

MYTHOLOGY AND ALLEGORY IN DRAMA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
BEN JONSON AND WOLE SOYINKA

by
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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literature

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Moffat Moyo
January, 2010

APPROVAL

This dissertation of Moffat Moyo is approved as fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

This study compares the use of allegory and mythology in the drama of Wole Soyinka and Ben Jonson with special focus on *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman* by Soyinka and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* and *The Golden Age Restored* by Jonson.

The study uses close textual analysis through the Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism and New Historicism approaches to show that these two dramatists have used mythology in their texts extensively.

Wole Soyinka has used both ancient Greek and African mythologies while Ben Jonson has used ancient Greek mythologies only. The myths used by Soyinka include those that refer to the beginning of eternal death, those about the god Ogun, and ancient Greek ones such as the myths of Prometheus, Atlas, Cinderella, Osiris, and the Phoenix.

Apart from the myths discussed, the study has also shown that both authors have made use of allegory in the dramas. Soyinka has applied allegories of the politics in Nigeria. He has tyrants, dictators, who are not ready to listen, featuring in form of colonialists in *Death and the King's Horseman*. Because of his dual cultural makeup, he also has images of biblical characters such as Jesus Christ in his drama, specifically in *The Strong Breed*. Soyinka has also used an allegory of himself in the texts where he is represented by characters as in *Death and the King's Horseman*.

Ben Jonson on the other hand has employed classical myths which include the myths of the Golden age, Pallas, Cronos, and Zeus. There is also the use of the myths of Atlas, Hercules, Antaeus, the Hesperides, Mercury, the pigmies, and Daedalus.

Jonson, whose role as a masque writer is to elevate the king, in his masques, shows the king, in the image of Pallas, to be the judge of all England, the bringer of an ideal world in *The Golden Age Restored*. In *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, Jonson shows himself to be a great artist, in the form of Hercules, but teased by nonentities in drama represented by the dwarfed pigmies. This is in relation to the many other dramatists who argued with the short-tempered and proud, learned Jonson. In the masque, Jonson has also brought in his architect, unsurpassed in skill by anyone of the time, Inigo Jones, in the form of the greatest architect in Greek mythology, Daedalus, Icarus's father.

The study concludes that while both artists use mythology in their texts, it is only Soyinka who combines African with Greek mythology as Jonson uses Greek mythology only. In the use of allegory, both authors portray the societies they live in, and, interestingly, both reflect the way they have been treated as individual artists in these societies.

Finally, the study suggests that further study could be carried out in the reasons why playwrights use mythology in their works. Other areas of further study identified are: the use of the archetypes in literature, and whether European dramatists use African myths and if they do the extent to which they do so.

I dedicate this work to my mentor and lecturer, the late Professor Mapopa Mtonga. His work still lives on. I also dedicate it to my beautiful daughter Nthangana Them bani waZalilo. You inspire me to work harder every passing day.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 General

This chapter endeavours to look at the subject of mythology and allegory in drama in general. It starts by giving a background of mythology and masques in general. It is within this background that it examines the subject playwrights: Soyinka and Jonson. The chapter also presents the statement of the problem, the aim, the specific objectives to be investigated and the research questions to be answered.

The research questions are followed by the theoretical framework that outlines the two theories employed by the research. The theories are Psychoanalytic Literary Theory based on psychologist Sigmund Freud's writings, and New Historicism, a history-related theory.

The last section of the chapter outlines the conceptual framework by introducing and explaining the major concepts which are of direct relevance to the study. The chapter ends with a summary of the main issues dealt with.

1.1 Background to the Study

Drama has been and probably will ever be part of human life. Barton (2003) says that human beings are always acting wherever they are which implies that drama is basically as essential to life as is breathing. Such a perspective of drama leads one to regarding it as one of the most outstanding areas of art which require attention.

Mythology and masques are two areas of literary and dramatic study that have not been given sufficient attention by scholars. While it is accepted that mythology can be seen as a framework for a great deal of life's explanations, it still remains an area not as highly attended to by scholars as would be expected. A number of scholars have shunned this area probably because, as Wilfred and others (2005) suggest, of its being religious, cultic and occultic in nature or probably they have found it difficult or unnecessary to apply it to the study of literary and dramatic art. Still, mythology has contributed greatly to the origins of the same arts.

Similarly, masques have also been left in the obscurity of literary and dramatic studies by most academicians. The most disregarded in this regard is the Jonsonian masque. Yet, it is the Jonsonian masque that brought the masque to the fore, especially in his time, 17th century England. Jonson himself, a contemporary of Shakespeare, whose fame could have been eclipsed by the same Shakespeare, as many scholars have suggested, has been described as an equal of Shakespeare. It should also be mentioned, though, that he has been resented by many because of his temper and feuds in the literary and theatrical world. He has not been given much attention on the stage of academia especially by African academicians of English whose focus on Shakespeare as the only giant of that period has blinded even themselves from looking further than they can see. He, in fact has suffered from this lack of popularity from his own day (Barish, 1963).

Wole Soyinka has been called the greatest of African theatre and literature by many and he has undoubtedly stood alongside the greatest names of all time in the literatures of the world. He has been renowned for his blending of African and European theatrical traditions thereby winning a following of both parts of the world (Jones, E. D. 1988; McPheron, 1998; Moore, 1978; Witalec, 2006).

It is this high level of the individuals being discussed and the importance and magnitude of the literary elements – masque, allegory and mythology, that has led to this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is indisputable that mythology and allegory have been used in literature. From the classical times, mythology was the backbone of most literary works. The great epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are both based on Greek myths. Drama by artists such as Sophocles and Euripides is highly mythological.

Scholars who have looked at both Soyinka and Jonson all seem to point at the fact that they have recognised and appreciated that these dramatists, though looked at separately, use mythology in their works. Though, little has been done to identify the actual myths let alone the allegorical elements the dramatists use. Munatamba (1981)

in his paper *The Promethean Myth in Soyinka's **The Man Died*** has identified the myth (that of Prometheus) used and shown how Soyinka has employed it in the text. Even though the work looks at Soyinka, it does not focus on his dramatic works as the work *The Man Died* is prose. Work on his drama has been looked at in the passing and has generally been seen to be mythological while the individual myths have not been discussed.

For Jonson, the case is even worse as very few scholars have taken interest in exploring his masques. Most of those that have studied him have looked at his poetry and plays, chiefly plays. The study of mythology and allegory in his work is even less talked about than in Soyinka's.

It can be argued therefore that not much work has been done to investigate mythology and allegory in the dramatic works of the Soyinka and Jonson. Stated as a question therefore, the problem to be investigated is: what is the literary significance of the myths and allegorical elements used in the dramatic works of Soyinka and Jonson?

1.3 Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to establish the literary significance of the myths and allegorical elements used in the dramatic works of Soyinka and Jonson.

1.3.2 Objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the myths and allegorical elements used in the dramatic works of Soyinka and Jonson;
2. To compare the myths and allegorical elements used by Johnson to those used by Soyinka;
3. To relate the allegorical elements to the societies in which the works were produced.

1.3.3 Research Questions

The research has attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the myths and allegorical elements used by Jonson and Soyinka in their dramatic works?
2. Do Jonson and Soyinka use the same myths in their works? And
3. What is the relationship between the allegorical elements used by the writers and the societies they were produced in?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This work is based on two theories: Psychoanalytic literary theory and New Historicism.

Psychoanalytic theory, formulated by Sigmund Freud, has two sides to it: the first part developed by Sigmund Freud himself while the second part was developed by his sometime protégé Carl Gustav Jung.

The first part is based on his view that man's mind is basically divided into three components: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. The Id is said to be a collection of all human basic needs and drives such as hunger, sex, and thirst that need constant expression and fulfilment. The Superego on the other hand is made up of the conscious and is related and facilitates adherence to the rules and regulations of society. The Ego provides a balancing mechanism of the two. If people acted on all their impulses, they would live in a society characterised by chaos while if they always listened to the Superego, they would even be able to die because of the inability to break a single rule (Forehand, 1977).

The operations of the three components of the human mind listed above are also reflected in literary works which represent these same elements at a higher level in form of allegory. Psychoanalysis goes on to show that representation can be at the author-text level where the author represses some of his other needs and lets them out through the text. The use of representation could be the author's inability to hold up their experiences. Just as the slips of the tongue show human beings their greatest

fears, so does one's writing. This part of the theory has helped identify the allegorical elements used in the texts under investigation.

The second part of the theory, developed by Jung, has identified archetypes present in all human societies. Jung has observed that humans all over the world have similar conceptions of the world. They believe in similar concepts. Regardless of which different cultural backgrounds human beings come from, they have similar views of the world. Their understanding and explanation of the world is very similar. There are images that keep recurring in all their lives such as "great heroes and mothers as strong and supportive, especially Mother Earth as something that provides us with food and care" (McMahon et al, 1995; 397). It is this part of the theory that has been used to identify myths used in the texts under discussion.

The second theory, New Historicism, basically states that it is not possible to create the past exactly the way it was. The past is therefore reinvented merely in the way it is seen in the viewer of the present. This theory, according to Booker (1996), has been influenced by scholars such as Marx, Foucault, and Greenblatt among others. Booker further states that applied to literature, this theory tries to show the relationship between literature and society. As has been mentioned above, literature therefore shows aspects of history as perceived by the writer. It is not a perfect picture of the past but merely a close translation of the same.

New Historicism has been used in this research to show the relationship between the allegorical elements used in the texts and the societies the works were produced in.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

1.5.0 General

In almost every society, people have tried to explain the world using various routes. Questions such as why the world is, why it is the way it is, and how it came to be the way it is have seriously affected man. Man from almost every cultural part of the world from primitive times to the modern day has tried to explain the world. It is in

many ways that man has tried to make these explanations for the benefit of mostly himself (inclusive of his offspring, of course) and the world to a certain extent.

Most notable of these explanations have been stories whose origins are difficult to trace. Above all, these stories usually seriously lack scientific backing. These stories have been referred to as myths. The stories also bear a significant presence of the gods to whom a great deal of these explanations is attributed.

1.5.1 Definition of Terms Used

[These definitions are chiefly supported by Abrams (1999) and Chalfant and Labeef (2003).]

1.5.1.1 Allegory – a literary or dramatic device in which the events of a narrative or an implied narrative obviously and continuously refer to another simultaneously structure of events or ideas, whether historical events, moral or philosophical ideas, or natural phenomena.

1.5.1.2 Mythology – a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives.

1.5.1.3 Masque – a type of drama that had elements of poetry, music, dance, song splendid costuming, and stage spectacle that was popular in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. Its plot is mainly mythological and allegorical. Masks were chiefly used by the performers.

1.5.1.4 Drama – the form of composition designed for performance in which actors take the roles of characters, perform the indicated action, and utter the written dialogue.

1.5.1.5 Theatre – as opposed to drama, this encompasses an entire performance. It includes a building, room, or outside area used for performing plays on one hand, and the activity or job of writing, performing, or organizing performances of plays.

1.5.1.6 Mask – an object worn either to disguise or protect the face or to project the image of another personality or being.

1.5.1.7 Satire – the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. Its difference from the comic stems from the fact that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself.

1.5.1.8 Literature – writings such as stories, poems, and plays, especially those that are considered to have value as art and not just entertainment. They are said to be a mirror of life in that they are based on realities of their audiences.

1.5.1.9 Culture – everything that is socially learned and shared by a group of people in a society. It also refers to the way of life and the ideas that contribute to that way of life.

1.5.1.10 Religion – a social institution concerned with the ultimate meaning of life and with the answers to questions that are ultimately unanswerable by nature. It also generally refers to a system of beliefs in a god or gods that has its own ceremonies and traditions. While in this paper the above are the working definitions of religion,

the word is also used informally to mean an activity or aim that is extremely important to someone.

1.5.1.11 Development – development generally refers to change, growth, or improvement over a period of time. In economic issues, it has been understood in terms of the process of improving the economy of a country or region by increasing the amount of business activity. This paper uses the second definition even though in other circles the word is used to signify the process of creating a new product or method such as in book or software development.

1.5.2 Application of Mythology and Allegory in Literature

Myths have not been very easy to define. Therefore, various scholars have defined them in many ways though there is still a direction to which they all seem to be pointing. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003), myth refers to a story or set of stories, especially explaining in a literally way the early history of a group of people or about natural events or facts. The same dictionary states that mythology, on the other hand, is 'myths' in general. Abrams (1999; 170) points out that the word *myth* comes from the Greek word *mythos* which, in classical Greek, signified any story or plot, whether true or invented. He defines mythology as "a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives".

While Abrams has taken mythology to be a system, Anderson and his colleagues (1989) refer to mythology as a study of myths. They state that the word *myth* comes from the Latin word *mythos*, and from the Greek word *Muthos* both that mean *story*. They further say that *muthos*, in turn, comes from *mu*, meaning 'to make a sound with the mouth.' This leads them to concluding that myths are therefore as basic, to us, as language itself.

Just like Abraham, Anderson and his colleagues say that myths are stories that are religious in nature, representing the primitive human beings' deepest wishes and fears. The religious nature of the stories mentioned here should to us be evidence for the relationship between the stories and the gods believed in by the same narrators of the stories.

Related to myths are terms such as *legend*, *folktale* and *fable*. A legend according to Abrams (1999: 171) is a story in which "the protagonist is not a supernatural being but a human being." Abrams defines folktale as "a short narrative in prose of unknown authorship which has been transmitted orally." David (2000) also subscribes to the definition cited above regarding a legend. However, he defines a folktale as a hereditary story that does concern supernatural beings who are not gods and that the story is not part of the systematic mythology of a people. A fable is basically a short didactic story, often involving animals or supernatural beings stressing plot above character development, whose subject is to teach a moral lesson (Kirszner and Mandell; 2004). While a fable is said to be short, it is not always that it turns out so. A good example is George Orwell's *Animal Farm* which is discussed in more detail under the illustration for allegory. The book uses animals as the main characters in the narrative while humans do not take the central role. It is this quality that qualifies it to be called a fable while its being interpreted at two levels makes it be an allegory.

