criticism of the existing state in the Western Region, he was advised to leave Nigeria for his personal safety. Throughout Soyinka's years in exile, he ceased to write for the Nigerian press, although he did write articles which appeared in British papers.

Wiveca Sotto comments on these writings in The Rounded Rite: "Soyinka violently turned against the regime of Idi Amin as a flagrant example of terrorism and misused leadership" (1985, 14). James Gibbs writes in his article "Tear the Painted Masks..." that Soyinka's commitment "became part of a wider campaign against the violation of human rights and the exercise of tyranny in Africa" (1983, 25).

Upon Soyinka's arrival to Cambridge and Sheffield as Visiting Professor in 1973, he realized that the Eurocentric attitude to African culture and literature had not changed since his years at Leeds. Soyinka discovered, much to his dismay, that the study of African literature and the series of lectures prepared and to be delivered at the English universities were to take place entirely in the Department of Social Anthropology.

Reflecting on this matter, Soyinka writes in Myth, Literature and the African World: "Casual probing after it was all over indicted that the Department of English (or perhaps some key individual) did not believe in any such mythical beast as 'African Literature'" (1976, vii). Soyinka considers it one of his duties as a writer to contribute to the release from what he calls "intellectual bondage and self-betrayal" (1976, viii).

Soyinka is primarily an African writer. Although he has traveled over a vast area of the world and his range of

experience gives him a worldwide view of mankind, he chooses to treat man mainly through the African environment. His primary audience is in Africa although his work is performed in Britain, continental Europe and the United States of America. In 1986, Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

B. Yoruba Culture

A study of Yoruba culture is important in understanding the dramatic work of Soyinka. Eldred Durosimi Jones, editor of African Literature Today writes: "The Yoruba are one of Africa's most remarkable peoples. Their culture is not only rich, but shows a remarkable capacity for survival..." (Jones 1983, 4). The original home of the Yoruba is Western Nigeria.

Yoruba culture is defined by the influence of ritual and mythology. Festivals and celebrations in the form of song and dance supply an environment in which order and harmony are mandated. Yoruba drama utilizes theatre practices in the form of dance, mime, masquerade, the chorus and religious rites and ceremonies.

The big Yoruba festivals occur at the time of harvest. The principal external features of these festivals are drumming, singing, dancing, feasting, and sacrifice. Poetic praise songs and prayers are recited. Dances reenact mythical events and spirits are released. Sacrifices of

freshly killed animals are offered to the gods.

The gods of the Yoruba pantheon are prominent in Soyinka's imaginative universe. The principles and phenomena of existence which they stand for are active forces in what Soyinka calls the "African world view" (Maduakor 1986, xiii). The Yoruba are surrounded by gods and spirits with whom the lives of mortals interact. They believe that below the deities are numerous spirits of their ancestors and of things.

Ancestors are worshipped through the egungun masquerade. Colorful costumes and masks are worn symbolically as an embodiment of the spirit portrayed by the masquerader. Masked figures, possessed by the spirits they represent, are able to speak with unearthly wisdom. Soyinka uses this idea of possession in The Road.

The wood-carver is central to Yoruba life and worship. The carving of masks and other objects for the worship of these numerous ancestors and gods makes the Yoruba the most prolific as well as the most artistic wood-carvers in the world.

Farming is the most important occupation of the Yoruba. Some of the trees and crops which assume symbolic significance are yam, kola and oil palm. One of the products of oil palm is palm wine. This is a universal drink of the Yoruba, but is also used for the drink of ceremony and

celebration. Soyinka's character, Professor, in The Road serves palm wine every evening during his version of the "communion rite."

The Yoruba regard human life as part of a continuum of life stretching from the spirits of unborn children through bodily existence to the spirits of departed ancestors. It is necessary to note that the past or the unknown future (the unborn) is not a mystery to the Yoruba but co-exist in the present consciousness. Soyinka explains temporal concepts in the Yoruba world-view in Myth, Literature and the African World: "The world of the unborn, is as evidently older than the world of the living as the world of the living is older than the ancestor-world" (1976, 10).

This important collection of essays theorizing African aesthetics develops the relationship of myth to performance today. Soyinka's vision of the transformation of the physicalities of space and time in the act of performance is demonstrated in The Road. In connection with the concept of the existence of the three worlds of the dead, the living and the unborn, Soyinka emphasizes the importance of the masquerade for a new moral consciousness. Through the rites of passage there is a "movement of transition" between these worlds. In Soyinka's The Road, the actualization of this metaphysic is seen in the egungun masquerade.

The fourth area of existence is explained as the "dark continuum of transition" which the Yoruba label "the abyss of transition" (26). The Yoruba deity, Ogun, correlates through his own history and nature this fourth area ("the fourth stage") of existence. Ogun is the original sacrifice, the one who dares chaos and the abyss. Soyinka describes Ogun as "Lord of the road," "protector of orphans," and "roof over the homeless." He stands for rigid justice.

Further description reveals Ogun as god of iron, master craftsman and artist, farmer and warrior, essence of destruction and creativity. He is seen by Soyinka as the embodiment of contradiction. At the heart of Ogun's being is the relationship of the gods and man. Ogun led the first rite of passage through the fourth space. Eldred D. Jones comments on the relevance of Ogun: "The duality of Ogun's nature, the creative and the destructive, makes him an enigmatic symbol in both Soyinka's own creative work and his criticism" (1973, 15).

C. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956): Theatre Theory

German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht, dominated German theatre of the 20th-century. The anti-illusionistic staging methods and parable structures developed in 1924, later became the basis for his theory of epic theatre. The essential point of Brechtian theatre is that it seeks to

engage the audience at a rational level (Brecht 1957, 86).

The aim of Brechtian theatre is to inspire social change and social justice. The audience is given a "kind of report on life" as any member would like to see it, while at the same time seeing a great deal more than he would choose to see (Brecht 1957, 43). Brecht explains that the spectator sees his wishes not merely fulfilled but also criticized. As a result, the spectator sees himself not as the subject but as the object.

Brecht manipulates staging, dramatic, and literary devices. For example, the placement of musicians on stage and the use of placards are used for the purpose of estrangement. These devices, initiated by Brecht, are the first examples of "distancing" (Verfremdungseffekt), commonly referred to as "alienation effect" (101).

Brecht explains this term in A Short Organum for the Theatre when he writes: "A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (192). He further states that "alienation effects" are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today (192). Thus Brecht intends his plays to be viewed from a critical perspective, and in so doing utilizes the concept of estrangement.

D. The Road: A Synopsis

The following synopsis is intended to be an account of the progressive action throughout the play and to introduce the reader to Soyinka's characters. It is provided for the reader who may or may not be familiar with this play. For interpretations and critical perspectives, see Chapter IV and Chapter V of this thesis.

The action of the play takes place somewhere in Nigeria beside a motor road in the time lapse of one day. Professor, the principal character of the play, has erected a shop referred to as the "Aksident Store," where he sells parts, which he scavenges from road accidents, to drivers in need of spare parts. Close to Professor and his shop we find a number of characters who are all dependent on the road for their livelihood. In this category are Kotonu, a lorry-driver who has given up his trade and taken it upon himself to assist Professor in his business; Samson, Kotonu's companion, who is deeply dissatisfied with the fact that Kotonu no longer drives, and who wants Professor to persuade him into taking it up again; Salubi, who aspires to become a private chauffeur but who has not yet secured a driver's license; Say Tokyo Kid, a lorry-driver, and the leader of a gang of thugs who rent their "services" to politicians who want to disturb their opponents' meetings, and harm them in other ways; and Particulars Joe, a

thoroughly corrupt policeman.

Professor is a former Sunday-school teacher and lay-reader in the church which is located very near his store. He was expelled from the parish when he was caught appearing before his Sunday-school students in a state of inebriation. He allegedly embezzled church funds. Professor has lost his faith in the validity of organized religion, but this does not mean that he is not interested in spiritual matters. With the single-mindedness of a man possessed, he attempts to find a key to a mysterious truth, which he calls the "Word." He believes the key is closely related to death, and the mysteries of life are found in the revelation of the mystery of death.

Professor is of the opinion that whoever does not understand the meaning of death cannot understand the meaning of life. It is this conviction that has caused him to settle down so close to the road, where death is ever-present. However, Professor also has worldly interests. He supplements his income from selling used parts by forging driver's licenses and other "official" documents. He occasionally causes road accidents, to hustle business for his shop, by pulling up road signs.

