CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

I began this thesis by describing the melodic dialogue between Indian Carnatic chants and European religious plainsongs. It was clear that there was no distinct hierarchy between the voices of Aruna Sairam and Dominique Vellard. Instead, the most interesting feature about the vocal interaction was their mutual interest in exploring and giving voice to new forms of articulation, which gave rise to the hybrid construction that the performance represented. In the three chapters that followed my introduction, I have tried to examine the role of such a dialogue in facilitating the creation of hybridity and its relevance to postcolonial discourse. Hybridity, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins and Helen Tiffin explain in Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, "takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc" (118). In this paper, I have looked at three forms or representations of hybridity – linguistic, cultural and literary – in a selection of plays by Wole Soyinka.

In Chapter One, I examined language as a site of contestation between the voice of the colonizer and that of the colonized in two plays, The Lion and the Jewel and The Road. The English language, the legacy of British colonialism in Nigeria, may be seen as a colonial instrument through which colonial discourse is disseminated. English words, thus, are inscribed with white cultural and political dominance. In both plays, Soyinka rejects such an assumed authority and appropriates the colonizer's language to give agency to the postcolonial native African. The playwright compares and contrasts Nigerian figures of speech and words with Christian and European descriptions. While the language employed to convey all this is English, there are essentially several versions of the language articulated in the plays – one a mimicry of formal, British, English while the others, a translation of Nigerian expressions in the English language.
and a colloquial appropriation of the English language by the natives. Through all these, Soyinka demonstrates the differences between black African and white European cultural expressions as well as the contestation between postcolonial and colonial discourses in their interaction. By appropriating the English language and foregrounding the various versions of the language in his plays, he demonstrates the coexistence of various new voices that have emerged from the colonial encounter.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the notion of hybridity with reference to the cultural identity of the postcolonial subject in the play, *Death and the King's Horseman*. Most of Soyinka's plays explore the effects of the colonial encounter on the cultural identity of the native subject. However, it is this particular play, in my opinion, that best demonstrates the cultural dilemma of the native who has also been widely exposed to European ideas. Soyinka's hero – Olunde – has to mediate between the two conflicting positions, between his African cultural roots and his British education: he is required to choose between an honorable but suicidal act of tradition and an alternative which demands a denial of his roots, the rationale of which stems from the very colonial discourse he opposes. Although not all dilemmas experienced by the postcolonial subject in Soyinka's writings are as dramatic as to the extent of entailing suicide, Soyinka's text suggests that such encounters can open up a dynamic space between the two conflicting positions, where the subject's cultural identity is negotiated and redefined.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I examined the idea of hybridity in the mode of magic realism in the play, *A Dance of the Forests*. Magic realism as a marginalized literary mode – vis-à-vis realism in colonial discourse – is employed in postcolonial studies both as an act of resistance as well as to provide agency to colonized or formerly colonized voices. In Soyinka's play, the portrayal of ghosts, spirits and deities who intervene freely in human affairs and who mingle with humans on a daily basis
foregrounds a dimension of reality that deviates from the Western notion of realism and its linear line of rational thought. While similar mythical or magical characters and interactions are also found in other plays by Soyinka, I have chosen to look at *A Dance of the Forests* in this thesis because of its significance to Nigeria. The play was written and produced in conjunction with the new nation's celebration of independence in 1960. On such an occasion, the playwright chose to remind his new nation of its problematic past and the need to recognize and learn from its mistakes if it were to avoid repeating similar errors in the future. By expressing this in a magical realist text, Soyinka not only makes possible the inter-generational dialogue with which he reminds the nation of its past, but also celebrates the occasion of independence by giving prominence to Nigerian culture. The priority given to Yoruba mythology in the play demonstrates the extent to which such metaphysics form an important and daily part of African society. The mystical interaction between the spirits and humans and between the past and the present also illustrates the role of such a dialogue in helping the present generation of humans acknowledge their past crimes and consider a wiser future.