What is most outstanding from the above discussions is the idea that a myth is a story or a 'story item' in mythology. Mythology therefore, as Abrams has suggested, should be looked at as an 'all encompassing' system of all narratives handed down through generations. An interesting feature of myth that needs to be pointed out here is that of repetition. Because of the idea of its being handed down from one generation to another, myths are repeated throughout life. The term 'narratives' has been used because these myths have been a part of humanity since time immemorial as there was no writing in the olden times. These myths were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The narratives here should be taken to be oral narratives. The mention of narratives is in this case tied to orality, another term which is related to the concept of myth. Examples of myths in literature, which shall be discussed in greater detail much later, can be found

employed in great works such as the great epics *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* by Homer.

In relation to the present study, myths are stories which people of a particular part of the world have come up with to explain the world. These include creation, punishment, reward, and all other phenomena to do with the rest of the world.

As stated earlier, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an example of an allegory. This work was written at a time when writers were not very free to openly write works critical of political leaders.

This scenario explains why writers usually present their work disguised so that the readers themselves can decipher the meaning.

Allegory is another essential literary device used by writers to convey their intentions. Generally, there is consensus among scholars on what constitutes allegory. Mweseli (2005: 348) in the appendix to her co-edited *Imagination of Poets; an Anthology of African Poems* says that allegory is "a literary or dramatic device in which the events of a narrative or an implied narrative obviously and continuously refer to another simultaneous structure of events or ideas, whether historical events, moral or philosophical ideas, or natural phenomena." In other words, these events that could be seen to be all-meaning and totally complete on their own are not really complete as they refer to something else. Her use of the word 'simultaneous' here shows the duality of meaning in the narrative or implied narrative in a given situation. What needs to be questioned regarding Mweseli's definition is the use of the word 'obvious' because it is not always clear that a work of art is operating at two levels such as is the case in *Animal Farm* where the narrative is a representation of events at two levels.

For example, Booker (1996) considers allegory at character level. He defines it as "a literary form in which the persons or objects described are intended to invoke another set (often of a more abstract or general nature) of persons or objects." This definition suggests that allegory does not always have to be an easy way to explaining a literary or dramatic piece of work. Another interesting element of Booker's definition is the use of the word 'invoke' which conveys the idea that it is

not enough for the reader or critic to read between the lines but the text itself will excite emotional appeal and effect on the reader who will be brought to the thought of other objects or persons in the text. It is at this level that the reader will make associations between what they are reading and what they can see outside the text and draw conclusions about the representativeness of the text in question.

There is a relationship between allegory in literature and society because literature is based on society. In this regard, it can be argued that even the fictive characters discussed in the masques of Jonson are not fictive. They will be taken to be real in two ways: firstly that they have actual relations not in the masque but in the world, in myth. According to the original claims of mythology, the myths were as real as the humans that discussed them themselves. This is how real the characters of the bible such as Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham and others are. It is this reality that qualifies the claim, on the first argument that these characters are not fictive. The second argument is that the characters have actual human qualities. They are endowed with the power to behave like humans do; they can talk, eat, get happy or angry, and so on. This means that these characters are real and not fictive. The conclusion from this understanding is that literature can easily be seen as fiction apart from the argument that really it is the imagination of the creator of the literature.

The existence of a relationship between literature and society implies the existence of a close link between society and the artists which translates into the work of art being a mere replica of society. The writer picks actual names of social members as the material for his work. He picks on actual issues going on in his society as what the society will identify with in the consumption of the product. It is at this level that the argument takes root that every literary piece of work is allegorical. What the critic needs to do is look at the associations between the work and the characters and elements in the work being studied. The names in the masques of Jonson and the plays of Soyinka and the issues (especially the issues) being dealt with are very close to the lives of the audience because they are what they are a part of throughout their lives. This is well expounded by Shakespeare's "All the World's a Stage" from *As You Like It* which shows that between drama and life, which is society, it is difficult to draw a line for distinction.

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances,
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
 Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
 Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the canon's mouth. And then the justice,
 In fair round belly with good capon lined,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slippered pantaloon
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
 His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
 (II.vii. 139-167)

1.5.3 Application of Mythology in Drama

There are two concepts to know here: firstly that myths are used directly through mention by the authors, and, secondly that there are cases when a myth may not be mentioned by the author. The researcher is, in such a case, expected to explain the myths employed by comparing elements of the myth and how they seemingly have been employed in the text. What this implies is that there could be parallel or simultaneous events taking place in the myth and in the text.

Both these examples can be seen in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, a play based on the myth of Icarus. What is most interesting about this play is Marlowe's mentioning of the wax wings that melted with the heat of the sun. While he does not mention Icarus, to whom the melting of the waxed wings is

attributed, it is easy to conclude that Marlowe had Icarus in mind. One good reason for this conclusion is the understanding that the poet/playwright, like many other literary figures of the time, was well-versed in mythology of ancient Greece. It is no wonder then that the same appear in their works.

Paying more attention to *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, one sees that the entire play is based on lack of satisfaction in which one desires to do or have more than they are allowed. As recounted on the site <http://www.island-ikaria.com/culture/myth.asp>, Icarus, on whom the play is based, with his father Daedalus, created wings with feathers and wax with which to escape from Minos's Labyrinth where they were imprisoned after helping Theseus killing a Minotaur.

When they set off, Daedalus warned his son not to fly too low lest his wings touch the waves and get wet, and not too high, lest the sun melt the wax. Unfortunately, the young Icarus, overwhelmed by the thrill of flying, did not heed his father's warning, and flew close to the sun. The wax in his wings melted and he fell into the sea, his short life ending at that time.

Marlowe's *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* shows a Doctor Faustus who has studied so much such that he has been awarded a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. Yet, Faustus is not satisfied with what he has achieved. He says that he needs a greater subject. In his view, what he has done falls below his abilities. He therefore is in need of something more challenging, something that will not leave him at the same level with the rest of people.

To achieve this, Faustus sells his soul to Lucifer so that he can perform magic all over the world. At the end of the period of which he had to perform the magic, Faustus is to surrender his soul. This is a very difficult moment and he desires to escape it. Faustus fails to redeem himself and dies.

It is not difficult to state that Icarus did fly too high not due to lack of satisfaction but his being overwhelmed with flying. Of course, this difference shows that it might be difficult at some point to say the story of Faustus is based on the myth of Icarus. It should still be stated here that the mere relations shown so far,

disregarding the differences, clearly show man's desire to do more than is possible and hence his failing. Both Faustus and Icarus failed because of the same problem.

Earlier, it was mentioned that there are two ways to help show the use of myth in texts (this is not limited to drama alone but encompasses all literary genres). The first is that the writers deliberately mention the myths in question such as Marlowe did. Still, Marlowe's mentioning is not very reliable because he does not mention the actual myth itself or even simply the name Icarus. All he does is mention the melting of waxen wings, almost out of context. All the same, this mentioning shall be taken to be the first identifying feature. The second is the mere relationship between the work and mythological stories. The relationship seen between *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* and the myth of Icarus in the entire story clearly shows one later work being based on the earlier one.

This study shows the use of mythology and allegory in drama and how they contribute to our understanding of not only the texts but also the rest of the world we live in. To illustrate this thesis, the dissertation analyses two plays by Wole Soyinka, *The Strong Breed*, and *Death and the King's Horseman* and two masques by Jonson, *The Golden Age Restored* and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is confined to the use of mythology and allegory in drama. The study identifies the myths and allegorical elements used in drama. It does not give reasons why the playwrights have used the myths and allegorical elements in their dramas. It is a study of the dramatic works of Wole Soyinka and Benjamin Jonson. The study was taken to establish the use of mythology and allegory in drama. In this regard, the results of the study should be interpreted within the context of the works under investigation and should in no way be taken as a reflection of what might be obtaining in other dramatic works by the same authors or others.

1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the study by providing background information to the study, stating the specific problem under investigation, the aims and specific objectives and specific research questions addressed. Further, the chapter presents the theoretical as well as conceptual framework within which the study was undertaken by defining some of the major concepts relating to the study.

The second chapter deals with the review of literature related to the present study in order to place the investigation within the context of similar studies thereby enriching it as well as providing a justification for it.

The third chapter presents brief synopses of the texts under discussion. The texts are *The Strong Breed*, and *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka, and *The Golden Age Restored* and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* by Benjamin Jonson.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of the use of mythology in the identified texts. Using the approaches identified in the conceptual framework, the chapter identifies and examines the myths used in the texts under study.

The fifth chapter specifically identifies the myths used in the texts by the two playwrights. The chapter gives more relevant information on the identified myths and how they have been used in other texts where possible. The chapter also tries to relate the identified myths to their actual use in the subject texts.

The sixth chapter identifies the allegorical elements used in the texts. The identification is based on the knowledge of the styles used by the playwrights and also on how writers generally write allegorically.

The seventh chapter looks at the relationship between the identified allegorical elements and the societies in which the writers lived. The chapter tries to explain what could have affected the use of these allegorical elements in the studied texts.

The eighth chapter presents the summary of the findings and subsequent discussion. It gives a general overview of what has been learnt regarding mythology and allegory in drama and also allegory in literature and society.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic under discussion in general. It has presented the background to the subject, and identified the problem being discussed before proceeding to state the aim and the specific objectives of the research. Thereafter, the chapter has outlined the research questions followed by the theoretical framework and finally the conceptual framework of the study.

The overall idea brought out is that the subject of mythology and allegory is at the centre of literature though not given particular attention in most recent literary studies. It has also been noted that the same concepts of allegory and especially mythology are central to human life as they give answers to life's very important questions. What has been observed, though, is that literary scholars have not done enough to identify specific myths and allegorical elements in the works of the two playwrights. It is this point that has justified this paper.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on mythology and allegory in drama. It begins with a presentation of literature on Ben Jonson. It further examines the works that study the use of mythology and allegory in drama. The review goes on to analyse the works of Jonson before proceeding to explore Soyinka and his works, not restricting them to the subject plays, *Death and the King's Horseman* and *The Strong Breed*. The texts discussing the works of Jonson are those that have a bias towards the masque.

The chapter also discusses Greek mythology and concludes with a review of literature on African mythology. The review of literature on both Greek and African mythology is based on the fact that while Greek mythology is used by both dramatists, Soyinka uses more of African myths and therefore accords African mythology an opportunity to be considered.

This section looks at Ben Jonson and how he has been received by academicians and drama enthusiasts in general.

2.1 Literature on Jonson

This section looks at Jonson and his works.

“The dramatic as well as the other works of Ben Jonson...are of various degrees of merit, ranging from an excellence not surpassed by any contemporary excepting Shakespeare, to the lowest point of laborious mediocrity” (Shaw, 1867). Jonson is here regarded not just as a great artist but also as an average artist who despite being of high merit still had works that have been referred to above as of ‘the lowest point of laborious mediocrity’.

Shelling (1910) describes Jonson as the greatest English dramatist. In introducing the first volume of *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, Shelling says that Jonson remains “the greatest English dramatist..., the first literary dictator and poet laureate, a writer of verse, prose, satire, and criticism who most potently of all the

men of his time affected the course of the letters”. Apart from his being the greatest dramatist, Jonson is here described as a very contributing factor in the development of the literature, especially drama of the England of the time. It can be argued that this, in his being poet laureate, is proof enough that Jonson was very highly regarded even by the royal house.

The masque has been defined by the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2008) as a short dramatic entertainment performed by masked actors that originated in the folk ceremony known as mummary and evolved into elaborate court spectacles in the 16th–17th centuries. A masque presented an allegorical theme using speeches, dances, and songs, in a performance often embellished with rich costumes and spectacular scenery. The encyclopaedia further states that the genre reached its height in 17th-century England when the court poet, Ben Jonson, collaborating with Inigo Jones on many notable masques (1605–34), gave it a literary force before it developed into opera.

The relationship between the masque and the mask that was mentioned earlier should once again be emphasised. The mask is worn by the performers during the performance of the masque. The mask is an object worn either to disguise or protect the face or to project the image of another personality or being. Masks have been used in art and religion since the Stone Age. In most primitive societies, their form is dictated by tradition, and they are thought to have supernatural powers. Death masks, associated with the return of the spirit to the body, were used in ancient Egypt, Asia, and the Inca civilization, and were sometimes kept as portraits of the dead. They have also been widely used in the theatre, beginning with the Greek drama and continuing through medieval mystery plays, and the Italian Commedia Dell'arte, as well as in other ritualistic theatrical performances such as Nyau and Makishi in Zambia.

Deserving to be called the father of the masque, Jonson, as it has been shown, had a comfortable relationship with Shakespeare and his works were as great as Shakespeare's.

2.2 Literature on the Masque

While this section looks at the masque in general, it does so with a bias towards the Jonsonian masque. This is because Jonson, as it will be made clear in the discussion that follows, has been central to the evolving and development of the mask. In Abrams's (1999) definition of the concepts, Jonson is referred to. The section will therefore mention Jonson not just because he is the subject of this paper but also because he is the chief authority and employer of the masque.

Abrams (1999) says that masques combined elements of poetic drama, music, song, dance, splendid costuming, and stage spectacle. He says that the masque's plot is mainly mythological and allegorical. While Abrams does not explicitly attribute the mythological and allegorical elements to the Jonsonian masque, he still mentions Jonson as among the finest artists of the seventeenth century England for the poetic plot. He seems to imply, here, that even Jonson himself employed the elements of allegory and mythology in his masques.

One may learn from Abrams's explanation that the masque involved the use of mythology and allegory. Shelling (1910), in explaining the rise of Jonson to be the greatest English dramatist, further says that Jonson derived his plays from classical stories and myth that had held the world of drama from the beginning of drama. He shows, in this case, that the use of mythology in drama was amongst Jonson's important elements of the time.