Every evening at seven o'clock, when holy communion is being administered in the church nearby, Professor and his "parishioners" also partake of a kind of "communion," during

which Murano, Professor's palm wine tapper, serves palm wine to those present. Murano, after being badly injured in an accident, has been found and taken care of by Professor.

A flashback scene reveals that Kotonu injured Murano on the road. Murano, who was taking part in a religious feast in honor of Ogun, and who was, at the time, possessed by the god, suddenly came dancing out onto the road, where he was run over by Kotonu. At the time of the accident, Murano was wearing an Egungun-mask, which was later picked up and hidden by Kotonu inside the "Aksident Store."

The action shifts from the flashback scene at the Drivers' Festival to the present moment inside the "Aksident Store." The mask falls out of its hiding-place and Murano picks it up. Professor, who has all the time been convinced that the "Word" would be revealed to him through Murano, now sees his chance of speeding up the course of events. He entices Murano to put on the mask and to start dancing a ritual dance. Say Tokyo Kid makes an attempt to interrupt this ritual dancing. This attempt leads to a fight during which both Professor and Say Tokyo Kid are killed.

CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

I. Introduction

The following analysis includes data taken from Soyinka's, The Road. The data is organized into thirteen tables. The analysis focuses on similarities and dissimilarities in Brechtian and Soyinkan theatre. For the purpose of this thesis, the page numbers listed in the tables coincide with the following source: Soyinka, Wole. The Road. London, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1965. 1-101. The text provides a glossary of Pidgin and Yoruba words on pages 97-100 and translations of Yoruba songs on pages 100-101.

The five research questions provide a guide for each of the thirteen tables.

II. Findings and Analysis

A. Research Question One

Does evidence of Brechtian traditions exist throughout Soyinka's work in respect to dramatic and staging devices?

This question is examined by testing three theatre conventions: one, placement of musicians; two, recounting past incidents; and three, use of song and music. Each convention is examined by stating the theatre norm, Brechtian convention and Soyinka's perception of Brechtian convention as illustrated in The Road.

Norm is defined as a pattern, model, or standard regarded as typical of a specified group (Funk & Wagnalls 1966, 921). Or, as some researchers note, "A norm represents a defined group" (Isaac 1971, 79). Brechtian convention, for the purpose of this study, relates to dramatic technique, staging devices, literary devices and dramatic form. The first theatre convention to be tested is the placement of musicians.

The norm, as it relates to this thesis, is the placement of musicians off-stage. For the purpose of this analysis, this normative basis refers to modern American/European musical theatre in period and genre. For example, the American/European theatre places the musicians in the orchestra pit, off-stage right, off-stage left, or up-stage behind the set or cyclorama.

The Brechtian convention is exemplified in the 1928 production of The Threepenny Opera when the small orchestra was installed visibly on the stage (Brecht 1957, 85). Soyinka places the musicians on stage while fulfilling the roles of lay-abouts and generally "low-life" type characters. The musicians also act as an undifferentiated "chorus" who help to make possible the play's free movement in time. The arrival of the flashback scenes is signaled by the way in which the chorus of lay-abouts reacts to it. The interaction of the musicians with the song and drama

fulfills both the Yoruba Traditional performance style and Brechtian theory. Table 1 provides the reader with illustrations from The Road.

Table 1

Placement of Musicians as Illustrated in The Road

PAGE	INCIDENT/STAGE DIRECTION
19	Half-way through Samson's moaning, one of the layabouts strums his guitar, begins to sing "Drivers' dirge." The others hanging by the fence join in idly. Samson turns angrily on the leader and says: "Get out get out. Is that the kind of song to be singing at this time of the morning? Why don't you go and look for work?"
20	Outside the gang (musicians), resumes its song, singing the lewd verse now. Interspersed with salutations called out to passing friends and abusive comments on favorite targets.
59	During the flashback scene of the "accident at the rotten bridge," when Samson is trying to herd his own passengers across the bridge, the layabouts (musicians) begin dirging softly. The layabouts stop dirging, remain standing awkwardly in their usual place, looking uncertainly towards Samson.
86	Inside the shack, the Professor commands the group to sing his favorite praise-song.
88	During Professor's mock ritual of evening communion, the sound of organ music is heard coming from the church. Professor listens for some moments, then turns to the band and says: "Wipe out that sound, God forgive them." The band begins playing, drowning the organ music almost at once.

Placement of Musicians

As the gang sings the "Drivers' dirge," their stage position is on a ragged fence along side the road-side shack. The musicians interact with characters who pass in and out of the action. During the flashback scene of the accident at the rotten bridge, the stage direction reads: "The lay-about's stop dirging, remain standing awkwardly in their usual place, looking uncertainly towards Samson" (Soyinka 1966, 59). This demonstrates the dramatic placement as well as the physical placement of musicians. They are a part of the past action as the incident is reenacted for the audience. As the musicians are fading out in the flashback scene, Professor who is in the present, calls out from inside the shack commanding the group of musicians to sing his favorite praise-song.

It is of interest to note that the use of organ music interspersed throughout the action comes from inside the church. The church is represented by only a corner of the building visible on the set. The organist, who plays from inside the church, is physically placed outside the dramatic action while at the same time functioning as a part of the internal logic.

Soyinka uses the music played by the gang to drown out the organ music heard coming from within the church. The influence of Traditional African theatre is seen in the

placement of musicians on stage. Thus the physical and dramatic placement of musicians is influenced by both Brechtian theatre and Traditional African theatre (Katrak 1986, 62-3).

Recounting Past Incidents

The second theatre convention to be tested is recounting past incidents or action that occurs before the play begins. The norm in recounting past incidents is communicating the event through the eyes of the character who tells the story, primarily through the use of words/language and gesture/movement. The Brechtian convention is relocating the action of the play to another place and time, and narrating with the use of storytelling and parables. This convention is demonstrated in Brecht's The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1944). In this play, the "past" events are not connected to the personal histories of the "present" characters. However, in The Road they are connected.

The distinctive concept found in Soyinkan theatre is the mixture of narrative, descriptive, and past action reenacted. Soyinka accomplishes this with the staging device referred to as flashback staging. This play-within-a-play is a film-like technique which is used to give greater clarity to past incidents for both the characters on stage and for the audience. The audience is not simply told

about the events of the past, they are shown. Table 2 contains examples illustrating the use of flashback staging in The Road.

Table 2

Recounting Past Incidents

PAGE	INCIDENT
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55-59	<p>The Narrow Escape at the Wooden Bridge: Scene begins to flashback as professor asks for an account from Samson and Kotonu.</p> <p>With a shout from Samson and a violent screech of brakes, Samson and Kotonu are suddenly back at the broken bridge. They walk forward, skirt an area carefully and peer down a hole in the ground.</p>
70-73	<p>Drivers' Festival -- Alleged Death of Murano (the egungun masquerader): Scene begins with the explosive fall of the tailboard and a lighting change. The crisis of the festival is reenacted before the audience as Samson and Kotonu relive the incident.</p>
82	<p>"Rememberance hymn" for Sergeant Burma: Onset of flashback with Particulars Joe (a uniformed policeman) recounting "Rememberance Day" and how all the "big shots" were present at the church service and Professor read the lesson while the bishop preached a moving sermon. Particulars Joe states that Sergeant Burma sang five notes behind the congregation who sang three notes behind the choir who sang two notes behind the organ.</p> <p>[Strains of a Rememberance hymn, the four sections ending in that order, one after the other, Sergeant Burma last of all, singing 'Africa' style and a prolonged A-a-men to boot. during which...] Particulars Joe says: "Burma, Burma, congregation done finish long time."</p>

The first example of flashback staging is "The Narrow Escape at the Wooden Bridge." The accident involved a crowded lorry that passed Kotonu and Samson about one mile ahead of the bridge. The passenger lorry was the first to fall through the rotten planks of the bridge and went crashing to the depth of the chasm. Kotonu manages to stop short of the side of the chasm.

The scene begins inside the "Aksident Store" with Professor asking Samson and Kotonu for an account of the accident. As Professor fills out the accident report, a shout from Samson and a violent screech of brakes, set the present moment into the past. While Samson and Kotonu relive the accident at the bridge, they communicate the horror of the moment to the audience. Professor continues his narrative of questions and comments from inside the shack while Samson and Kotonu reenact their near-death experience back at the bridge.