Through these chapters, I hope I have succeeded in demonstrating the role of the dialogic process that takes place in the liminal space in giving rise to hybridity. To the postcolonial society that is still experiencing the ramifications of its past colonial encounter, the idea of an "interstitial passage" located "between fixed identifications" and that "opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" is certainly appealing (Bhabha 4). Through this, the postcolonial individual is no longer confined to Western epistemological structures that have in colonial discourse divided the world into the metropolitan center and the rest of the world as its periphery. Postcolonial writers like Soyinka, Derick Walcott, Wilson Harris and Salman Rushdie have demonstrated that their location at the margins can be transformed into a position of empowerment. Their position becomes a
Chapter One

2 Sutra House is a performing arts troupe in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which focuses on traditional songs, dance and craft. It occasionally features guests from overseas in its annual repertoire.
8 I do acknowledge that this idea sounds utopian. History is a grim reminder that such an ideal environment is difficult to achieve and, in fact, has yet to be achieved. Nonetheless, I would maintain that any effort to promote the removal of such unjust hierarchies in society is significant and represents a progressive step toward achieving the utopian picture.
11 Trade between the area along the Niger Coast of Western Africa (today known as Nigeria) with European companies in the 19th Century influenced the distribution of power in the area. By the end of the century, British companies managed to persuade and coerce local leaders to give up their lands and administration to the British companies. These protectorates were eventually sold to the British Crown. The Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria was formed in 1914 and it wasn't until 1960 that Nigeria attained independence as a sovereign nation. See George Douglas Hazzledine, The White Man in Nigeria (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969) and Walter Russell Crocker, Nigeria: A Critique of British Colonial Administration (Freeport: Books of Libraries Press, 1971).
12 John Adegua, When the Man Died: Views, Reviews, and Interview on Wole Soyinka's Controversial Book (Benin: Adegua, 1975).

Chapter Two

2 More of this view will be discussed later in this chapter.
3 The play will be referred to as Lion in the rest of the chapter.
5 The abbreviation CP2 shall be used to refer to Collected Plays 2 in this chapter.
6 The abbreviation CP1 shall be used to refer to Collected Plays 1 in this chapter.
7 It is acknowledged that the quest to grasp the mystery of death is anything but trivial and the play explores this issue to a large extent. The Professor's delusion demonstrates his misguided perception and warped way of finding the answers to his questions on mortality. In this chapter however, I shall focus on how language is employed to portray the contestation between Christianity and the egungun belief.
8 Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders," The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
9 In Aké, Soyinka describes his childhood, growing up with a staunch Christian mother in the city of Akesu, the hotbed of Christian missionary efforts in Nigeria. He began to pay more attention to his Yoruba heritage upon returning from England in 1960 (Wright 1-6) and goes on to discuss his views on Yoruba mythology and drama in Myth, Literature and the African World. See Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 28.

Chapter Three

2 The play shall be referred to as Death in the rest of the chapter.
3 The abbreviation SI shall be used to refer to Six Plays.
4 Edward Said's Orientalism is a critical examination of the corpus of colonial assumptions that homogenize peoples in the Orient with little or no regard to their individual and collective positionalities.
5 Within the egungun society is a troupe of entertainers known as the "Agbegbue", which literally means "we take wood to dance". These performers have been initiated into the order and trained to "deal with the dead". However, though they are members of the cult, they are not permitted to carry the serious masks that represent the deceased who are revered. These travelling actors will dance at religious ceremonies as well as perform to entertain an audience. Very often, their impersonations parody prominent characters in local mythology or contemporary society. Despite this lighter aspect of the society's ritual, its reverence for the dead is not to be trivialized. See Ulli Beier, "Yoruba Theatre," Introduction to African Literature (London: Longman, 1967) 244.

Chapter Four

2 The play shall be referred to as Dance in the rest of the chapter.
The abbreviation CPI will be used to refer to Collected Plays.


See Zamora and Fair, "Introduction: Daisquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrot(s)," Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community.

See Derek Walcott, "The Muse of History," The Post-colonial Studies Reader.

Wright 82.

The phrase "the abode of a thousand demons" is in reference to Soyinka's translation of D.O. Fagunwa's Yoruba novel, Ogboju Ode nimi Icho Irunmale, which means The Forest of a Thousand Daemons (London: Nelson 1968).


Soyinka's prison journal The Man Died provides a moving account of his experience and a glimpse of the writer's resolve in resisting efforts to break his spirit. See Wole Soyinka, The Man Died (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1972).

See Soyinka, The Open Sore of a Continent.

"Nigeria: A Series of Coups," BBC Online Network, June 10, 1999