On the other hand, Jamieson (1966) alluding to Milton's *L'Allegro* says that Jonson is an epitome of the Ancients. This is because Milton, in the poem, says:

Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnèd sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

Jamieson looks at the mentioning of the 'learnèd sock' as referring to the slippers that were worn by Greek and Roman actors of comedy. This cannot be taken to be merely an illustration of Milton's relating Jonson to the ancients but an actual picture

of how Jonson himself valued the ancients. For, he too has gone on to mention the socks in his own preface to Shakespeare's First Folio, as he says:

And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee I would not seek
For names; but call forth thund'ring Aeschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to us...
Or, when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone, for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Jonson's being compared to the ancients does not come as a coincidence but Milton must also have known that this 'learnèd' playwright and poet had enough knowledge of the ancients whose skills and techniques he made good use of. Though the reference is to his 'gentle Shakespeare', it would still be concluded that Jonson's was respect for Shakespeare and acknowledgement of the great Ancients that he went on to allude to Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles who it will be agreed have helped shape his writing as well.

Jonson began his career on the masque at the accession of King James to the throne. He is said to have written "in his long career" more masques than all his competitors put together (Shelling, 1910: xvii). It is further said that Jonson has been sharply compared with Charles Dickens as both being "men of the people, lowly born and hardly bred. Each knew the London of his time as few men knew it; and each represented it intimately and in elaborate detail. Both men were...seeking the truth by the exaggerated methods of humour and caricature; perverse, even wrong-headed at times...but leaving the world better for the art that they practiced in it" (Shelling, *ibid*, xxi).

His theory, the above source continues to argue, demanded design and the perfection of literary finish and he believed that Apollo could only be worthily served in singing robes and laurel crowned (Jamieson: 1966). The mention of Apollo is crucial to the issues being examined in this dissertation. Jonson's bringing of Apollo into his life gives a picture of his belief in the relevance of mythology to his works and knowing that the gods had a role to play in his success as an artist.

Shelling (1910) goes on to state that Pallas and Atlas return to the stage in *The Golden Age Restored* and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* respectively suggesting that mythology still predominated Jonson's works particularly masques which are actually the centre of discussion in the current study.

While accepting that Jonson demanded design and perfection of literary finish, Jamieson (1966) says that according to Milton in the work cited earlier, *L'Allegro*, Jonson was laboriously theoretical in his artistic creations. His works are therefore taken to have been theoretically approached hence his having been misunderstood when he talked about Shakespeare. The online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia states:

In Timber, which was published posthumously and reflects his lifetime of practical experience, Jonson offers a fuller and more conciliatory comment. He recalls being told by certain actors that Shakespeare never blotted (i.e., crossed out) a line when he wrote. His own response, "Would he had blotted a thousand," was taken as malicious. However, Jonson explains, "He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped". Jonson concludes that "there was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned." Also when Shakespeare died he said "He was not of an age, but for all time."

Jonson acknowledges therefore that Shakespeare merely flowed on and on in his work. Blotting a line would hence need to blot everything else, as it had been created spontaneously. What still remains important here is to understand Jonson's art of composition. Based on the above, it should be easy to say that though it is said that Jonson was mechanical, he still believed in the flow of the art. He still believed that in art one had to flow with the inspiration. The picture created in this instance is that Jonson was not only mechanical but also artistically involved through inspirational creation and modification of his literary art.

In summation, it can be said that Jonson has an upper hand on the masque and does more than anybody else.

2.3 Literature on Soyinka

To shift focus to Wole Soyinka, this dissertation will begin by studying the history of Nigeria, and Soyinka's place in the same history. It is after this discussion that the literature examining Soyinka's works will be reviewed. According to the site <http://www.iss.co.za/Af/profiles/Nigeria/Politics.html>, on the history of Nigeria, Nigeria was colonised by the British between the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. That could roughly be said to be between the years 1850 and 1910. The government formed a legislative council in 1922 with limited African representation though traditional leaders continued to rule. This appears to be the introduction of modern politics and leadership in Africa as even though the traditional leaders continued to rule amidst the British, they did so under the supervision of the colonial authorities.

The site further says that the British government introduced a federal system of government in 1947 under a new constitution, and the system was based on three regions namely Eastern, Western, and Northern with a view to reconciling the regional and religious tensions and accommodating the interests of the diverse ethnic groups namely the Ibo (in the east), the Yoruba (in the west) and the Hausa and Fulani (in the west).

In 1951, the constitution was abrogated and a ministerial government was introduced and the federation became self governing in 1954. Yet, it was only on October 1, 1960 that the Federation of Nigeria became independent.

In spite of being independent, Nigeria still, and to date, had ethnic problems whose roots were steeped in the power-sharing irregularities from as early as 1964. These problems had to do with widespread economic disparities in the Nigerian society and clear signs of corruption in public life.

In December 1964, the first election to the House of Representatives was held since independence. While this was a good sign of progress, the period between 1966 and 1979 was characterized by military intervention, takeovers and civil war. Even in the military, there were national rivalries and ethnic sentiments. This led to the first coup perpetrated by junior officers of mainly Ibo origin. Many top

government leaders including the president were killed. The constitution was suspended and the Supreme Military Council was formed. In July 1966, there was a counter coup and the new leader a General Yakubu Gowon tried to bring back discipline to the army and appointed a military governor in each region.

However, in 1967, the Biafran civil war erupted out of the Biafrans desiring to be an independent country. During the war, an estimated one million Biafran civilians died mainly due to starvation.

General Gowon tried to produce larger representation of ethnic groups other than the main three. Military rule continued until 1975 when Gowon was forcibly retired. Nigeria was rocked by a number of overthrows under different leaders until the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998 that saw Nigeria's return to democracy.

Moore (1978) says that an involvement in public actions is to some extent unavoidable for the writer and intellectual in any African country. This leads to a discussion on Wole Soyinka, who, Shorter (1998) describes as Africa's leading playwright, who also happens to be a poet, novelist, essayist, memoirist, librettist, lecturer, nonfiction writer, editor, and biographer, born in Ìsarà, Nigeria in 1934. According to Wilatec (2006), Soyinka, as a child became increasingly aware of the pull between African tradition and Western modernization. Most people in his village, Aké, were from the Yoruba tribe and were presided over by the *ogboni*, or tribal elders. His grandfather introduced him to the pantheon of Yoruba gods and other figures of tribal folklore. His parents, however, were representatives of colonial influence: his mother was a devout Christian convert, and his father was a headmaster at the village school established by the British. At this stage, as shown by Wilatec, Soyinka already had the two cultures inherent in him. This condition was further enthused by the education he received both at home, in Nigeria, and in England. As the discussion progresses, it shall be seen that Soyinka has this combination of cultures clearly reflected in his writings.

Moore (ibid) in his *Wole Soyinka*, further says that no African writer or intellectual can avoid involvement in public affairs. On this subject, Wilatec (2006) says that Soyinka was arrested in 1965 after being accused of using a gun to force a radio announcer to broadcast incorrect election results. There was no evidence to

attest to that. Therefore, the writers' organization, PEN, protested and, after three months, Soyinka was released.

The most outstanding instance of his involvement in public activities was his attempt to broker a deal between the warring factions in 1967. This was during the Biafran civil war. What angered Soyinka was the government's brutal policies towards Ibos who were attempting to form their own country, Biafra. He then travelled to Biafra to establish a peace commission composed of leading intellectuals from both sides of the conflict. The Nigerian police accused Soyinka of assisting the Biafrans to purchase jet fighters. This led to his two-year imprisonment with no formal charges.

Soyinka began a period of self-imposed exile in 1993 when General Ibrahim Babangida refused to allow a democratic government to take power. Babangida, who appointed General Sani Abacha as head of the Nigerian state, charged the pro-democracy individuals, one of whom was Soyinka, with treason due to their criticism of the military regime. Facing a death sentence prompted Soyinka to leave the country in 1994 and spend time lecturing in European and American universities.

Soyinka has held teaching positions at a number of prestigious universities, including the University of Ghana, Cornell University, and Yale University. He also served as the Goldwin Smith professor for African Studies and Theatre Arts at Cornell University from 1988 to 1991. Soyinka has received several awards for his work, such as the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986 and the Enrico Mattei Award for Humanities in 1986.

Amongst the many writers looking at Soyinka, Jones (1988) seems to have done the most comprehensive study of the writer. He looks at Yoruba mythology in general as he studies the Yoruba culture that includes their occupations and festivals. After that he goes on to talk about Christian and other influences on Soyinka, and later at Soyinka's basic concerns.

Jones sees Soyinka as being attached to modernity by work experience and education while it is his background that is imbedded in the Yoruba culture. He goes on to say that apart from this relation, Soyinka has also taken deep interest in Yoruba

studies. This has led to his works having both European and African (Yoruba) traditions deeply rooted in them.

Yoruba culture, Jones says, has its home area in western Nigeria but is present in many other parts of the world such as South America, the Caribbean, Sierra Leone – the places that had contact with slave trade. In Nigeria, the homeland of the culture, the culture is prevalent particularly in the following six western provinces: Oyo, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ondo, and Lagos, and Ilorin division of Ilorin Province, and Kabba division of Kabba Province.

The traditional life of the Yoruba, it is said, is dominated by religion. A lot of gods are present and they interact with the mortals. They have four hundred and one gods in total. Olodumare (Olorum) is the supreme god – creator, king, omnipotent, all-knowing, all-wise, judge, immortal, invisible, and holy. He is worshiped through minor deities, although invoked physically. The Yoruba do not represent him or build shrines for him. He appears as Forest Head in *A Dance of the Forest*. Another important god, Ogun, is best understood in Hellenic values as a totality of the Dionysian, Apollonian, and Promethean values. He is also seen as the protector of orphans, roof over the homeless, and terrible guardian of the sacred.

The main occupation of the Yoruba is farming though they are also involved in fishing, hunting, weaving, dyeing, and trading. Palm wine is seen to have a very mystical role in Soyinka's works. Generally, the culture of the Yoruba is enshrined in the language.

Jones says that Christianity has influences on Soyinka as there are biblical references in his works. Other influences, as was mentioned earlier, include modern American and European drama through his studies at Leeds. He also has interest and makes references to mythologies particularly Greek mythologies. Because he also worked as a play reader at the Royal Court Theatre, Soyinka has been influenced by pre-modern writers Ibsen, Ben Jonson, and Chekov. His audience, it is mentioned, is primarily African.

Soyinka's basic concern, passionately and desperately, is for society. This concern is not only literary as can be seen from his involvement in politics. It is for

this reason that Jones has ended by saying that generally, Soyinka's works appreciate life and deprecate the opposite such as war.

Moore (1978) is another writer who has explored Soyinka's works. To the views of Jones (1988) above, he adds as an already known fact that "Soyinka's work is linked with certain events and experiences of his life that the critic cannot write of it, beyond the level of mere description, without making some attempt to link the two" (pg 1). This view could lead one to suggesting that Moore sees Soyinka's writing to be to a certain extent biographical. This could be the reason why he argues that it is not possible to look at his works in isolation from his life. It is further married by the introductory statement on the Soyinka segment of this paper that he has had some involvement in public life.

Jones (1988) has already substantiated this claim in his pointing at Soyinka's imprisonment, and also his self-imposed exile that Wilatec (2006) has alluded to.

While not restricted to his drama, Moore (1978) proceeds to indicate that Soyinka's satirical writing dates back to his first three years at Leeds where in his poetry such as "The Other Immigrant" that gives a portrait of a sharply-dressed black student whose dignity is donned with his three-piece suit and who realises the prospect of his return to the country where 'the one-eyed man is king.'

In part, the poem says:

My dignity is sewn
Into the lining of a three-piece suit.
Stiff, and with a whiteness which
Out-Europes Europe,
My crisp Van Heusen collar
Cradles an All-Wool Tooltal tie,
Turning respectful eyes towards
I, Me resplendent in my three-piece suit
Upon the word 'riff-raff'.

Soyinka, in this case shows his hatred for mirror-image imitation and social pretension. He already appears to be a dramatist who intends to portray and not betray his culture.

Moore can therefore be seen to be looking at Soyinka as a satirist not only in his drama but also in his poetry.

Witalec (2006) whose writing on the history of Soyinka has helped this dissertation tremendously, sees Soyinka's works, especially the dramas, as having a focus upon the dichotomies of good versus evil and progress versus tradition in African culture. He sees *The Swamp Dwellers* as a condemnation of African superstition by showing religious leaders who exploit the fears of their townspeople for personal gain, and *A Dance of the Forests* as a warning to the newly independent Nigerians that the end of colonial rule does not mean an end to their country's problems. Witalec goes on to show that while Soyinka warns against sentimental yearning for Africa's past in *A Dance of the Forests*, he lampoons the indiscriminate embrace of Western modernization in *The Lion and the Jewel*. In *The Trials of Brother Jero*, a play that was written in response to a request for a play that could be performed in a converted dining hall in Ibadan, Soyinka draws on his observations of the separatist Christian churches of Nigeria, on Ijebu folk narratives, and on theatrical conventions exploited by dramatist Bertolt Brecht. Soyinka constructed a vigorous comedy around the character of a messianic beach prophet.

In his conclusion, Witalec says that Soyinka's work is based on the themes constructing sweeping narratives of personal and political turmoil in Africa.

According to an article on the site <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/soyinka.html> accessed on 20th April 2009, Soyinka has for long been a critic of the Nigerian government. He has criticized the corruption brought to Nigeria by the oil industry. Soyinka is actually compared to fellow writer and human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941-1995) who was hanged despite international protests.

Another writer, McPheron (1998) says that Wole Soyinka is among contemporary Africa's greatest writers. He is also one of the continent's most imaginative advocates of native culture and of the humane social order it embodies. He sees Soyinka's work employing an approach that would lead to liberating black Africa from its crippling legacy of European imperialism. McPheron therefore says Soyinka envisioned a "New Africa" that would escape its colonial past by grafting the technical advances of the present onto the stock of its own ancient traditions.