The scene at the bridge ends after Samson finishes his speech to Kotonu. The musicians stop dirging and the dramatic action returns to inside the shack. Samson finishes his speech to Kotonu about killing a dog for Ogun, god of the road, to eat. The Yoruba believe that if a driver kills a dog and offers it up to Ogun as a sacrifice, the life of the driver is spared.

The second example of flashback staging is seen at the "Drivers' Festival." This scene begins with the explosive fall of the tailboard and a lighting change. Suddenly, Samson and Kotonu are back as the festival. The first image in this sequence is the egungun mask falling onto the stage after the tailboard falls. Kotonu has accidentally run into the egungun masquerader with his truck.

Samson quickly raises the board and pushes the mask under it. Mask-followers fill the stage searching for their mask-bearer dashing back and forth with steady chanting. At the "Drivers' Festival" the participants are all armed with whips and thick fibre stalks. Two carry a dog tied to a stake. The mask-followers break off sporadically for brief mutual whipping contests, looking for their missing god, the egungun masquerader.

Samson throws the body of the egungun into the truck and replaces the tailboard. Kotonu is coerced by Samson to "Strip the mask and get under it" (Soyinka 1965, 72). Kotonu gets under the mask and begins dancing frantically, gradually collapsing on the ground until he is completely inert. The mask-followers flog one another off the scene. The scene ends with a slow black-out, and a half-minute pause.

While Samson is muttering to himself over Kotonu's refusal to drive any more after the accident, the chorus

dirges softly in the background. This dirging underlines the mobility of the chorus's function and their ability to change the character of a scene by suddenly charging it with the energy of the past.

Ketu Katrak recounts the flashback scene of the "Drivers' Festival" as staged in The Goodman Theatre production in Chicago, April 1984:

The Drivers' Festival begins after a fade-out when we see Professor standing with the Ogun mask. In the Festival itself, the frenzied dancing and drumming reach a climactic pitch when the blinding headlights of Kotonu's truck almost floodlight the stage and knock Murano down. As the scene plays out, the lights return to fade-out and then to full stage lights as we (the audience) return to the scene with Professor clutching the Ogun mask in his hands. (Katrak 1986, 69)

The dramatic action moves almost simultaneously into the past with the flashback scene and back into the present.

The third example of flashback staging is a brief scene which occurred on "Remembrance Day." This episode is much lighter in tone and mood than either preceding incident. Particulars Joe, a uniformed policeman, recounts that day and how all the big shots were present at the church service. P. Joe tells how, the deceased, Sergeant Burma (driver and proprietor of the "Aksident Store") sang five notes behind the congregation who sang three notes behind the choir who sang two notes behind the organ.

The four sections of a "Rememberance hymn" are sung with the four sections ending in that order. The scene ends and the action returns to the present moment when P. Joe says: "Burma, Burma, congregation done finish long time" (82). Samson continues the present action in a running dialogue with P. Joe about the deceased late Sergeant Burma.

In reference to flashback staging Gerald Moore writes: "Soyinka devises a machinery of almost frightening flexibility and economy to evoke past action; the actors literally slide into the past despite themselves when they initiate or overintensely recall its events" (1971, 60). Occuring with flashbacks is a simple confusion of one moment of time with another. The imitation of any past or future action can charge the present with all its unpredictable enery and horror. The arrival of such an event is often signaled by the way in which the chorus reacts to it.

Judging from accounts of the flashback episodes and the textual stage directions, Soyinka is somewhat influenced by Brechtian staging conventions. Brecht makes use of the narrative through parables and storytelling and relocates the action of the play to another place and time. In both Brechtian and Soyinkan theatre, the location of the past event is very important to the progression of the drama. The location in the past impacts the action in the present.

Like Brecht, Soyinka presents the action through the use of narrative, gesture, movement, song, lighting and sound effects. Unlike Brecht, Soyinka accomplishes this through the use of flashback staging. This device allows Soyinka to present action moving in and out from the present to the past, bringing the past to life on the stage.

Use of Song and Music

The third theatre convention to be tested is the use of song and music. The norm utilizes song and music as an outward expression of an inner emotion or thought. Song and music tell the story of a character's hope, fear, disappointment, happiness or despair. As a result, music and song are used to communicate the inner consciousness of the character to himself, another character or the audience. Song and music in Brechtian theatre is used to comment on the dramatic action. When a character sings, he undergoes a change of function.

Brechtian theory states: "In no case should singing take the place where words are prevented by excess feeling" (Brecht 1957, 44). The Brechtian convention is when music and song are used to comment on the existing condition or situation. For example, the introduction of music in The Threepenny Opera, in 1928, meant a certain break with the dramatic conventions of the time. For the singing of the songs, a special change of lighting was arranged and the

orchestra was lit up.

The nature of Yoruba music, explained by Soyinka in Myth, Literature and the African World, "is intensively... highly charged, symbolic..." (147). He comments that the European [Brechtian] concept of music "does not fully illuminate the relationship of music to ritual and drama among the Yoruba" (147). The uniqueness of Soyinkan tradition, in The Road, is commentary by musicians intermingling with the action while serving as a backdrop representative of the Nigerian masses. It is of great importance to note that the songs, in this text, are written and sung in Yoruba with English translations provided for the non-Yoruba producer.

Moore suggests that the influence of Yoruba "ballad operas" or "folk operas" from the early nineteen-fifties is prevalent in The Road. In these "operas," much of the text was sung and most of the rest improvised. Traditional music and instruments were introduced in the late 'fifties. The text was written in the vernacular (Yoruba) and traditional themes were introduced in the early 'sixties.

These "folk operas" were performed by Nigeria's popular professional theatre troupes. Popular "theatre parties" began to flourish in Western Nigeria in the late nineteen-forties and early nineteen-fifties. For some time these groups were not seen to be the important innovation that

they were. Although they were regarded with tolerant amusement by the educated class, it was the "theatre parties" which helped to create an urban audience for itinerant performers (Moore 1971, 66).

Commenting on the influence of this art form, Moore writes: "These 'folk operas'... realized the ideal of 'total theatre' towards which Soyinka's more literary work, perhaps initially influenced by Brecht, had also been tending." He explains that this art form unites the word, sung or spoken, with dance, mime, music and gesture on a basis of absolute equality dictating the rhythm throughout the drama. It brings the drummer and the singer right on to the stage in a manner more extreme even than that of Japanese drama (1971, 67).

The Road with its Yoruba choruses and completely integrated action is a logical development from Soyinka's previous work. Moore comments that "It may also mark the beginning of a creative interplay between the burgeoning popular theatre and the more university-based drama of Ibadan and Lagos" (1971, 66). Table 3 illustrates the use of song and music as it appears in The Road.

Table 3

Use of Song and Music

PAGE	SONG/MUSIC/DRUM RHYTHMS
17	Organ music carries on the conflict in tone and pace throughout Samson's story of Professor's behavior during the church service.
19-20	"Driver's dirge" (trans 100)
28	"Thugs' War-chant" (trans 100) When Say Tokyo Kid finishes his story about the accident of the passenger lorry he passed, the drummer beats louder and raises a heavy, drowsy voice.
49-50	Narrative of the death of Kotonu's Father "Dirge for Kokol'ori" (trans 101)
59	Flashback scene: Drivers begin dirging softly at the scene of the rotten bridge
86	Song: "Professor's praise-song" (trans 101)
88	Organ music
93-4	Professor shouts to the band: "Play you foul-mouthed vermin of the road." [The band obeys him slowly, beating out the rhythm of agemo emerging from the bowels of earth. The egungun continues to dance.]

Samson imitates the Professor in his former church-going days when he used to stand and bow every time the bishop mentioned the name Jesus Christ. From the church window, which dominates the back wall of the stage, comes a burst of organ music functioning to punctuate exactly the

rhythm of the original scene as Samson plays it. The organ actually performs the type of role later assumed by the chorus in the scene at the "Drivers' Festival."