Native myth, reformulated to accommodate contemporary reality, was to be the foundation of the future, opening the way to “self-retrieval, cultural recollection, and cultural security”. He says Soyinka dreamed instead of a truly de-colonized continent, where an autonomous African culture assimilated only those progressive elements of recent history that were consistent with its own authentic identity.

This view brings in the policy of assimilation that was employed by the French government in their colonisation of their subjects. Senghor, with Césaire, however, spoke against it and came up with his philosophy of Negritude. It is interesting to note though that Soyinka is one critic of the concept of Negritude saying a tiger does not shout its ‘tigritude’; it acts it and lives it. This raises questions when looked at in line with his assimilation of the African cultures with the western while criticising Senghor’s negritude.

Apart from his personal involvement in politics, Soyinka used his work to also openly challenge Nigerian authorities. Of course, this is a statement that has been alluded to by many other critics of Soyinka. On Soyinka’s style, McPherson says that his discordant mixing of genres, his wilful ambiguities of meaning, his unresolved clashes of contradictions cease to be the aesthetic flaws as Western critics often label them. Instead, they become our path into an African reality fiercely itself and *utterly other* when looked at but from the angle of his connection with the mythic world. His conclusion, regarding Soyinka is that his plays, novels, poetry, and critical essays only peripherally prepare the reader for his autobiography. Rich description, elaborate scenes and fascinating characters are interwoven in a narrative style laced with side-splitting humour and luxurious poignancy.

This section has attempted to present a brief history of Nigeria in order to define Soyinka’s place in it. It has shown Soyinka’s special style of blending European as well as African dramatic traditions in his writings. He is seen as artist in whom the two cultures have a symbiotic relationship.

2.4 Literature on Greek Mythology

This section of the dissertation reviews various literature on Greek mythology drawn from various sources such as internet publications, journals as well as books and book chapters.

The online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, states that Greek mythology refers to a body of myths and legends belonging to the ancient Greeks. The myths and legends concern their gods and heroes, nature of the world and the origins and significance of their own cults and rituals. The current encyclopaedia under discussion states further that Greek myth explains the origins of the world and details the lives and adventures of a wide variety of gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines, and other mythical creatures.

The site points out that these myths were originally disseminated in oral-poetic tradition though today they are referred to as Greek literature. Two original authors whose works are seen as the oldest Greek literary sources are Homer and Hesiod. While Homer's works centre on the Trojan war, a war that lasted ten years, Hesiod's contain accounts on the genesis of the world, the succession of divine rulers, the succession of human ages, the origin of human woes and the origin of sacrificial practices.

It is further mentioned that Greek mythology has exerted an extensive influence on the culture, the arts, and the literature of Western civilisation, and it remains part of Western heritage and language. Poets and artists from ancient times to the present have derived inspiration from Greek mythology and have discovered contemporary significance and relevance in these mythological themes.

The site further discusses the creation myths of the Greek which information it attributes to the writings of Hesiod in his *Theogony*. Based on *Theogony*, the site states that the beginning is termed Chaos, which is a yawning nothingness. Then out of the nothingness emerged Gaia (the Earth) and some other basic divine beings who include Eros (Love), the Abyss (Tartarus), and the Erebus. Without male assistance, Gaia gave birth to Uranus (the Sky) who later fertilised her. This brought the birth of the first Titans: six males and six females who were followed by the one-eyed Cyclopes and Hecatonchires. The youngest, Cronus, is regarded as the most terrible

of Gaia's children. He castrated his father and, with his sister-wife Rhea, became ruler of the gods while the other Titans became his court.

Cronus's castration of his father came back to him when he too was confronted by his son Zeus. Because of his having betrayed his father, Cronus feared that his offspring would do the same. As a result, every time Rhea gave birth, he snatched up the child and ate it. Rhea hated this so much such that she tricked Cronus into swallowing a baby blanket-wrapped stone and thus had the life of their child, Zeus, saved.

When Zeus was grown, he fed his father a drugged drink which caused Cronus to vomit, throwing up Rhea's other children and the stone. He later challenged Cronus to war for kingship of the gods. Zeus emerged victorious and became king.

The case followed when there came a prophecy that his first wife, Metis, would give birth to one greater than him. This made him swallow her while she was already pregnant with Athene. They made him miserable until he asked another god to open his skull upon which Athene burst out, fully grown and dressed for war. This helps show the relationships among the gods apart from explaining the beginning of the world.

On the relationship between the gods and humans, the myths explain that there were times when gods intervened in human activities and times when the two were separate from the other.

Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, divides these into two thematic groups: tales of love and tales of punishment. The tales of love are plagued by incest or the seduction or rape of a mortal woman by a male god. The general idea in the stories is that relationships between gods and mortals are to be avoided.

The tales of punishment look at the times when the gods through, mostly, one of them only steals from the gods and reveals the secret knowledge to the rest of the humans. This usually led to the punishment of the god in question.

Finley (1956) focuses on Odysseus, the central character in Homer's *The Odyssey*. This review looks at this work in relation to Homer and Greek mythology in general with little emphasis on *The Odyssey*. In his Chapter One that discusses Homer and the Greeks, Finley says that Homer is an influential figure in the creation of their pantheon. He seems to say that Homer is responsible for the creation of the Greek gods. This cannot be argued against because, Finley adds, "faced on first looking into the *Illiad* or *Odyssey*, one anticipates a Bible or some great treatise in philosophy" (ibid: 13). These writings are therefore seen to be more of religious than artistic works. It is this nature that connects them to being an authority on Greek religion as well.

On the other hand, even though Homer is credited for the creation of the Greek pantheon, as stated above, he should also essentially be seen as a teller of myths and legends. He goes on to state though, that the process of mythmaking had begun among the Greeks centuries earlier. Wherever the Greeks were, it continued by word of mouth and was always ceremonial. "The essential subject-matter of myth was action, not deeds, creeds, or symbolic representations, but happenings, occurrences, - wars, floods, adventures by land, sea and air, family quarrels, births, marriages, and deaths" (Finley, 1956: 21).

Finley has therefore looked at Greek mythology as having been created by the Greek themselves from times ranging centuries before to the time of Homer. The main reason why Homer, according to Finley, has been credited to having been a decisive figure in the creation of the Greek pantheon is his mastery at the creation of his and the Greeks' greatest masterpieces *The Odyssey* and *The Illiad*. With reference to this view, it would be conclusively said that while Homer found the Greek pantheon already in existence, he was behind their recording. For this reason, he is not the creator but merely a recorder of the same.

Leeming (1989) in his *The Myths of Greece and Rome* observes that the mythmakers of ancient Greece and Rome were interested in speaking to ordinary humans by focussing on their deepest concerns. Like all true art, great myths, which Greek myths are, give an insight into the nature of the world. For this reason, Leeming argues, Greek myths served various purposes in the Greek society of the

time. The main uses of the myths include, but are not limited to, explaining the creation of the world, explaining natural phenomena, giving story form to ancient religious practices, teaching moral lessons, explaining history, and expressing, as dreams do, the deepest fears and hopes of the human race.

From the revelation presented above, it can be concluded that myths are central to humans as they explain to man why he is where he is. Leeming, it can be concluded, sees myths as having that ability to show man his position in society.

In his *The Elements of the Epic* that appears in the same *Elements of Literature* series, Course Three, Leeming (1989: 716) states that the spiritual nature of myths is because “they are concerned with the relationship between human beings and the world of the unknown or the spiritual realm.” The use of the word ‘unknown’ entails that there is the unknown and the known. Myths should therefore be taken to explain what man does not know. This, it would be concluded, means that Greek myths were therefore created as a scapegoat from what the people did not understand. They came as a way of one avoiding saying they did not have an answer.

Guerin (2005) points out that mythology should be looked at in the lines of psychoanalysis. He says that while psychoanalysis attempts to disclose about the individual personality, mythology, as a study area, reveals about the mind and character of a people. Myths are the symbolic projections of a people’s hopes, fears, values and aspirations. He argues that the myth “is a dynamic factor everywhere in human society as it transcends time, uniting the past (traditional modes of belief) with the present (current values) and reaching toward the future (spiritual and cultural aspirations)” (ibid, 184).

On the other hand, Guerin (2005: 203) contends that onetime student of psychologist Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung (1875 to 1961) who was especially knowledgeable in the symbolism of complex mystical traditions such as Gnosticism, Alchemy, Kabala, and similar traditions in Hinduism and Buddhism, made sense of the unconscious and its habit of revealing itself only in symbolic form. Later described as the father of mythology, “Jung detected an intimate relationship between dreams, myths, and art in that all the three save as media through which archetypes become accessible to consciousness.”

The archetypes that Jung identified come mainly in three forms: shadow, amina, and persona; “structural components of the psyche that human beings have inherited”. The symbolic projections of these archetypes are encountered throughout the myths and literatures of humankind (Guerin, 2005: 205).

The shadow is the darker side of the unconscious. This is the inferior and less pleasing aspect of human personality that human beings never wish to expose but instead suppress. The authors say that Jung sees the most common variant of the shadow to be the Devil who represents the dangerous aspect of the unrecognised dark half of the personality.

The amina is what has been referred to as the most complex of Jung’s archetypes. It is the ‘soul-image’ of man. It represents his life force or vital energy. It can be said here that it is the amina which makes man be who he is. He would be incomplete and his worth would be doubted in the absence of the amina. This is later described as the feminine designation in the male psyche in that it is projected upon women. In the female psyche, this image is called the aminus. According to Boeree (2000), the animus represents the male side of women. The image of the opposite sex that is carried in human beings is found in the amina. What is concluded from this is that the human psyche is bisexual though the psychological characteristics are unconscious revealed only through dreams.

In contrast, the persona, Guerin (2005) continues, is the facade of the amina. It is the mask that is shown to the world. What is implied here is that there is the image of man that is different from his actual self. That is what he shows to the world.

Jung’s conclusion was that the shadows are a primitive, collective unconscious shared in the psychic inheritance of all members of the human family.

This section has focussed on literature discussing Greek mythology with some parts still mentioning myth in general. The general consensus has been that Greek myths were created by a number of the Greeks themselves with Homer being credited as chief among them. The next section reviews literature studying African myths.

2.5 Literature on African Mythology

The final section of the chapter, reviews literature on African mythology. The discussion will border on the nature of the myths and how they have contributed to shaping the African way of life.

Because of lack of information regarding life and death, Werner (1933) begins her book *Myths and Legends of the Bantu* with some doubts on the concept of life and death:

Closed the kind eyes; nevermore the clasp of the faithful
hand.
But the clamour and wrath of men are still, where they
sweetly rest,
And the loved dust is one with the dust of the well-loved
land.
Earth has taken the wronged and the wronger both to her
breast.
Cetshwayo sleeps in Inkandhla, Rhodes on Matopo height,
Escombe and Osborn alike in the dear Natalian soil.
Do they dream? And what dreams are theirs in the hush of
the kindly night?
Never, since time began, has any come back to tell...
O brave, true, loving hearts, at rest from long strife and toil.
Mandiza, Sineke, Mamonga, Kebeni, Magema,
Hail and farewell!

Ikenga-Metuh (1987) defines myths as sacred tales that are believed to actually have happened, and are unquestionable, undebatable matters. He says that they are a clear presentation of the outlook of people living in communities. It is their objective and permanent philosophy of life. He separates them from folktales which he says are told for entertainment, and perhaps to instruct in morality, and from legends that are the culture's history put in story form. One interesting point to raise in line with Ikenga-Metuh's thinking is the relationship with the functions of myths that have been discussed in this paper already as suggested by Leeming (1989). What Leeming says are functions of myths, Ikenga-Metuh suggests belong to other genres of oral tradition such as folktales and legends.

Kangende in his 2001 publication, *Zambian Myths and Legends of the World*, traces the origins of Zambian myths to the pre-colonial times when the Zambians' ancestors lived in close contact with nature. He says that during this time, the ancestors roamed dense forests hunting, fishing and gathering edible fruits, berries and succulent plants.

Most of the hunters used spears, axes, bows and arrows for bigger animals, dogs for smaller animals such as hares, and also trapped using snares and nooses of various kinds. This complexity of hunting made hunting such a serious business that some people became professional hunters.

Kangende further says that hunters in many Zambian cultures were held in high esteem and that they even belonged to hunters' guilds that can also be looked at as hunters' shrines.

Though so important and held in high esteem, hunting was also very dangerous as it required hunters to walk through thick forests where they risked being mauled by wild animals. The other danger was even with fellow hunters. If, for instance, there were disagreements between hunters in sharing food, some hunters would murder their colleagues. In order to ensure survival and success in hunting, hunters used to practice a lot of ritual magic. Hunting dangerous animals required special charms.

Fishing, similarly, was a dangerous occupation. It generally involved methods such as netting, the setting of lines, trapping fish in baskets set in weirs, and poisoning or dragging baskets. The danger, though, was brought in by the canoes being capsized by hippos and crocodiles. To be protected from such, fishermen and women used special charms that they wore or suspended at the bows. Other charms were used by being attached to nets to ensure a good catch and prevent the nets from being torn.

It is not only the charms that these hunters and fishermen depended on. They also depended on the ancestors. For example, they relied on the ancestor hunters and fishermen. They believed that being attached to the ancestors would guarantee them protection and success in their professions.

Kangende in this work has tried to relate African myth to life's most important occupations. He sees myths to have been influenced by man's desire to have a better world. Man was able to fit into his world more easily through the intervention of the ancestors who are his connection to the supernatural world.

This work therefore considers myths as those stories that help man understand the world beyond physical reach such as the involvement of the gods in people's day to day lives.

Apart from Kangende, the other writer who has studied mythology in Zambia is Mwewa (1977) in his PhD dissertation, *Traditional Zambian Eschatology and Ethics Confronting the Advent of Christianity*. In the first chapter, Mwewa looks at the traditional Zambian's concept of God. He says that the traditional Zambian sees God as the supreme being responsible for the creation of everything including man himself. Sometimes, he has been given names that mean moulder or maker and creator such as *Kabumba-Lesa* (Bemba).

Mwewa further states that myths that relate to the origin of death show God as the Lord of Life and creation. He shows that it was man's own mistake or folly that led to his choosing death over life. He says that due to the same myths, it still remains in Zambia today that "the East symbolises life, birth and growth. The West is the sign of the setting sun, of dangers, of the ebbing of life; it denotes death" (1977; 3).

Over and above, Mwewa says that "the names, proverbs, myths, expression and prayers concerning God manifest a traditional Zambian belief in the existence of a personal supreme being" (Ibid; 25).

The works discussed so far are by Zambian writers. Knappert (1971) would probably be brought in appropriately here with his claim that by the time of his writing his book, *Myths and Legends of the Congo*, there was no comprehensive study of mythology of the many peoples of the Congo. He says that most authoritative works on the subject were written by missionaries who he says had spent twenty to forty years among the indigenous Congolese. Many historians have been accused of writing the history of lands foreign to them. This has been used to

account for the misconceptions regarding the history of the world. Many have said that it is for this reason that the history shared from an outsider tends to be biased towards the outside hence not giving a genuine picture (Chondoka and Botha: 2007).

It should not be surprising that Knappert is a non-African by origin. He was born in Holland. What he may use as defence for his authority on African myths is his having carried out extensive studies on African literature. This is evident from his holding degrees from Ghent, Pretoria, and Makerere. He has also been a lecturer in Oriental and African Studies in London.

The question raised here could probably be on Knappert's desire in showing that his work represents the most comprehensive study of the mythology of the Congo when he explains that he has included tales from his own research in the work under discussion. Of course, he explains that legends of the Congo are different from many other tales as each story has a mystery at the bottom leaving the reader puzzled. He says this shows the inexpressible secret of the human spirit.

What is clear here is that in these myths, it is the human spirit that is at the centre. While the introduction of this chapter states that myths are related to the supernatural, still they are not divorced from the human being who is at the centre. Therefore, as has been said, they are meant to relate man to the world and therefore can be taken to mean that they try to connect man's inner spirit to the supernatural.

Knappert sees these myths and legends to be compounded by spirits and witches, and serpents and monsters. It would therefore not be wrong to conclude that Knappert's view is what has been already arrived at above that these myths are intended to connect man's inner spirit to the world of the supernatural. Therefore, man is connected to this supernatural world because these myths are at the centre of his life.

In *The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Africa*, Zahan (1979) makes a sweeping statement about African myths on the beginning of death. He says that these myths are sometimes simple, repetitious, signifiers of the human condition. He goes further to state that other myths are presented as superficially

plausible lines of argument linking man's immortality to a certain requirement which he cannot satisfy.

In talking about this, Zahan mentions that many authors have talked about the 'message that failed.' This is understood to mean that there was a message that was sent but failed to reach man hence the message of death.

This theme of the message that failed has brought issues regarding speed versus slowness on one hand and life versus death on the other. These myths generally have the lizard and the chameleon carrying a message to man. Due to chameleon's slowness the message of life does not reach man. The message man gets is from fast-paced lizard. It is the message of death.

According to Zahan, these myths show that there is space between God and humans. This therefore goes on to mean that there is a world of man and that of God. They go on to explain the immortality of God and the mortality of man. In conclusion, he says that this indicates man's concern to locating the problem of human existence.

Zahan's view seems to point to the idea that death came to man because of the two reptiles, chameleon and lizard. This leads to a relationship with the reptile in Milton's *Paradise Lost* that is blamed for man's death. In this case as well, there is a message that failed. This is the message from God that man should not eat of the forbidden fruit. Man's inability to heed this message, and hence to listen to Satan, is blamed for all his woes.

...the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death unto the world, and all our woe,
With the loss of Eden... (lines 1 – 4).

The message that failed then that Zahan (1979) has illustrated above, though discussed under African related mythology literature, is not divorced from English mythology as revealed by Milton. Zahan's concept of 'the lost message' can, therefore, be said to be universal.

Akol (2007) sees the transferability of the stories as what makes it easy for the stories to travel through generations. He says the village environment and atmosphere in which they are told impress them on the memory. It can therefore be inferred in this case that Akol does not merely say that the environment contributes to the stories being transferred from one generation to the other, it is clear he shows that they are meant to be memorised. It is for this reason that Leeming's (1989) view that one of the roles of myths in society is to teach morals holds. Even though he has not mentioned it, it will be taken for granted that Akol regards them to be an element of teaching in society as much as they are used to explain the world.

Another out of the ordinary element Akol brings out is that of the stories being told to children. He sees them as being a teaching ground since education is introduced to people at a younger age. It can be concluded here that the activity of telling myths is not merely to entertain but chiefly to educate.

The relationship between education and mythology is related to the relationship between education and morality. Magesa (1998: 41) connects morality to mythology. He observes that the conception of morality in Africa is embedded in tradition. It originates from God and through the ancestors goes on to man. God, in Africa, is seen as the "Great Ancestor, the First Founder, the Giver of Life, the Power behind everything that is. The Ancestors, the dead human progenitors of the clan or tribe, are the custodians of this tradition. They are its immediate reason for existence, and they are its ultimate purpose". When the ancestors, who are actually in constant contact with both God and humans, intrude into the lives of humanity, it is with specific intentions. This they do either on their own or through the agency of the spirits. On the other hand, the spirits, he states, are in the form of either disincarnate human persons or powers residing in natural phenomena such as trees, rocks, rivers, or lakes.

The hierarchy therefore has God holding the highest position, followed by the Ancestors, and finally humans. The spirits take the position between the Ancestors and humans, though sometimes they are 'sidelined'.

Magesa further says that according to the African, myth and, its companion, ritual constitute what students of language can term 'primary language' as it is a

symbolic form of language that expresses the truths of human existence in a way that rational language cannot. His conclusion is that myths comprise the African moral conception of the universe.

Magesa's conclusion cannot be said to be apt in relation to myth in Africa. The basic understanding is still what covers the entire human species regarding myth. It is clear that the human being's creation and understanding of myth is centred on his quest to understand the world that he cannot explain in plain language. It is for this reason that he has created a path that will help explain the world for him that will be unquestionable and undebatable.

2.6 Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to review various literature that examine the subjects of the dissertation. The various literature discussed focus on the dramatists under discussion and the literary and dramatic concepts related to their work.

The next chapter gives synopses of the texts under discussion. The chapter begins with Jonson's *The Golden Age Restored* followed by *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. Later, Soyinka's plays, the first *The Strong Breed*, followed by *Death and the King's Horseman* come in.

CHAPTER THREE: SYNOPSES OF THE TEXTS

3.0 General

The dissertation studies four texts in total. Even if there is reference to other texts made, the subject texts are given prominence. This chapter briefly retells the works under study. It summarises the masques first, then the plays later. *The Golden Age Restored* is first, followed by *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. In the plays, the first is *The Strong Breed* which is followed by *Death and the King's Horseman*.

3.1 *The Golden Age Restored*

It is during the Iron Age and Pallas descends to earth after Jove, God, has expressed his displeasure at the behaviour of humans. Jove has explained that the absence of justice on earth requires him to restore the Golden Age.

After clashing with Iron Age, Pallas, through her powers, exterminates Iron Age from the earth. Pallas calls on Astraea, the goddess of justice, and the Golden Age, who, while descend to earth, wonder whether they are coming to live with men again. They further ask Pallas if Jove will restore to earth Justice and purity which Pallas affirms. They descend to reign.

Pallas promises the Poets that during this restoration of the Golden Age, the virtue that was oppressed will grow and buried arts will flourish. The poets promise to work under the charge of Pallas. Pallas throws a bolt of lightning from her shield and darkness is replaced with light.

This restoration of the Golden Age and Astraea leads to what is ultimately seen as the restoration of the earth as they say:

Astrea. Now peace,
Golden Age. And love,
Astrea. Faith,
Golden Age. Joys,
Both. All increase;
Two Poets. And strife,
Two Poets. And hate,
Two Poets. And fear,

*Two Poets.
All Four.*

And pain
All cease.”

3.2 Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue

In the scene, there is a grove of ivy at Atlas’s feet, out of which, to a wild music of cymbals, flutes, and tabors, is brought forth Comus, the god of cheer, or the belly, riding in triumph, his head crowned with roses and other flowers, his hair curled; his attendants wait upon him crowned with ivy, and present him a hymn in which they praise him as the god of the belly referring to him as prime master of art and giver of wit.

Hercules’s Bowl-bearer responds saying that singing of god Comus here, the Belly-god, is both well and not well. It is well as it is a ballad, he argues, but when the belly is not edified by it, it is not well.

Hercules, who has been asleep all this while, awakes and sees men shaped as bottles dancing. This surprises him. He believes it is Earth’s anger that has bred such men that he calls sponges, because he killed her son, Antaeus. He wonders if this drunkenness can be taken to be pleasure since, it is clear, it can lead to one’s death as they might burst after drinking so much. He goes on to say that this that the belly feels is not delight but punishment. At this point, a choir is discovered that invites Hercules to rest. As the choir sings, it invites him to rest because, according to the choir, he has done so much for the sake of virtue. He rests and sleeps.

After Hercules has fallen asleep, an antimasque of pygmies is performed in which the pigmies wonder why Antaeus is dead and Hercules still alive. As though strong, they begin to make as if they will avenge Antaeus’s death by killing Hercules. They say they will kill him even if he brought three others his equal. Yet, when Hercules awakes, they all disappear running into holes.

At his waking, Hercules is asked by the choir to look at the dwarfs who, it believes, will die upon being seen. It is concluded that it is for this reason that they have already fled.

Mercury descends from the hill with a garland of poplar crown and asks Hercules, active friend of virtue, to rest still and not be disturbed by dwarfs. He informs Hercules that the aged Atlas has sent him a crown and that Atlas appreciates the assistance he, Hercules once gave him. He goes on to mention that today pleasure will be reconciled with virtue. Pleasure will be servant while virtue will look on.

The choir asks Atlas to open up and let men come out so that they may read his mysterious lines and signs of education. The men, twelve of them, come out of Atlas and are led by pleasure.

Hercules asks Mercury, whom he refers to as Hermes, who the leader of the descending men is. He is told that it is Daedalus, the wise.

Up to the end of the masque, songs follow in which it is said that the dance should interweave a curious knot so that it is not possible to tell the difference between which is, and that which is not pleasure. The final message which brings Daedalus and Hercules together, shows that pleasure and virtue are expected to walk together but not dwell together. The men are asked to return to the hill and be engaged in labour. They are advised to keep virtue's seat their own.

3.3 The Strong Breed

The edition used in this dissertation is from the 1964 *Five Plays* of the Oxford University Press.

The play opens with Sunma, a workmate of Eman's, a school teacher and physician in their modest clinic, and Jaguna's daughter, persuading Eman to leave the village because, as she claims, she wants them to watch the New Year together – in some other place.

As the scene progresses, two travellers pass hurriedly in front of Eman's house. The man has a raffia sack while the woman has a cloth-covered basket. The man enters first, turns and urges the woman who is just emerging to hurry.

Eman refuses to leave the village. This does not please Sunma who tells Eman that the villagers do not care what he does for them. She tells him all the villagers are evil. While this is going on, Ifada appears. He is a drooling idiot who seems incapable of anything. He presents Eman with a basket of ripe oranges. Sunma says she does not want Ifada near her. Even though this does not please Eman, Sunma maintains that Ifada should stay away from them.

Meantime, a sick girl who is not allowed to play with other children for fear that they might catch her disease enters. Eman gives her his bubba for her carrier. Similarly, this does not please Sunma. The girl asks Ifada to play with her since he is the only one available even though he has 'a head like a spider and' his 'mouth dribbles like a roof'.

While the celebrations are going on outside, Eman and Sunma are locked up in Eman's house. A short while later, they hear sounds of panic coming from outside. Moving to the door, Eman realises it is Ifada, who desperate with terror, pounds on the door. Sunma advises Eman not to open the door claiming it is a trick. Without heeding Sunma's advice, Eman opens the door and lets Ifada in.

Within a short space of time, voices are heard outside. Eman lifts Ifada and hides him in his inner room and returns shutting the door behind him. The earlier voices come closer and the village elders, Jaguna, Sunma's father, and Oroge followed by other men come to Eman's house. They request to be given Ifada but Eman refuses that it is not right for them to use an unwilling person for carrier. After a lengthy discussion, they challenge him to take the position of Ifada since the role of carrier was for strangers and, apart from Ifada, the only other stranger in the village is Eman. In the meantime, Jaguna has asked some men to take his daughter, Sunma, home so that she stops interfering with what he is doing.

Unable to stand up to the challenge, Eman sees Ifada taken away, their eyes transfixed. The scene ends in a short blackout of no more than a minute. The

objective behind the short blackout could be to show that it takes Eman little time to decide as this can be seen from his past decisions. This is revealed more in due course.

In the scene that follows, Ifada is seen returning to Eman's house. When Sunma, enters, she sees Ifada and concludes that Eman has been taken away as carrier. Even though Soyinka does not say what happens to Eman during the blackout, it is assumed that he decided to take the position of Ifada knowing that he was the only other stranger in the village and, therefore, the only other person who could save Ifada.

Sunma calls Ifada names realising Eman's being taken away has been caused by Ifada. She asks him to take her where Eman is and, as soon as Ifada points the direction, Sunma seizes him by the arm and drags him off as her voice fades into other shouts and sounds of running footsteps, banged tins, bells, and dogs.