Soyinka introduces the songs and chants in such a way that they prove to be closely connected with the themes of the play. The musicians express themselves and mark the events of the day by singing songs which comment on Nigerian society. For example, the "Drivers' dirge" is used to comment on the drivers' failure to heed the warning of the dangers of the road and consequently drive humanity to destruction. The idea of the road to death, which is the central theme in The Road, is closely linked with this song.

Moore signifies a function of song and music in The Road as "a means of establishing mood and rhythm" (66). Music and song are also used suggestively and symbolically. For example, when Say Tokyo Kid finishes his story about the accident of the passenger lorry he witnessed, the band performs the "Thugs War Chant" to the heavy beat of the drummer. The slow song and drugged movements pick up tempo and the musicians stamp out to a violent beat and somersaulting war-dance.

This action signals a shift in mood and dramatic action and suggests the action of the event to come. The thugs leave the scene only to return with their heads bashed in. They fight to protect the politician Chief-in-Town at a

political meeting. The heavy beat of the drummer symbolizes and suggests the soon-to-come bashing of the thugs' heads during the fight which occurs "off-stage."

The musicians dirge softly when Samson and Kotonu are re-enacting the death of Kotonu's truck-pushing father. On both occasions of the "Drivers' dirge" and the "Dirge for Kotonu's father", Moore writes: "This dirging underlines the mobility of the chorus's function and their ability to change the character of a scene by suddenly charging it with the energy of the past" (61). This use of music constitutes a simple confusion of one moment of time with another. Thus, in addition to using music and song symbolically and suggestively, the unique quality of music in Soyinkan theatre, according to Moore, is that "the chorus helps to make possible the play's free movement in time" (67).

B. Research Question Two

How does the convergence of Yoruba culture and Brechtian theatre theory function in relationship to Brecht's concept of estrangement?

This question is examined in two parts. Part one addresses the issues of wealth, power and political corruption as presented in The Road. Selected text is presented in Tables 4 and 5. Part two demonstrates Soyinka's use of symbols illustrated in Table 6.

Both Soyinka and Brecht address social conditions and political events of the world in which they exist.

Brechtian convention intends that dramatic work be viewed from a critical perspective, utilizing the concept of estrangement. The aim of both Brechtian and Soyinkan theatre is to inspire an audience to social change and social justice.

Table 4

Wealth and Power

PAGE	INCIDENT
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- | | |
|---|--|
| 5 | Samson is role-playing as he pretends to be an African millionaire. Answering his own question, "...what will I do with all that money if I am a millionaire?", he says to Salubi, "As for Professor, I will give him special office...so he can forge driving licences for all my drivers. The man is an artist and, as a millionaire, I must support culture." |
| 6 | Samson, as millionaire, asks: " Ah, my friends, what can I do for you?"

Salubi answers in attitude of prayer, "Give us this day our daily bribe. Amen." |
| 6 | Samson [dips in an imaginary purse...] says:

"Now remember, officers first. Superintendents! [Flings the coins. Salubi scrambles and picks up the money.] Excellent!...And now, those who are new to the game." [He and Salubi collapse laughing...] |
| 6 | Salubi replies: "Haba, make man talk true, man wey get money get power." |

Table 4 (continued)

97 Translation: "Ha, make man talk true, the man who get money get power."

Wealth and Power

Samson, who is at the lower level of the socioeconomic scale, plays the role of an African millionaire. He is acting out this charade in front of Salubi, who is of even lower status. Samson comments on what he would do with all that money. He decides that he would give Professor a "special office" with an air-conditioner and an automatic printing press so he could forge licenses for all of Samson's drivers. In reference to Professor, Samson says: "The man is an artist and, as a millionaire, I must support culture" (Soyinka 1965, 5).

The role-playing continues when Samson flings coins to the imaginary government officials receiving their bribe money. When Samson calls out, "Ah, my friends, what can I do for you" (6)? Salubi replies, "Give us this day our daily bribe. Amen" (6). When Samson finishes his millionaire charade, Salubi simply states in pidgin English: "...man wey get money get power" (6). This translates to "...the man who get money get power" (97).

Soyinka is very deliberate in his comment on the distribution of wealth and power in this episode with Samson

and Salubi. The scene is written and performed in such a way that the characters appear to be commenting on the condition and not the playwright. Soyinka chooses to communicate his view of corruption in Nigerian society with a comic approach. This approach, used by Soyinka, is very much like that used by Brecht in The Caucasian Chalk Circle in the scenes with Brecht's character, Azdek.

In the playwrights' characters of Samson and Azdek, we see both appearing as objects. Samson mounts himself on a chair on top of a table while performing his African millionaire role. Similarly, Azdek positions himself in the judge's chair sitting on the Statute Book as he fulfills his role as judge. Both men are robed with an outer garment and seated in a position above the other characters in a statuesque pose. Brecht writes: "As soon as the human being appears as an object the causal connections become decisive" (Brecht 1957, 50). By presenting the characters as objects and introducing the comic approach, Brecht's concept of estrangement is observed in both Soyinkan and Brechtian theatre.

Table 5

Political Corruption

PAGE	INCIDENT
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22-23 The character, Chief-in-Town, a politician, manipulates Say Tokyo Kid, Captain of thugs, with a packet of marijuana to get his gang together to serve as "Personal Bodyguard" at a party meeting. Action is described as follows:

Enter Say Tokyo Kid, with a leap over the fence. Say Tokyo Kid and Chief-in-Town talk "business." Chief-in-Town takes out a small packet of "the old Chacha-Mu-Chacha." Say Tokyo snatches it greedily, examines it, sniffs it. Chief-in-Town goes. Say Tokyo quickly rolls himself a stick of hemp, sits in a corner and starts to inhale.

24 Particulars Joe, a uniformed policeman, thrusts his head through the door of the Aksident Store where Say Tokyo and his gang sit around the table dragging on the hemp. Joe sniffs the air, turns to look up and down the road, then slides into the room. Barks suddenly, "Wey your particulars? I say give me your particulars." Say Tokyo reaches out a stick of weed to him which he accepts behind his back. Joe gives a quick nod to Say Tokyo as he lights up Joe's cigarette.

Political Corruption

Chief-in-Town, a politician, arrives on the scene at the "Aksident Store" with a packet of marijuana for Say Tokyo Kid, a driver and "Chief of Thugs." The action develops as Chief motivates Say Tokyo to get his gang together for a party meeting. Say Tokyo is obliged to serve

as personal body-guard to Chief in exchange for a small packet of "Chacha-Mu-Chacha." This scene demonstrates the corrupt nature of the political system and the added decadence of police officials.

When Policeman, Particulars Joe, arrives and smells the smoke, Say Tokyo shares a "stick of weed" with him. Initially, it appears that P. Joe busts in to confiscate the "weed," but quickly it is apparent that he simply desires to partake for his own pleasure. Say Tokyo is more than happy to oblige P. Joe as he lights up Joe's cigarette for him.

Soyinka, being a political activist, uses his characters to comment on the political condition in Nigeria. Characters, Chief-in-Town and Particulars Joe, are representative of corruption and decadence present in the leadership of Nigeria. James Ngugi comments on the realities of the contemporary African scene: "Elections are a democratic farce in which bribery, thuggery, and brutal force are used" (Peitersen & Munro 1969, 58).

Symbolism

The principal symbol existing in The Road, is the road itself. Giving the play its title and serving as the center of its action, the road symbolizes both the god Ogun and the "cosmic abyss" that he was the first to bridge. The "abyss" is the transition between the various stages of existence; birth, death and the unborn. Table 6 provides textual

references illustrating the use of symbolism.

Table 6

Symbolism

PAGE	SYMBOLS
9	<p>When Professor enters the "Aksident Store," he and Samson exchange words:</p> <p>Samson: Perhaps you have missed your way. Professor: You think I did? Indeed anything is possible when I pursue the Word. But...mind you tell the truth...you are not here to take the Word from Me? Samson: Oh no...not at all. You must have missed your way that's all. Professor: Then I must hurry. But first, can you tell me where I am? Samson: Oh yes. In the wrong place.</p>
34	<p>Samson says to Kotonu: "Nine years we have been together and now all you want to do is be a shopkeeper." Kotonu adds, "And sleep." Samson replies: "Yes sleep. Stay in one spot like a spider."</p>
34	<p>Samson walks about the room. Stops to look at the spider, saying: "Your brother is having dinner. Hm. Just the wings left of that fly." Kotonu replies: "The road and the spider lie gloating, then the fly buzzes along like a happy fool..."</p>
34	<p>Kotonu asks Professor: "And you set him to tap palm wine for you?" Professor replies: "You grope towards Murano, the one person in this world in whom the Word reposes."</p>
8	<p>The scene of Professor's mock communion ritual. [Murano pours palm wine for everybody.]</p>

In the dialogue between Professor and Samson, Soyinka comments on the symbolism of the road and the word.

Professor, in his confused state of mind, thinks he has followed the path to the wrong place. The road symbolizes death and the "Word" which Professor seeks is the understanding of death. Soyinka comments on the relationship of the road to death:

The Road is based on what I might call a personal intimacy which I have developed with a certain aspect of the road...It is a very strange personal experience which developed out of my travels on the road. It was almost a kind of exorcism writing that play....I consider The Road one of the three personal plays I have written... It concerns the reality of death. (Katrak 1986, 65)

To further the use of symbolism, Kotonu says: "The road and the spider lie gloating, then the fly buzzes along like a happy fool..." (Soyinka 1965, 34). The spider and its web are symbolic of the hazardous road and its entrapment of the passengers; as a spider spins its web to ensnare its victim. Samson refers to the spider as Kotonu's brother, symbolizing the nature of Kotonu. He is a lethargic character who uses sleep as an escape from the reality of haunting accidents which he experienced on the road before his resignation as a driver.

Soyinka explains the symbolic use of palm wine in Myth Literature and the African World: "The mystery of the wine of palm, bled straight from the tree and potent without further ministration, is a miracle of nature acquiring symbolic significance in the Mysteries of Ogun" (159). Palm wine was instrumental in the tragic error of the god. Ogun was intoxicated with wine before his battle at the head of the Ire army. After he returned to the state of sobriety, he was left with nothing but the dreaded truth that, in his drunkenness, he had killed both friend and foe. The symbolic use of palm wine is first introduced through the character of Murano, as he is the palm wine tapper for Professor. Every day, Murano leaves at dawn to tap wine. Every evening, he returns to serve the wine at Professor's mock communion ritual held for the "users of the road."

C. Research Question Three

How do Brecht's points of epic theatre function in The Road?

Soyinkan theatre presents a view of the world in which the spectator is made to study, to analyze, and to think of what he or she sees and feels. Soyinka has said that he admires Brecht's "complete freedom with the medium of the theatre" and is less interested in "his purpose or intentions" (Moore 1971, 19). However, it seems that the didactic character of Brecht's epic theatre, indicating an

appeal for social consciousness and responsibility in both actors and audience, has also been a source of inspiration to Soyinka's work.

Although epic theatre appeals to the spectator's ability to reason, Brecht is quick to add that "it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre" (1957, 23). Soyinka takes his audience one step beyond the empathetic response to his drama. The spectators enter a rational realm where they might question how this dramatic experience could enrich the community as a whole. Table 7 provides an example of the Soyinkan view as presented in The Road.

Table 7

Nigerian Setting

PAGE	STAGE DIRECTION/SET DESCRIPTION
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1	<p>Dawn is barely breaking on a road-side shack, a ragged fence and a corner of a church with a closed stained-glass window. Above this a cross-surmounted steeple tapers out of sight. Thrusting downstage from a corner of the shack is the back of a 'bolekaja' (mammy wagon), lop-sided and minus its wheels. It bears the inscription--AKSIDENT STORE--ALL PART AVAILEBUL.</p> <p>In the opposite corner, a few benches and empty beer-cases used as stools. Downstage to one side, a table and chair, placed in contrasting tidiness.</p>
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Soyinkan View

The setting which Soyinka chooses to place his drama illustrates his view of the world as presented in The Road. Soyinka finds the perfect Nigerian setting in the "Aksident Store." Nigeria is notorious for its slums and filth. By setting the play in the midst of this filth, Soyinka constantly reminds his audience of this reality. Drivers, touts, thugs, lay-about and chief officials frequent the Store.

The setting is a meeting place for those who are homeless and a shelter for the victims of society. Soyinka says that his characters who gather outside the Store are not without feelings or means of self-expression. This expression comes forth in the form of chants and dirges.

D. Research Question Four

Does a section by section analysis of Soyinka's The Road support Brecht's concept of each scene existing in itself so that the entire drama develops by sudden leaps and not as an uninterrupted chain of dramatic events?

This question is examined by determining the beats throughout the first twenty-three pages of The Road. A beat, for the purpose of this analysis, is determined by the onset or shift in the progression of the dramatic action. Table 8 provides the reader with a sample script analysis indicating beats. Table 9 illustrates the onset and closing

of the the flashback scenes.

Table 8

Beats

PAGE	BEAT	ACTION
1	1	All the characters lie dormant.
1	2	Murano gets up
1	3	Tower clock strikes five (5:00 am). Samson gets up, goes outside, follows Murano with his eyes, then returns to the shack.
2-8	4	Tower clock strikes again. Samson and Salubi get up and converse.
8-10	5	Professor enters. Samson and Professor exchange dialogue.
10-12	6	Samson signals Kotonu to get Professor out. Professor continues to speak with Samson as Kotonu and Salubi enter the conversation.
12-19	7	Kotonu and Professor exit, leaving Samson and Salubi to speak with each other.
19	8	Kotonu enters. Half through Samson's moaning, one of the lay-abouts strums his guitar, begins to sing the "Drivers' dirge" as the others hanging by the fence join in idly (trans. 100). The song is sung in Yoruba.
19-20	9	Samson comments to the lay-abouts on the song: "Get out, get out. Is that the kind of song to be singing at this time of the morning? Why don't you go and look for work?" Samson recognizes Kotonu. They talk.

Table 8 (continued)

20	10	Outside, the gang resume their song, singing the lewd verse now (trans. 100). Interspersed with salutations called out to passing friends and abusive comments on favorite targets.
22	11	Enter Chief-in-Town, a politician.
22	12	Enter Say Tokyo Kid.
22-23	13	Chief takes out a small packet. Say Tokyo snatches it. Chief goes. Say Tokyo rolls himself a stick of hemp.

Table 9

Flashbacks

PAGE	INCIDENT
55-59	The Narrow Escape at the Wooden Bridge: Scene begins to flashback as professor asks for an account from Samson and Kotonu. With a shout from Samson and a violent screech of brakes, Samson and Kotonu are suddenly back at the broken bridge. They walk forward, skirt an area carefully and peer down a hole in the ground.
70-73	Drivers' Festival -- Alleged Death of Murano (the egungun masquerader): Scene begins with the explosive fall of the tailboard and a lighting change. The crisis of festival is reenacted before the audience as Samson and Kotonu relive the incident.
82	"Rememberance hymn" for Sergeant Burma: Onset of flashback with Particulars Joe (a uniformed policeman) recounting "Rememberance Day."

Table 9 (continued)

Particulars Joe states that Sergeant Burma sang five notes behind the congregation who sang three notes behind the choir who sang two notes behind the organ.

[Strains of a Remembrance hymn, the four sections ending in that order, one after the other...]

Beat 1 begins the dramatic action as all the characters lie dormant in a sleeping position on the set. Beat 2 is determined when Murano gets up. Beat 3 follows when the tower clock strikes five (5:00 am). Samson awakens and goes outside to follow Murano with his eyes, then returns to the shack. Beat 3 is stimulated by the sound of the tower clock.

Beat 4 occurs when the Tower clock strikes again. Samson and Salubi get up and engage in conversation. Professor enters in beat 5 and Samson and Professor exchange dialogue as Salubi joins the conversation in beat 6. Kotonu and Professor exit in beat 7.

Beat 8 begins with the reentrance of Kotonu and continues as one of the lay-abouts strums his guitar and begins to sing the "Drivers dirge." The song which is interjected into the action in beat 8 and continues through beat 10 serves as an interruption in the development of the action. The action progresses in beats 11 and 12 with the

entrance of Chief-in-Town and Say Tokyo Kid. Say Tokyo Kid and Chief-in-Town talk "business" in beat 13 as Chief takes out a small packet and gives it to Say Tokyo.

The opening scene progresses in a linear pattern to further the action developing in beat 13. This illustrates an "uninterrupted chain of dramatic events." Throughout the first twenty-three pages of script, the dramatic events do not appear to be "epic" events structurally. However, as the action continues, the flashback scenes referenced in Table 9 create action which is liberated from the limits of a single "line" in space and time.