Eman is seen as a carrier in hiding and says he will remain in hiding till dawn saying he has done enough already playing the carrier. Jaguna, Oroge and the other men are pursuing him. It is learnt that he had not even gone through one compound before he bolted. This is interpreted to mean that he had underestimated what a carrier was expected to go through. The men are guarding his house expecting that he will be getting there.

While in hiding, through a flashback, it is learnt that Eman's father was a carrier in Eman's original village. He had 'carried the boat' for a long period of time which was expected of a carrier in his village. It is also learnt that being a carrier in Eman's original village is an honour and carriers are treated with respect. Eman is told by his father that theirs is a Strong Breed. They were called to be carriers. A special quality in them is mentioned that at their births, their mothers died. This showed to them that really they were destined to be carriers. It is further learnt that Eman's betrothed, Omaa, died giving birth to Eman's child. At the end of this scene, Eman's father's attendant informs the old man that the boat is ready and the old man says he is too. The old man leaves trotting followed by two men.

As the last man leaves, Eman comes face to face with Oroge. Jaguna also enters and shouts to the rest that they have found him. He is whipped back to the 'present' and he flees once again.

It is nearly midnight and they continue pursuing him. Jaguna once again encounters his daughter, Sunma, who calls him a 'murderer', flying at him, clawing at his face like a crazed tigress. He strikes her so hard on the face that she falls to her knees. Ifada comes in to help her up.

The scene that follows has Eman initially playing two roles: one in the present and another in the past. Though chiefly the scene is in a flashback, Eman comes in as a carrier though the rest of the other characters are unaware of him.

In this scene, there comes a girl aged fourteen, Omae, who talks to a boy, Eman, of the same age. The boy is at a circumcision site and the girl is his lover. As they are talking, Eman's tutor comes in. He says he is going to have the girl punished for having come to a restricted place. He says that he will make her wash his clothes. Able to tell that his tutor wants to sleep with Omae, Eman leaves with his clothes and asks him to leave her alone. The scene ends with Eman and Omae. Eman is leaving Omae and the rest of the village seemingly forever. He asks her to stay with his father.

When the pair vanishes, Eman the carrier, and adult, makes a nervous move as if to go after them. The girl he helped at the opening of the play appears. He asks her for water. After exiting to get Eman some water, she re-enters with Jaguna and Oroge and points where Eman was. They conclude he is thirsty and looking for water. It is learnt that the path to the stream passes through the sacred trees. To them this is something planned by the gods.

The next scene is another flashback set around a burial site. Eman, in the flashback, mourns the loss of his lover, Omae who died giving birth to his son. His father has stood a distance away from the burial group. Eman, the carrier enters, as the other Eman (in the flashback) exits.

When Jaguna and Oroge enter, it is learnt that they have set a trap. Jaguna mentions that when he sets a trap, 'even elephants pay homage – their trunks

downwards and one leg up in the sky. When the carrier steps on the fallen twigs, it is up in the sacred trees with him’.

In the final flashback, Eman enters as carrier with the Old Man carrying a boat as in the earlier scene. Eman wants to go with his father but the Old Man does not allow this saying they cannot give the two of them at the same time. All the same, Eman follows, then ‘there is a sound of twigs breaking, and a sudden trembling in the branches. Then silence’.

The final scene has the front of Eman’s house appearing with the sick girls hanging effigy (carrier). Sunma enters supported by Ifada who goes mad rushing at the object and tearing it down. The villagers begin to return, subdued and guilty. They exchange no words. As Jaguna and Oroge appear, Jaguna, who is leading sees Sunma and stops at once, retreating slightly. When Oroge enquires why, he merely says, “The viper,” referring to his daughter.

Finally, in Jaguna and Oroge’s dialogue, it is shown that men are cowards in this village. ‘One and all they looked up at the man and words died in their throats’. Jaguna says that women could have behaved better but one by one they crept off like sick dogs. The light fades on Sunma, Ifada and the sick girl.

3.4 Death and the King’s Horseman

First published in 1975 by Eyre Methuen Ltd, the edition used in this dissertation is the 1993 Methuen Drama reissue. The play has been written in five scenes. This synopsis looks at the play in relation to the five scenes. The scenes shift between what can be termed as chiefly Western and chiefly African, where the first scene is chiefly African, the second chiefly Western, the third chiefly African while the last two focus on both Western and African scenarios.

The first scene opens in a marketplace ‘in its closing stages’. Women pass through with their loaded baskets on the way home. ‘Elesin Oba enters pursued by his drummers and praise singers’. In this scene it is learnt that Elesin ‘is a man of enormous vitality who speaks, dances, and sings with that infectious enjoyment of

life which accompanies all his actions'. He is embarking on a journey, it is later learnt, to the other side where the ancestors are.

Iyaloja, a mother of the market, with the rest of the women dress him in rich *alari* cloth. While the dance is going on, Elesin sees an exceptionally beautiful woman who he is attracted to immediately. The woman is betrothed to Iyaloja's son but, since Elesin is on the verge of going to join the ancestors, he has to be granted whatever he desires. Elesin is asked to prepare himself as the women go to prepare the bridal chamber.

In scene two, the reader is introduced to the District Officer, Simon Pilkings who, at the opening of the scene, is, with his wife Jane, dancing to a tango playing on an old hand-cranked gramophone. It is clear they are wearing some fancy dress which, it is learnt later, was confiscated from the *egungun*, the ancestral masquerade who were causing trouble at the time their costume was confiscated.

Much of this is revealed when a constable, Amusa refuses to talk to them (the Pilkings) because of the costume that he calls the costume of the dead. Though he refuses to talk, Amusa is a Moslem who is expected not to believe in traditional African religious practices. His refusal to talk in the presence of the mask suggests that even though he is a Moslem, he is still an African. Refusing to speak, Amusa writes that there is an emergence case where an important chief 'the Elesin is going to commit death' at night.

On the other hand, Joseph, Pilkings's home servant is a Christian. Joseph is asked by Pilking, after Amusa has left, if the costume has any effect on him (Pilkings). He says that Pilkings being a good Christian and white cannot be affected by the costume that he describes as powerless. On being asked what is happening in town, Joseph says that the Chief, Elesin is going to die so as to accompany the King who died a month earlier. According to tradition, when the King dies, a month later he has to be buried with his Chief Horseman, who in this case is Elesin. But later, when Pilkings asks Joseph the meaning of the drums, Joseph explains that they send two messages: the death of a great chief and the wedding of a great chief.

In the same scene, it is learnt that Pilkings has had problems with Elesin. Pilkings sent Elesin's son, Olunde, to England to study Medicine. The result was a serious difference between the two.

Pilkings sends Joseph with a note to Amusa instructing him to arrest Elesin as a way of foiling the attempted suicide.

By the end of the scene, Pilkings reveals that the Prince of England is on a tour of the colonies and he is now in town. It is said that he will be gracing the ball that is taking place later in the night.

The third scene is at the market place again. Amusa, with two of his constables, has come to arrest Elesin. The women of the market tease him and tell him that Elesin, who is destined by blood to be the King's Horseman, is with his new bride. Two girls who grab hats and batons from the constables begin to play-act, imitating whites and giving their views of the white man's view of his African servants.

When Elesin leaves his bridal chamber, he returns and begins the dance of death that is expected to transport him to the other side. In a song conversation between him and his Praise-Singer, Elesin shows his journey to the other side. Iyaloja sings praises for Elesin just as his Praise-Singer does.

As the voice of the Praise-Singer shows the deeper movement of Elesin into death, the scene comes to a close with Elesin's continued dance, now in a trance. Lights fade as Elesin's gestures in his dance become weighty.

In Scene Four, the masque is in performance at the hall of the Residency. The couples are in a wide range of fancy dress. There is also a police brass band which plays Rule Britannia as the Prince enters and later formally opens the floor.

Later, Amusa comes to report the results of his encounter with Elesin. Unfortunately, he cannot talk to Pilkings because of Pilkings's costume. He is immediately fired.

The Resident is not happy with the idea that there is a looming riot in town. He fears that it will send a bad message to the Prince who is present. As Pilkings

leaves to maintain order, he leaves his wife, Jane who meets Olunde, dressed in a western suit.

Olunde explains that he used the same passage as the Prince. He travelled on a mail boat in the Prince's convoy. He says that when he was informed that the King had died, he knew he had to return to bury his father as was expected of him. This leads to a discussion that borders on sacrifice. It is learnt that a white Captain blew up a ship while inside because it was a danger to the other ships and the rest of the population. Olunde also shares what he saw during the war saying that young men are wasted as they go to fight in the war. This is in reference to the Second World War, the period around which the play is set.

During the discussion, Jane seems to understand what is going on in African culture when she compares it with theirs.

When he meets Pilkings, Olunde tries to explain the situation to Pilkings who does not seem ready to listen. When Elesin tries to run away from Pilkings (from backstage), he comes face to face with his son (onstage). Disappointed that he has seen his father before he (his father) is dead, Olunde leaves saying to Elesin, "I have no father, eater of left-overs."

In the final scene, Elesin is imprisoned in a wide iron-barred gate that served as a store for slaves before being transported. In a dialogue with Pilkings, Elesin tries to explain to Pilkings the damage he (Pilkings) has caused to the rest of the population of his chieftom by preventing the ritual suicide. He even asserts that Olunde will avenge what Pilkings has done as his (Olunde's) spirit will destroy them.

When Iyalaja, comes to see Elesin after being permitted to see him by Pilkings, she ridicules Elesin for having been slow in performing his duty. She scorns Elesin very strongly saying he has betrayed the people. She later announces that she has brought a burden that moves on the slow weary legs of women. She says that even though the burden is slow, it has overtaken Elesin and it rides ahead of his laggard will.

At its arrival, the burden is revealed as Olunde who has died in place of his father. At seeing this, Elesin instantly strangles himself.

The bride who was sobbing earlier but has been motionless all this while walks calmly into the cell and closes Elesin's eyes. She then pours some earth on each eyelid and comes out again. Iyaloja says, "Now forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn." She goes off accompanied by the Bride.

3.5 Conclusion

Though quite lengthy, this chapter has basically given the synopses of the works under investigation. These are: *The Golden Age Restored*, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman*. The next chapter examines the use of mythology in the texts.

CHAPTER FOUR: MYTHOLOGY IN THE TEXTS UNDER INVESTIGATION

4.0 General

This chapter examines the use of mythology in the texts under investigation. It should be mentioned on the onset that the identification of mythological elements used in the texts does not entirely depend on the actual mention of the myths in question. The analysis is based on the understanding that the writers in question have an understanding of the myths being discussed.

As it has already been stated, the texts in question here are: *The Golden Age Restored*, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, *The Strong Breed*, and *Death and the King's Horseman*. Both methods discussed in the Conceptual Framework will be used to show the myths in the texts.

4.1 *The Golden Age Restored*

As this masque that was written and presented in 1615 is discussed, it is important to firstly get the meaning of Golden Age even though it is known that Golden Age is a character in the masque.

The online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia points to a poem by the love poet Ovid that says:

The golden age was first; when Man yet new,
No rule but uncorrupted reason knew:
And, with a native bent, did good pursue.
Unforc'd by punishment, un-aw'd by fear, [...]

Almost appropriate for the definition, the Golden Age is the time during the beginnings of life. According to Greek mythology, it was a time when everything was as is desired. And, as can be concluded from Ovid's poem, extracted from his *Metamorphoses*, it was an ideal time. It would not be wrong to say that it is a time that man is looking forward to hence over insistence on it by not only writers but also the rest of humans as it is the central theme regarding the afterlife preached in various religious and mythological texts.

The Golden Age is present in Greek mythology, Christianity, Islam, and other religious beliefs. According to the site, the Greeks believe that the age took place in the beginnings of humanity which is perceived to have been an ideal state or utopia. It is known as a period of peace, harmony, stability and prosperity.

In Christianity, it is a time associated with the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is the same kind of time that Christians are looking forward to during the time referred to as The Kingdom of God. While the serpent is still seen in the Garden of Eden, it should be realised that the serpent is not only an evil being, but also symbolises wisdom and knowledge, desired attributes in humanity.

In Islam, the Golden Age is taken to have been from the time of Prophet Muhammad for about five hundred through the Umayyad, and Abbasid dynasties until the Mongol Invasion.

The Golden Age, it is believed by the Hindus, was the first and perfect stage of life in humanity. They call it the Krita Yuga or the Satya Yuga. In the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*, it is described as:

[...] Men neither bought nor sold; there were no poor and no rich; there was no need to labour, because all that men required was obtained by the power of will; the chief virtue was the abandonment of all worldly desires. The Krita Yuga was without disease; there was no lessening with the years; there was no hatred or vanity, or evil thought whatsoever; no sorrow, no fear. All mankind could attain to supreme blessedness. [...]

They believe that when the world comes to the end, this stage will come back. There is some similarity here with the Christian belief.

From this, it can be concluded that the Golden Age is generally a mythical period. It is what human beings desire and, for this reason, they relate it to the gods. As was discussed much earlier in the dissertation, myths are related to the gods. It is for this reason that these religions can be taken to be institutions of myth to those

that do not believe in what they preach. Only those who are part of them believe that what they teach is real.

The short masque, *The Golden Age Restored* has four main characters: Pallas, Iron Age, Golden Age, and Astrea.

Pallas who is also known as Athene or Athena plays the centre role in the masque. The Greek Goddess was once known as the Goddess of war though she is chiefly known for her role as judge, and mediator than for actually fighting in battle. She was Zeus's main advisor and the only one who was entrusted with his magic shield and the secret regarding where he hid his lightning bolts.

As was explained in Chapter Two of this dissertation, Athene's birth is very out of the ordinary. She was born after a prophecy that Zeus's wife Metis would have a child greater than Zeus himself. This made Zeus swallow her when she was pregnant of Athena. After suffering from several headaches, Zeus asked another god to split open his head which translated into Athena's birth.

Just like in her myth, in the masque Athena plays the role of judge. She condemns Iron Age to change and perish.