E. Research Question Five

Does Soyinka subject his characters to change and to criticism in the course of the dramatic action?

This question examines four characters in The Road: Professor, Samson, Kotonu and Murano. Brechtian theatre subjects characters to change and to criticism. Selected text is examined for the purpose of determining if Soyinka's characters in The Road are subjected to change and criticism. Tables 10, 11, 12 and 13 provide the reader with select text indicating whether Soyinka subjects these four characters to change and criticism, or not.

Table 10

Professor

 PAGE CHARACTERIZATION

- 10-11 Professor says to Kotonu: Come then, I have a new wonder to show you...a madness where a motor-car throws itself against a tree -- Gbram! And showers of crystal flying on broken souls.
- 11 Professor continues to describe what he sees at the accident:
 ...I hurry to a disgruntled swarm of souls full of spite for their rejected bodies. It is a market of stale meat, noisy with flies and quarrelsome with old women. Three souls you know, fled up that tree...They died all three of them crucified on rigid branches...
- 85-86 Professor says: But don't we all change from minute to minute? If we didn't we wouldn't hope to die. Well, same as the road. But I am set in my ways...Call out the hymn. Any song will do but to restore my self-confidence make it a song of praise. But mind you don't disturb me. I feel like working.
 Group sings his favorite praise-song (trans. 101).
- 87 As the group sings, Professor gives short, cynical laughs. Then he turns round suddenly, vicious contempt in his voice, and they stop.
 Professor speaks: "...You are important I promise you. Everyone here is important. Your lives whittle down the last obstacle to the hidden Word."
-

Professor

Professor is proprietor of the drivers' haven. He is formerly a Sunday-school teacher and lay-reader. Professor

attempts to persuade Kotonu to go with him to the scene of a car accident. This segment of text provides the reader with a sense of Professor's urgency in his own search for the meaning of particular deaths. Professor believes that if death has no meaning, then life can have none either.

Professor comments on change and death when he says: "But don't we all change from minute to minute? If we didn't we wouldn't hope to die" (85). He reveals his ambiguous nature when in the next breath he continues with: "But I am set in my ways..." (86). Before calling out to the band to play his favorite praise song to restore his self-confidence, he says: "We must all stick together" (86). As the gang begins to sing, he waves them off saying: "But mind you don't disturb me. I feel like working" (86). This is yet another example of Professor's ambiguous personality.

Professor represents the individual set apart from society. Soyinka sees society as being in constant need of salvation from itself. This act of salvation is not a mass act; it comes about through the vision and dedication of individuals who relentlessly pursue their vision in spite of the opposition of the very society they seek to save. These individuals frequently end up as the victims of the society which benefits from their vision (Katrak 1986, 100-01).

Soyinka refers to Professor as the tragic protagonist. In the Yoruba tragedy, the protagonist undertakes all tasks consciously or unconsciously for the sake of the community. However, the dramatic action is not resolved by chastising wrong-doers or failed purposes (Katrak 1986, 101). Although Professor's personal quest ends in vain, his final death benefits his community infusing it with life-sustaining powers.

Professor changes in character from what he was before the dramatic action begins. For example, he changes from a church-going man who burned "drinking shacks" to a man who serves palm wine every evening at his mock "communion ritual." Professor is a character filled with ambiguities and changes "from minute to minute."

Table 11

Samson

PAGE	CHARACTERIZATION
6-12	Role-playing: Poses as an African Millionaire who owns the "Aksident Store."
16-17	Storytelling: The story of professor's behavior in church during the bishop's sermon.
59	The flashback scene of the accident at the rotten bridge is recounted by Samson with interjections by Kotonu, the driver.

Table 11 (continued)

- 82 Role-playing: Dresses in Sergeant Burma's uniform. Sets the change in speech; speech patterns and language. Uses pidgin English and some Yoruba words for this speech. Mimics Burma.
- 92 Role-playing his own character as tout. Language and speech pattern changes from proper English to pidgin English with a mixture of Yoruba words and phrases.
- 99 Translation of Samson's speech from page 92.

Samson

Passenger tout and driver's mate to Kotonu, Samson is the main vehicle for the satirical humor. Samson changes throughout the dramatic action. He slips in and out of the present and into the past. Samson extends the range of action with his role-playing and storytelling episodes. These episodes include imitations of an African Millionaire, Professor, the deceased Sergeant Burma and self-imitation as passenger tout.

Samson assumes the identity of Professor and imitates his every gesture while telling how every time the Bishop would say "Jesus Christ," Professor would stand and bow. Samson narrates: "The bishop thought he would teach Professor a lesson. So during sermon, he began to use Jesus Christ every other sentence. At first Professor tried to keep it up" (1965, 17). Simultaneously, Samson rises, bowing and sitting and bowing and sitting to the imaginary

repetition of the bishop's "Jesus Christ." Samson finishes his performance by imitating Professor's sudden sharp bow, and remaining there for some time. He concludes his story with: "That was how Professor solved it. He made one more bow and he stuck there" (17).

Samson's role-playing and storytelling episodes communicate the identity of the character who he imitates. In addition, these episodes further the understanding of the characters who are presented. The audience sees these characters through Samson's eyes. Through the shifting of one imitation to another, Samson undergoes change. While imitating Sergeant Burma, Samson experiences a closeness to death--imitating a man who is no longer alive except in the memory of those who knew him.

Table 12

Kotonu

PAGE	CHARACTERIZATION
10	Professor comments to Kotonu: "But I do know you. You are the coast to coast driver who gave up the road."
12	Kotonu goes with Professor on a "business trip" (to the scene of a motor car accident). They go to scavenge the remains of any value to sell at the store. Kotonu has taken over Sergeant Burma's position as proprietor of the "Aksident Store" and is now Professor's business partner.
14	Samson says: "This is all Professor's doing. And it was on him I was pinning my hopes, I was thinking he might be able to reform this runaway mate of mine (Kotonu). Now he goes and shows him yet another crash."
20	Kotonu says in justifying his new position as proprietor of the "Aksident Store": "A man gets tired of feeling too much."
24	Samson says to Kotonu: "Anyway, when you get tired of being a trader in dead lorries Chief-in-Town can take you up as a thug. Kotonu replies: "It isn't such a bad idea. At least I will see a man's face before I bash it in. Driving doesn't guarantee you that."
34	Kotonu reflecting back to that accident says: "One mile. Only one more mile and we would have been first at the bridge."
34	Samson walks about the room. Stops to look at the spider, saying: "Your brother is having dinner. Hm. Just the wings left of that fly."

Table 12 (continued)

- 34 Kotonu, trying to justify the disaster as the bridge says: "But why they and not us?" Their names weren't carved on the rotten wood." Samson pleads: "Just don't give up driving that's all I am trying to tell you..."
- 71 Kotonu speaks in defense of himself for running into the egungun: "But it wasn't my fault. Nothing could have saved him. You know my reflexes are good Samson, but the way he ran across..."
- 72 During the flashback scene at the Drivers' Festival: Samson shouts: "Now Kotonu, now!...Strip the mask and get under it..."

Kotonu, [tearing at the clothes, demented] cries: "It's all wet inside, I've got his blood all over me. [His struggles become truly frantic, full of violent contortions. Gradually he grows weaker and weaker, collapsing slowly on the ground until he is completely inert.]

Kotonu

Driver of a passenger lorry, Kotonu changes after the occurrence of two incidents. The first incident involves his near-death experience as he witnesses the accident at the rotten bridge. The second incident is the accident at "Drivers' Festival" when he runs into the egungun masquerader with his lorry.

These traumatic incidents cause Kotonu to refuse to drive and give up his license. Professor informs the audience of Kotonu's present position as proprietor of the "Aksident Store." Kotonu goes with Professor on a "business

trip" to scavenge the remains of any value from the scene of a motor-car accident. Personal and mechanical relics of road crashes are scavenged and sold as "used parts."

Kotonu justifies his decision to give up the road when he says to Samson: "A man gets tired of feeling too much" (20). Samson implies that Kotonu has tarnished his image by becoming the shop-keeper, and the next step is becoming one of Chief-in-Town's thugs. Kotonu, in defense of his decision to give up the road, replies: "That isn't such a bad idea. At least I will see a man's face before I bash it in. Driving doesn't guarantee you that" (24).

This statement refers to the incident at the Drivers' Festival when Kotonu accidentally bashes into the egungun masquerader without seeing his face. During the flashback scene at the Festival Kotonu cries out to Samson: "But it wasn't my fault. Nothing could have saved him. You know my reflexes are good Samson, but the way he ran across..." (71).

Comparing Kotonu's lethargy to the spider, Samson is determined to talk Kotonu into returning to the road. Samson pleads with Kotonu: "Just don't give up driving that's all I am trying to tell you...There isn't any driver in the whole of Africa who commands the steering wheel like you" (34). Kotonu, avoiding the issue, replies: "Oh let a man sleep can't you" (34)?

Samson coerces Kotonu to get under the injured egungun's mask to pose as the masquerader so the mask-followers will not know that their "god" has been injured. Kotonu is emotionally traumatized by the guilty feeling that he is responsible for the accident. When Kotonu places the mask, tearing at his clothes, demented, he cries out: "It's all wet inside, I've got his blood all over me" (72). Impersonating the dance of the egungun, Kotonu's struggles become full of frantic and violent contortions. Gradually he collapses to the ground until he becomes completely inert.

Kotonu lacks the necessary insensitivity to the numerous road crashes and constant realistic reminder of the proximity of death to those who are users of the road. Throughout the present action, Kotonu's lethargic nature is an outward display of his inner feelings of guilt. These feelings arise from a deep concern and sense of responsibility for the deaths of the unfortunate victims of the road. Ironically, Kotonu himself becomes a psychological victim of the road.

Kotonu's changes may be traced and clarified as follows. Before the play begins, Kotonu was one of the best drivers in Nigeria. After seeing too many accidents on the roads and witnessing too many deaths, Kotonu decides to surrender his license and give up driving. He becomes

lethargic and uses sleep as a means of escape from reality. He becomes corrupted by Professor and agrees to manage the Aksident Store. Kotonu experiences pangs of guilt because he feels a sense of responsibility for the deaths of the victims of the road. The guilt feelings arise due to a compromise of Kotonu's ideals. He now promotes road accidents as a means of business. He compromises his ideals by acquiring parts from wrecked vehicles and selling them to used-parts customers.

Table 13

Murano

PAGE	CHARACTERIZATION/CHANGE
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44	<p>Kotonu asks: "...where did you find Murano?" Professor replies: "Neglected in the back of a hearse. And dying. Moaned like a dog whose legs have been broken by a motor car. I took him-- somewhere--looked after him till he was well again.</p> <p>Professor says: "You grope towards Murano, the one person in this world in whom the Word reposes." Samson interjects: "Much use that is to him. He cannot use his tongue."</p> <p>Professor explains: "Deep. Silent but deep. ...beware the pity of those that have no tongue for they have been proclaimed sole guardians of the Word. And so their tongue hangs heavy and they are forever silenced. Do you mean you do not see that Murano has one leg longer than the other?" Kotonu replies: "Oh I admit he limps..." Professor speaks: When a man has one leg in each world, his legs are never the same. The big toe of Murano's foot--the left one of course--rests on the</p>
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Table 13 (continued)

- slumbering chrysalis of the Word. When that crust cracks my friends--you and I, that is the moment we await. That is the moment of our rehabilitation.
- 88 The scene of Professor's mock communion ritual. [Murano pours palm wine for everybody.]
- 90 Murano sees the mask and lifts it out.
- 93 From inside the canvas is pushed aside, emerging silently, the egungun (Murano).
- 94 The egungun dances.
- 95 The dance of the masquerade becomes wilder, racked by spasms, the gradual build-up of possession. The egungun has become thoroughly possessed.

Murano

Personal servant to Professor and wine-tapper, Murano is seen as the egungun masquerader, possessed by the god, Ogun, at the Drivers' Festival. Soyinka explains the function of this character in a note to the Producer:

Murano, the mute, is a dramatic embodiment of the suspension of death. He functions as an arrest of time, or death, since it was in his 'agemo' phase (Agemo is simply, a religious cult of flesh dissolution) that the lorry knocked him down. Agemo, the mere phase, includes the passage of transition from the human to the divine essence as in the festival of Ogun [Drivers' Festival] in this play. (Soyinka 1965, Introduction)

Closest to the reality of death, is Murano. He is in what the Yoruba call the "agemo" phase. Murano is in the phase of physical dissolution and gradual withdrawal from the

visible world. The character's identity is revealed in a conversation between Professor and Kotonu.

Murano's predicament of being caught between the world of the living and the world of the dead leaves him mute. Professor is convinced that Murano is "the one person in this world in whom the Word reposes" (44). Further, Professor believes that Murano's inability to speak is the result of his possession by Ogun during the Drivers' Festival. Professor takes Murano as his companion in order that he may learn from him the ultimate secrets of physical dissolution and the return to the primal energy which underlies all existence.

Soyinka gives the character of Murano a distinct limp to symbolize the image of one foot in the world of the living and one foot in the world of the dead. Professor explains this physical malady to Kotonu: "When a man has one leg in each world, his legs are never the same..." (44). Murano is the physical embodiment of the transitory stage from life to death. Professor is convinced that the "Word" (the meaning of death) dwells within Murano.

To better understand the role of the egungun, Ketu Katrak gives an account in her book Wole Soyinka and Modern Tragedy:

Egungun is the festival of the dead among the Yoruba. Each Egungun masquerader is commissioned to recreate a departed man.

He imitates his voice and his gait, and simulates his gestures. The resultant dramatic interlude is both serious and comic. The Egungun dancer, on one level, is simply an actor assuming a role. On another level, he identifies so closely with the spirit of a specific ancestor that he becomes possessed with his spirit and actually speaks with a new voice when he leaves the world of drama and make-believe and enters a spirit-realm. In this state of possession the Egungun can become a medium through whom the dead person will speak to the living members of the family. (101-2)

At the end of Part Two Murano emerges silently from inside the canvas, takes on the mask and performs the dance of the masquerade. This is the most significant scene for Murano and perhaps the most dramatic scene throughout the play.

CHAPTER V

COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

I. Introduction

The conclusion section of this chapter provides comments by authorities concerning the intent of Soyinka's work and comments regarding staged productions.

II. Comments

A. This section provides the reader with comments and criticism by dramatists and theatre scholars. Their comments address the social/political content of Soyinka's work and his responsibility to society as an artist.

The moral atrophy of the intellectual is a reoccurring theme in Soyinka's plays. James Ngugi states that it is the intellectual class in Nigeria that Soyinka scorns most.

Commenting on Soyinka's view of "these gentlemen," Ngugi writes:

He sees them as having neglected their rightful role of speaking out for the truth. Instead, they either approve of the "status quo," rationalizing away all its corruption, or else they condone it by their silence. (Pieterse & Munro 1969, 64)

The character of Professor, in The Road, is representative of the ineffectuality of the intellectual. Soyinka states: "He [Professor] is effeminate, lacks virility: his head is stuffed with bits and pieces of Western culture (66).

Ngugi is skeptical of Soyinka's role as artist in society. The artist's responsibility, stated by Ngugi, is to give moral direction and vision to the revolutionary struggle of colonized nations (60). The implication is that Soyinka represents the African artist who stands aloof to view society and highlight its weaknesses, but does not go beyond this to seek out the sources, the causes and the trends.

The very fact that Soyinka wrote the play The Road discredits Ngugi's skepticism. This is better explained by an account of Soyinka's position concerning hazardous road conditions in Nigeria. Katrak gives information obtained in an interview with Soyinka conducted by Alan Akarogun for Spear Magazine (Lagos), May 1966 (1986, 102). She writes that Soyinka, the literary artist, simultaneously involved in social reform organized the "Oyo State Road Safety Corps" in 1978, with himself as the head of the Road Marshals.

This group patrols the Ibadan-Ife road which, being narrow and hilly, is commonly recognized as dangerous, even fatal. The reckless speed at which people drive is controlled by the Road Marshals. Katrak shares her experience with the Ibadan-Ife road in conversation with Soyinka: "Since I was on that road several times, I mentioned to Soyinka that it was like taking one's life in one's hands. 'Ah yes,' he said, 'these taxis are flying

coffins. But things are much better now than they used to be a couple of years ago'" (1986, 102).