[Pallas.] So change and perish, scarcely knowing how,
That 'gainst the gods do take so vain a vow,
And think to equal with your mortal dates
Their lives that are obnoxious to no fates.[...]
Die all that can remain of you but stone,
And that be seen awhile, and then be none.
*They metamorphosed and the scene changed, she calls Astrea and
the Golden Age.*

In this masque, Pallas retains her quality as judge. She is responsible for restoring Golden Age with Astrea by her (Golden Age's) side.

Iron Age, just like the already briefly discussed Golden Age, is a mythological time derived from an actual time in history. According to an article by the free encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, on the site http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age, Iron Age is both mythical and real. The site, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ages_of_Man that focuses on the mythological iron age says that during this age humans live in toil and

misery. Children dishonour their parents, brother fights with brother and the social contract between guest and host is forgotten. During this age might makes right, and bad men use lies to be thought good. At the height of this age, humans no longer feel shame or indignation at wrongdoing; babies are born with grey hair and the gods have completely forsaken humanity: there is no help against evil.

In the masque, Iron Age is accompanied by a number of undesired characters who are personified qualities that Jonson has called evils. These are discussed in more detail in the next chapter that looks at allegory in the texts. Iron Age calls on to these fellows.

[*Iron Age.*] Come forth, come forth, do we not hear
What purpose, and how worth our fear,
The king of gods hath on us?
He is not of the iron breed
That would, though Fate did help the deed,
Let shame in so upon us.
Rise, rise then up, thou grandame vice
Of all my issue, Avarice,
Bring with thee Fraud and Slander,
Corruption with the golden hands,
Or any subtler ill that stands
To be a more commander.
Thy boys, Ambition, Pride and Scorn,
Force, Rapine, and thy babe last born,
Smooth Treachery, call hither,
Arm folly forth and Ignorance [...]

Iron Age here, with its companions, is a personification of evil which the mythological background has referred to as being so. Iron Age is the opposite of Golden Age which is more desired.

With a look at these three characters and their drawing on their mythological qualities, it can be concluded that Jonson has really borrowed extensively from mythology in his masque. The characters have mentioned other mythological characters such as Astrea herself, a goddess of justice, the Titans who were overthrown by Zeus (Jove), Cronos, Zeus's father, Phoebus (god of poetry), and Zeus himself. In the view of this study, the masque is chiefly a mythological conception veiled in themes of the modern world.

4.2 Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue

The masque, written and presented in 1618 will be analysed in terms of the myths used. The section of the paper will look at the myths employed and how they have been brought into play in the text.

At the very opening of the text, it is quite clear the masque has elements of mythology as seen from the scene that is the mountain Atlas. It should be known that Atlas is a mythical figure who, according to an online source on the myth of Atlas, the library thinkquest website, was one of Rhea's sons. During the war between Cronus and Zeus, Atlas sided with his brother Zeus. In punishment, after Zeus's winning, Atlas was made to support the weight of heavens using a pillar on his shoulders. As shall be seen later, he was temporarily relieved of the burden by Heracles who needed Atlas's help in procuring Golden Apples.

In the masque, Atlas is presented as an old man. Today, Atlas refers to a book that has maps of the world in it. For this reason, in the masque in lines 197 to 201, the choir sings:

Ope agèd Atlas, open then thy lap,
And from thy beamy bosom strike a light,
That men may read in thy mysterious map
All lines
And signs
Of royal education and light.

Atlas here is seen as the actual mythical figure who supports the weight of the heavens on his shoulders. This argument is valid because he is asked to open his lap so that men may read in his mysterious map lines and signs of education. Atlas's presence shows that there is a connection between him and maps. It is for this reason that it is argued here that the Atlas referred to here is the mythical one.

As the masque continues, we are introduced to another mythical figure, Hercules. The first time he says something in the masque, he asks what rituals are taking place when he sees men dressed as bottles and a cask dancing. This is in an

antimasque that precedes his speech. From his speech, it is shown that not only is he a mythical character but also in a mythical semi-plot in the masque. He says:

What rites are these? Breeds earth more monsters yet?
Antaeus scarce is cold: what can beget
This store?—and stay! Such contraries upon her?
Is earth so fruitful of her own dishonour?

'Earth' being mentioned here is the mythical Gaia who bore the Titans of whom Atlas is family. Antaeus, Greaves (1955) says, is Earth's youngest son. He was a king of Libya and his father was Poseidon. Antaeus lived in a cave, feasted on lion flesh and slept on the bare ground to increase his strength that was already insurmountable. He had a tendency of asking all travellers who passed through his village to wrestle with him after which he would kill them when they wore out. Hercules, who is discussed below was not pleased with this barbaric behaviour and desired to end it. It is not clear whether he challenged Antaeus or was challenged by him.

As they wrestled, whenever he fell to the ground, he was revived. Later, Hercules noticed that in fact, Antaeus was deliberately falling onto the ground and was thus regaining strength. He therefore held him up high in the sky and cracked his ribs. That ended Antaeus.

In the masque, Hercules seems to be saying that it is surprising to see more monsters. The presence of monsters, to him, means that Gaia is still giving birth to them. What surprises him is the fact that it has not been long since he killed one of the monsters, Antaeus. While this is not the story in the masque, it is clear Jonson fuses the myth into his masque.

Hercules himself is another important mythical figure who was almost killed by his stepmother Juno. According to Ellingson (1997), Hercules in Latin is Heracles. He was the son of Jupiter and Alcamene. Juno tried to kill him in his infancy by putting a serpent in his cradle. Being born with immense strength, the infant Hercules killed the serpent instead.

The relationship between Hercules and Atlas comes in historically. After trying to kill Hercules for some time, Juno drove him insane. This led Hercules to killing his wife and three children. For this, he was self exiled due to the shame of his lack of sanity.

Later, Hercules sought a Delphic oracle on what was required of him to regain his honour. He was advised to go to the King of Mycenae, Eurystheus and serve him for twelve years. Because Eurystheus could not think of any difficult task for the mighty man, he was helped by Juno with whom they devised twelve very difficult tasks, now known as the labours of Hercules, for him to complete.

One of these tasks, which actually was the eleventh, was that he gets the golden apples of the Hesperides. Hercules was advised that it was only Atlas who could help him do that. Hence, he told Atlas that if he would get the apples for him, he (Hercules) would relieve him of his labour of holding the heavens. When Atlas returned with the apples, he realised just how much it was relieving not to hold the earth for any period of time. Atlas, then, asked Hercules to hold the heavens for an undefined period of time. This Hercules accepted but asked if he could use a cushion. He, therefore, asked if could go and get it. For this reason, he asked Atlas to hold the heavens for the time being, and he left never to return again.

This incident is touched on in the masque as Mercury, the god of flight and of untruth, and a messenger of the Olympian travellers (also known as Hermes in Greek – the god of travellers and traders) mentions it to Hercules:

See, here a crown the agèd hill hath sent thee,
My grandsire Atlas, he that did present thee
With the best sheep that in his fold were found,
Or golden fruit in the Hesperian ground,
For rescuing his fair daughters, then the prey
Of a rude pirate, as thou cam'st this way;
And taught thee all learning of the sphere,
And how, like him, thou might'st the heavens up-bear,
As that thy labours virtuous recompense.

Mercury in this speech brings to life the story of Hercules and Atlas without hinting on how Atlas was tricked by Hercules. All the same, the reference to the myth is

unquestionably clear. It is important also to note that the killing of Antaeus by Hercules which was mentioned earlier is also mentioned in the masque.

After the second antimasque, that of the pigmies, the pygmies begin to taunt Hercules because, as they claim, he killed their brother.

1st Pigmy. Antaeus dead! And Hercules yet alive!
Where is this Hercules? What would I give
To meet him now? Meet him? nay three such other,
If they had hand in murder of our brother?
With three? with four? with ten? nay, with as many
As the name yields? Pray anger there be any
Whereon to feed my just revenge, and soon:
How shall I kill him? hurl him 'gainst the moon,
And break him in small portions? Give to Greece
His brain, and every tract of earth a piece?

Similarly, Mercury mentions the wrestling match in his long speech saying:

Antaeus, by thee suffocated here,

From these two speeches, it is clear that the myths of Hercules, Antaeus, and Atlas, intertwined as they are, have been used in the masque.

Even though there are still other mythological figures not yet discussed the dissertation will now focus on its last mythological figure, Daedalus. The figures not discussed include the Hesperides, who according to Grischy(?) were daughters of Hesper, Hesperus, who according to Atsma (2000), was Atlas's brother, and Juno (Hercules's stepmother).

Daedalus, as mentioned earlier, was Icarus's father. According to the site <http://www.island-ikaria.com/culture/myth.asp>, he was very very highly respected and talented being an artisan descended from the royal family of Cecrops, the mythical first King of Athens. He is remembered for his great skill in architecture, sculpture and invention, having produced many famous works.

He is recorded to have committed a crime of envy against his apprentice/nephew, Talus, who seemed destined to be as great an artisan as his uncle. Due to the envy, Daedalus killed the young artisan. He was henceforth exiled to

Crete where he was placed in the service of King Minos. It is here where he bore Icarus with the beautiful Naucrate, a mistress-slave of the King.

Daedalus built a labyrinth in which to imprison a dreadful Minotaur. The Minotaur was a monster with the head of a bull and body of man. It was born from a union between Pasiphae, Minos's wife, and a bull that Poseidon had sent to Minos for a gift.

When Theseus, the heroic King of Athens volunteered to be sent to the labyrinth with a view to killing it, and also as a way of presenting a human sacrifice that his city had been asked to send to Minos, he was given information on the labyrinth by Daedalus. At the same time, when he arrived in Crete, Minos's daughter, Ariadne fell in love with him. When he went to the labyrinth, with the information from Daedalus, Theseus managed to kill the Minotaur.

Realising that Theseus had managed to survive due to Daedalus's intervention, Minos was upset and instead imprisoned Daedalus and his son, Icarus who managed to escape using wings made from feathers and wax.

In the masque, Daedalus comes in as a wise man. He is a guide who gives his dancers laws. The reference to him as wise is due to his immense abilities in art and invention, which as can be recalled helped him escape from the labyrinth. As a leader of the group of dancers, Daedalus tries to reconcile Pleasure to Virtue. He says the dance steps should be so intertwined that it should be difficult to tell which one is which. They should appear as one. He further says that it should be hard to tell the difference between Pleasure and Virtue.

Come on, come on; and where you go,
So interweave the curious knot,
And ev'n th' observer scarce may know
Which lines are Pleasure's and which not.

First, figure out the doubtful way
At which awhile all youth should stay,
Where she and virtue did content
Which should have Hercules to friend.

Then, as all actions of mankind
Are but a labyrinth or maze,

So let your dances be entwined,
Yet not perplex men unto gaze;

But measured, and so numerous too,
As men may read each act you do,
And when they see the graces meet,
Admire the wisdom of your feet.

For dancing is an exercise
Not only shows the mover's wit,
But maketh the beholder wise,
As he hath power to rise to it.

The wisdom attributed to Daedalus is undoubtedly born out of his mythical wisdom. His having been an architect, sculptor, and inventor gives him wisdom. Jonson has used this wisdom in the mythical nature to give him the role of reconciling Pleasure to Virtue.

It can be said that while there is a new theme and plot in this masque, Jonson has dwelt so much in the mythologies of the characters to discuss new issues. The characters, not devoid of their mythical qualities, have perfectly fitted in the plot of the masque as much as the plot is not very highly developed. It can therefore be concluded to say that *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* has used mythology to achieve its effect.

4.3 *The Strong Breed*

It has been mentioned in this study that Soyinka chiefly combines African mythology and tradition with western conventions of writing. In this section of the paper, his play, *The Strong Breed* is analysed in terms of the myths used.

Here, the most likely method to yield best results will be the second one that was discussed which looks at the parallels between mythology and the text in question.

In analysing this work, it would be prudent to begin with a statement from Roscoe (1977: 210) who says that “old orders must die before new ones can grow and the dying must be long and squalid.” The whole element brought out here is that the old, unwanted and not any more necessary must go. It is only then that the new

can take root. It is not questionable as to what the role of death is in order for one to get renewal.

Upon birth, before a baby can be exposed to the rest of the world, it normally has its hair removed. This ritual signifies newness. The ritual of shaving continues and is seen in maturity. When a child becomes an adult, they go through the ritual of removing hair which connotes a shift into a different realm of life. A special ceremony usually takes place to let the world know the transition of this same individual. The Luvale of North-Western Zambia have the *Mukanda* ceremony which is a boys' initiation ritual while the Chewa of Eastern Zambia have the *Chisungu* for girls (Kapwepwe, 2007).

Upon dying, it was traditional in Zambia and it still is in other parts of the country for the dead to have their nails removed as they go into another world. It was and has been argued in a number of societies that the dead do not end at death but go to join another world. In traditional Africa, it is merely taken to be a movement to join the ancestors who are positioned between humans and the gods. The dead therefore are not finished but merely transported through the vehicle of death to the other world.

It is a similar claim coming from Christians who say that after death, the next stage is eternity either in heaven or in hell. Those that lived a Godly life enter a realm of eternal life in heaven while those that did not enter that of eternal death in hell which has perpetual suffering.

After the burial of the dead, in traditional Africa, the deceased's house is brought down to indicate that the past is gone and a new world has been born. The relatives of the dead, especially the very close ones like siblings, children, spouse, and parents shave to signify their entry into a new world. It is in this belief in the afterlife that all these rituals are performed. Death has therefore always been related to newness.