Local newspapers in the country often published articles instructing drivers on safety measures. For example, an article from the Daily Times (Nigeria), November 7, 1978, entitled "Wole Soyinka Accuses Contractors" reads as follows:

The special marshal of the Oyo State Road Safety Corps, Professor Wole Soyinka has called on the Federal Government to make the contractors who constructed the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, bear full responsibility for all loss of lives due to accidents so far on the road..."We are tired of an environment polluted by the stench from slaughter and maiming on the road," he [Soyinka] said. Professor Soyinka announced the launching by the State's Road Safety Corps of what he called "Operation Counter Terror." (Katrak 1986, 102)

Soyinka's reference to the "maiming on the road" is expressed in Professor's description of an accident he has witnessed in Part One of The Road: "I hurry to a disgruntled swarm of souls full of spite for their rejected bodies. It is a market of stale meat, noisy with flies and quarrelsome with old women. Three souls you know, fled up that tree...They died all three of them crucified on rigid branches (1965, 11).

In Soyinka's efforts to increase social awareness concerning the hazardous road conditions and the atrocities which occur due to reckless driving in Nigeria, he writes The Road.

Further criticism of Soyinka is that the creative struggle of the masses is ignored while his bent toward liberal humanism leads him to admire an individual's lone act of courage. Ngugi comments on Soyinka's characters when he writes: "The ordinary people, workers and peasants, in his [Soyinka's] plays remain passive watchers on the shore or pitiful comedians on the road" (Pieterse & Munro 1969, 69).

Gerald Moore, on the other hand, identifies Soyinka as "...a writer who cannot hide behind his vocation to avoid direct and personal involvement in events" (1971, 75). Soyinka supports individualism in that he believes the salvation of society depends on the individual will. For Soyinka, any form of political repression is a suppression of this individual will, which is the force through which new ideas and new life emerge.

James Gibbs writes of how Soyinka openly criticized and satirized prevailing political and social conditions existing in Nigeria after returning from Royal Court Theatre, London. One such example of Soyinka's involvement is the story of the Ibadan radio broadcast concerning the victory of Chief Akintola in the Western Region. Moore, in his account of the broadcast, writes: "Soyinka was accused of indulging in a little free-lance political swashbuckling by taping an announcement of an Action Group

victory in a careful imitation of the Premier's squeaky voice" (Moore 1971, 75).

According to Moore, Soyinka smuggled the recording onto the turntable at the Ibadan radio station in place of the official announcement of an "overwhelming" triumph for Chief Akintola. Soyinka was arrested and held under police custody for several weeks. He was acquitted in December 1965 when it could not be officially proven that Soyinka was responsible for the "pirate" broadcast. Moore comments that among those who believed the accusation, many admired Soyinka's courage.

III. Production Accounts

September 1965, The Road was first produced at Theatre Royal, Stratford East, London. The production, directed by David Thompson, was difficult to direct. Moore's account remarks: "Despite the difficulties of directing such a play with a miscellaneous 'black' cast including West Indians and South Africans, it won a good deal of critical acclaim" (1971, 75).

Ketu Katrak, in her production account of The Road, criticizes that a certain repetitiousness in the delivery of the words seemed to flatten the energy and vitality of Soyinka's words themselves. She further asserts that the dramatic structure is much more powerful in the written text than in actualization on stage. The role of the lay-about

is criticized as follows:

Functioning as a silent backdrop providing the ambience of the illiterate masses, the lay-abouts did not seem to be properly incorporated into the dramatic structure of the play. When they periodically burst into song, the dramatic place and purpose of their words seemed unconvincing. (1986, 61)

Katrak reveals in her account that the only time the lay-abouts "came to life on stage," was in direct conversation with the character of Professor. This observation is made on the basis that Professor is seen as the pivot around whom the action unfolds and evolves.

Katrak's criticism is that the lay-abouts appear outside of the dramatic action. She also refers to the lay-abouts serving as a silent backdrop representing the illiterate masses. This "backdrop" may be compared to the screens and canvases used in Brechtian theatre where he uses projections to show actual rooms, texts and pictures.

The lay-abouts may be seen as both backdrop and projections. The resulting image is that of the masses superimposed on the individual. They are grouped in a position intended to prevent the spectator's complete empathy. They turn the impact of the drama into an indirect one. As Brecht would say, "They are organic parts of the work of art" (1957, 58). This implies that the chorus is grouped and directed in the Brechtian tradition. Brecht

writes in A Short Organum: "The epic theatre uses the simplest possible groupings, such as express the event's overall sense" (1957, 58).

A production account of The Goodman Theatre production in Chicago, April 1984, directed by Soyinka is recorded as follows:

The set was highly commendable. The mammy wagon had inscribed on it "Akcident Store, No Smoking Alloud." The cloth covering the back of the truck bore a replica of a painted eagle which resembled the one on the stained glass window of the church. This gave a nice touch to Professor's quest for the meaning of the ultimate essence, straddling both worlds--the Christian and the Yoruba. The sign that Professor clutches as he runs onto the stage for the first time from the audience does not say "BEND," [as indicated in the script] rather the letter "Z" which figures the bend in the road. In his obsessive collecting of letters of the alphabet and words, this becomes a precious addition. (Katrak 1986, 102-03)

It is of interest to note that Professor makes his first entrance onto the stage from the audience. This may be viewed as an example of Brechtian influence in staging The Road. By bringing Professor in through the audience, the proverbial "Fourth Wall" is broken down and the spectator becomes, what Brecht refers to as, a "spy." This means that the spectator adopts an attitude of inquiry and criticism (Brecht 1957, 31).

The Egungun masquerade, a traditional (Yoruba) religious ceremony is familiar to Nigerian "theatre-goers." Traditional religion is communal in orientation. Traditional believers find a way to grasp the non-verbal, ritual medium of containing the fearful reality of death through their group participation in the ritual. A Nigerian audience understands the idea of dramatic enactment in the role of Murano as the Egungun at the "Driver's Festival."

Dapo Adelugba comments on his experience playing Murano at the Commonwealth Arts Festival production of The Road in London, 1965:

It was a challenging role, not in literary terms so much as in theatrical terms, challenging the actor to concentrate, to be very aware of his environment. It is very difficult to remain still for such long periods in performance...And it is very important for the audience to feel Murano's presence. This role calls for a unique kind of concentration. (Katrak 1986, 103)

The Nigerian audience understands that Murano symbolically demonstrates the passage from the human to the divine realm during the ritual dance. Moore comments: "If the play is based upon a theme or situation already familiar to the audience, it will command attention and participation of a kind seldom found in the 'entertainment' theatre of the West" (1971, 14). Brechtian theory states: "Perhaps the incidents portrayed by the epic actor need to be familiar ones..." (Brecht 1957, 56).

Dapo Adelugba states that it is important for the audience to be aware of Murano's presence. According to the theory of epic acting, the actor is doing all he can to make himself observed. Brecht states: "This making-oneself-observed contributes to the desired indirect impact" (1957, 58). Brecht is referring to his concept of estrangement in which the intent is to distance the audience so they may observe the subject from a critical perspective. It appears that the role of Murano is performed in the epic style. Thus the influence of Brechtian theatre is seen in the role of Murano.

IV. Conclusions

Throughout The Road Brechtian influences do exist. This is established in relationship to the placement of musicians as well as with the use of song and music. Brecht's concept of freeing up the confines of linear action is demonstrated with the staging device referred to as flashback staging. Although The Road is not epic in structure, it borrows from Brecht's theory that the aim of epic theatre is to bring about social awareness and change.

Brecht seeks to distance or "alienate" his audience by engaging that at a rational level. Soyinka on the other hand, aims at a visceral, emotional experience. Yet, he takes his audience into a rational realm where they are inspired to question how this experience could enrich the

community. In The Road, the tragic protagonist (Professor) challenges the audience to think about the external social value to his internal struggle. The focus at the end of the play is not on Professor's death but on the community which will think about and make his experience relevant to their continuing lives.

Brecht writes: "The epic drama knows no objective but only a finishing point..." (1956, 45). Therefore, the aim epic theatre is like the communal purpose of Yoruba tragedy. Both Soyinka and Brecht arrive at the same end, yet they achieve that end by what appears to be slightly different means.

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