Poets have equally exploited this concept. In *Goodbye*, Moyo (2005) says:

We have reached the end of the road
And must now go separate ways

We must still remember the days
That we passed through together
Now, as we go separate paths of life
Let us dip our thoughts deep
Into our memories of yesteryears [...]
Now that we are becoming separate
In thought and in fault
In the worth of our mirth
We shall live differently
I shall live a life unsupported
By the roots of our guiding friendship
A life of tears as wide seas
That I have to cross to reach the lands of happiness
And the worlds of bright laughter [...]
Dear, as we say goodbye to each other
Let us not hide our tears for each other
Let us not hide them away from each other
Let us cry together
As we pray that we meet again
Therefore, 'till we meet again
It's goodbye

The poem gives a picture that there is another world where the persona will meet the departed friend of theirs. There is an element of crossing over which symbolises moving from the world of the living to the world of the dead preached in traditional Africa. This crossing over comes out in *The Journey Beyond* where Awoonor (1975; 277) says:

The bowling cry through door posts
carrying boiling pots
ready for the feasters.
Kutsiami the benevolent boatman;
when I come to the rivershore
please ferry me across
I do not have on my cloth-end
the price of your stewardship.

The poet here shows the transition point where a boatman, Kutsiami ferries the departed across. As it has already been argued, it is difficult to say this is what really happens. It would hence not be wrong to conclude that this idea of crossing over to the other side is mythical.

It is in African mythology where people cross over to the other side and the question remains as to what exactly follows. What follows is a new world where

everything else is new. This could well be related to the already discussed concept of the Golden age.

Of course, if looked at in terms of Western mythology, the myth of the Phoenix here is the most appropriate. In *The Strong Breed*, there is the death of someone for the sake of newness. With Roscoe (1971) saying that Soyinka uses the idea of life in death and death in life, what is seen in this play is death bringing life through people being saved after desired sacrifice is made.

When the phoenix reaches the point of departure, it burns then rises again from ashes – young and new. In *The Strong Breed*, Eman's father, the Old Man has been carrying the boat for over twenty years. This is a sure sign of renewal every time he returns. He believes they are the only people who know how to take this kind of sacrifice and fears that Eman will not do it the way it really has to be done, which proves true later as the play progresses.

OLD MAN: I am very sad. You only go to give to others what rightly belongs to us. You will use your strength among thieves. They are thieves because they take what is ours, they have no claim of blood to it. They will even lack the knowledge to use it wisely. Truth is my companion at this moment my son. I know everything I say will surely bring the sadness of truth.

The thieves are the strange land where Eman works as a physician and teacher. Because of their lack of knowledge, the Old Man believes that it will have an effect on renewal. The Old Man knows that this is his last journey that is meant to be continued by Eman who has run away to a strange land where he shall not give the best of himself.

It is true that once the ritual is performed accordingly, renewal will follow. It should be remembered, though, that there still remains a lot more to be seen in terms of renewal in this text. Renewal needs not be limited to the performer of the action coming back to life; it comes in a variety of ways. For example, in tragedy, catharsis, which is the purging of emotions is expected to be on the audience. It is the audience that gets renewal in this case. Similarly, renewal in this case still pervades the air even as the Old Man leaves the task with the unwilling Eman.

When Eman dies in the strange land, the villagers walk back home subdued. They look guilty. It is clear from what has happened that this village has been renewed. It is very likely that the many times the end-of-year ritual has been performed have not yielded the best results. It would be right to say that at the sacrifice of Eman, the results of their evil are made clear.

This renewal of the Phoenix is possible with the Phoenix alone. Not any other bird would be able to be renewed as the Phoenix. Similarly, it is only Eman's family line that is meant for the task. The Old Man says that they are the Strong Breed making it only them to perform that task. They are special like the special bird. At their births, their mothers die. At the birth of the Old Man, his mother died. The same happened at the birth of Eman and his son with Omae, his betrothed.

What one learns at this point is the idea that renewal rituals can only be performed by the right people while also acknowledging that it is only death of one that brings life of another. In Head's *Maru* (1971), at the birth of Margaret Cadmore the Masarwa, her mother dies. This symbolically shows that the woman has to give away her own warmth for the survival of her little one. It can be accepted that the self exposure to the cold for the sake of giving warmth to the infant Margaret led to the mother's death. It is learnt that sacrifice is the only path that leads to continuity of a people. Had Eman not given his life for the sake of Ifada the idiot, it is very likely the situation would have continued. It can be assumed though that the sacrificing of strangers which this village was known for had been going on for a long period of time hence travellers not wanting to spend any time in the village area as is noticed at the beginning of the play where:

Two villagers, obvious travellers, pass hurriedly in front of the house, the man has a raffia sack, the woman a cloth-covered basket, the man enters first, turns and urges the woman who is just emerging to hurry.

From what obtains at the end of the play, clearly the place will be said to have been renewed and not expected to have experienced what has happened for several years. Even though Eman has not given to his people the much needed

renewal, he has still wisely used it to better the lives of others who probably needed it more than his village did.

Earlier in the play, Jaguna is seen to be an all-powerful father and village elder. He does not expect his daughter Sunma to express her views to him. By the time the play ends, the Sunma who has been oppressed though unhappy with the lifestyle in his village, changes. Jaguna is unable to face her. While earlier he had called her a harlot, this time he calls her a viper. This change shows a very important transformation in Sunma as well. Earlier, as a harlot, even if she was not one, she was meant to be used. As it is well known, harlots are meant for men's sexual satisfaction. When she becomes a viper at the end of the play, she stings. Men, like Jaguna, cannot mistreat her. This is evident in Jaguna's retreating when he sees her. He cannot face a viper now. While he has been a fearless person all along, he now comes out as a man who cannot face a woman when it has been said that women are the cowards.

Incidentally, Jaguna is the same one who has shown the change in his village. One wonders whether what is shown is what has always been born after the sacrifice of Eman or may be sacrificing Eman has now helped open people's eyes. Earlier in the play Eman tells Jaguna, Oroge and other men that they are not behaving like men. He further tells them that a village that does not produce its own carriers has no men. At the end of the play, Eman's words are fulfilled. The village has clearly showed the nature of men. Jaguna says that "women could not have behaved so shamefully. One by one they crept off like sick dogs." The leaders of the village now are seen going back to the village unattended.

Renewal cannot be overemphasised in this play. It is for this reason that the myth of the phoenix plays a role in the play.

Another myth is that of blood sacrifice. It is believed giving blood to the gods rids those sacrificing of their sins, evils or impurities. The myth appears in the book of *Genesis* in the Holy Bible where after sinning against God, Adam and Eve are dressed in animal skins so they can hide their nakedness. The shedding of blood for forgiveness of sins continues throughout life up to date. Man has been known to use blood to have his sins forgiven.

One of the most important Yoruba deities is Ogun. Horton (1989) says that according to the Yoruba, Ogun, the god of war, of the hunt and of ironworking, is the most important. He is also responsible for presiding over deals as, in Yoruba courts, some of the devotees of the faith swear to tell the truth by kissing a machete sacred to Ogun whose vengeance it is believed is very terrible. The same Ogun in Soyinka's *Idanre* is shown to be bloodthirsty. This could explain that he is responsible for blood in wars. In the same *Idanre* he is responsible for road accidents so that there is enough meat and blood for him to feast on. This leads one to believing that these sacrifices are done in honour of him. It is possible to conclude that Soyinka is trying to show just how important blood is for the god. For this reason, as much blood as is possible has to be shed for the satisfaction of Ogun.

The play therefore could also be understood in terms of a sacrifice for Ogun as he is also a god of the road. Eman has been seen on the road to a strange land where he becomes a teacher and physician. His leaving on this journey sees him losing his beloved Omae and he, too, is lost later. The road, it could be argued, has led to his loss. The deaths are even more prevalent in *The Road* that Soyinka himself seems to imply is the festival of Ogun. The deaths take place in form of accidents on the road. As the play opens, there is a mammy wagon that has no wheels and has an inscription –AKSIDENT STORE–ALL PART AVAILABUL. While the language is not expected to be grammatically correct taking into consideration the fact that the people encountered in the same place have humble education, the use of the phrase accident store gives an image of a place where accidents *are kept*. This place is not seen to be against but instead to encourage accidents as it is from accidents that it benefits. It is for this reason that Samson before getting to drive on the road says to Kotonu, “Kill us a dog before the hungry god lies in wait and makes a substitute of me...serve Ogun his tit-bit so the road won't look at us...” A number of people die in the accident after which a mass burial is witnessed. These elements of mass deaths appear in his *A Dance of the Forests* where about sixty-five people die when the truck, the incinerator overturned.

A traditional Yoruba poem *A Salute to my Ogun* in Soyinka's *Poems of Black Africa* (1975) reads in part:

[...]You said you were playing with a child.
 I saw much blood flowing from the girl's private parts.
 Ogun, don't fight against me.
 Don't play with me.
 You said you were playing with a boy.
 I saw much blood flowing from the boy's private parts.
 Ogun, don't fight against me.
 Don't play with me.
 You were playing with a pigeon.
 The pigeon's head was torn from its neck.
 Ogun, don't fight against me.
 Don't play with me.
 You said you were playing with a sheep.
 The sheep was slaughtered with a knife.
 Ogun, don't fight against me.
 Don't play with me.
 You said you were playing with a dog.
 The male dog was beheaded.
 Ogun, don't fight against me.
 Don't play with me.

The above traditional poem talking about Ogun, though, as Soyinka states, most critics have argued that traditional poetry is merely narrative and very much lack poetic quality as can be argued here, has a lot of allusions to what Ogun does. The poem, of course has definite repetition and special selection of words such as torn as opposed to removed, slaughtered as opposed to killed, and many such references. Ogun is represented as a bloodthirsty god in this poem that praises him. He cannot in this case be detached from blood.

It would be said that Soyinka uses both African and Western myths in *The Strong Breed*. The myths of the Phoenix which represents renewal, and blood sacrifices that run through a number of religions and Yoruba mythology where Ogun is at the centre, tell of Soyinka's weaving of African and Western myths in his work.

4.4 *Death and the King's Horseman*

Abrahams (1983) points to an African folktale that talks about how a spirit achieved human form by borrowing parts of the body from a number of donors. This myth appears in Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* which Young (1973) seems to believe

is a work that brings about identity in terms of being African. What is important in this discussion is not to look at identity in this text but the use of mythology.

In *Death and the Kings Horseman*, the question that is posed from the beginning of the play by any reader evidently had to be what the essence of life is as it ends in death. Obviously, the question is raised in relation to how the image of death is brought out in the play. The death of Elesin, unlike that of Eman, is desired more than his life. The person who moves with the play is taken aback when he realises Elesin's decision to have the final sexual pleasures before he goes to the other side. It seems clear in the mind of the audience that it is only the death of Elesin that will bring completeness in the lives of the people.

In his note, Soyinka urges the producers of the play not to look at it as being concerned with a clash of cultures. He says that the confrontation in the play is metaphysical, contained in the human vehicle, Elesin. The focus is on transition which brings together the worlds of the living, the unborn and the dead. One is expected in this play to look at the relations between each of these.

Though a play, *Death and the Kings Horseman* is based on actual events that took place in 1946. Jones (1973; 52) says that Soyinka's product is always "very striking and novel having transformed particularities from which it sprang." One should still accept that there are reasons as to why Soyinka has brought changes into his text where the events in the text are set about two years before they actually happened. The changes have gone much further than that as even the son who died in place of his father was not a student of medicine in England but a trader working in Ghana (Moore;1978). In his *The Bacchae of Euripides; A Communion Rite*, another mythology-packed play, Soyinka reworks Euripides's play *The Bacchae*. As much as he makes the changes, they have been welcomed.

In returning to the question of death and the meaning of life in the play and regarding the rest of humanity, the position of death in the play requires a critical study. There are two parallels regarding death in the text. The first is dying for the sake of someone else, someone already dead in that case. The second is reluctance to die as evidenced in the behaviour of Elesin.

Though the focus will be on the second, something still has to be said on the first. It is unarguable that history has it that a number of people have been buried alive to accompany certain special members of society. The most prominent of this is the burial of Nandi, Chaka's mother. It is clear in this case that people have been able to die for the sake of others.

Earlier, this chapter pointed out that it has been part of human experiences that people have died in saving others. In an interesting myth in Africa, it is said that when giving birth, the chameleon climbs a tree and falls to the ground. With that force, its belly is slit open and the young come out. Scientists, though, have argued that the reason why the chameleon is found dead most of the times after giving birth is because it gets to be too tired and weak to move and find food after giving birth. Basically, what is seen is that it dies for the sake of giving birth which shall here be termed giving life.

The necessity for someone to lose their life for the sake of a person who is already dead as portrayed in *Death and the Kings Horseman* calls for serious examination. Elesin's dying is not for the sake of the dead but bringing harmony to the rest of the universe because in the Yoruba cultural setup there is an interconnection between one and another of the living, the dead and the unborn. It remains necessary then that one dies to relate the living to the dead as the unborn prepare for the world.

This mythological relation is connected to the belief in the ultimate universe. It is therefore believed that the living, the dead and the unborn are all interconnected. Elesin belongs to the living while the dead king belongs to the dead. The unborn baby that is expected to have been formed after Elesin's meeting his young bride belongs to the unborn. In all this, there is a chain that leads one to the other and, finally, a cycle that has to be repeated throughout life. Breaking this cycle can bring serious consequences to the rest of world. Here, Elesin says that the world is not at peace.

The world is not at peace ghostly one. The world is not at peace. You have shattered the peace of the world foe ever. There is no sleep in the world tonight.

Elesin, here, seems to be saying that whatever affects the African universe affects the rest of the world and humanity. Elesin calls on the white man, Pilkings to understand what a mistake it is that he has made. This has been used probably to show just how much when one believes in something they are ready to do anything for the sake of it.

While the cosmic belief in the play plays a major role in explaining the African's understanding and appreciation of his world and how much he believes no one has the right to impose his beliefs on him, what comes to be more striking is the course the events take in the play. Because of Pilkings's attempts to save the life of Elesin (it is assumed at one level), the highly promising Olunde is lost. What is striking is the reason why it takes so long for Elesin to die. While it might be argued that had Elesin died early in the play, the play would not have been there, as many have argued to be the reason why Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* takes long to avenge his father's death, it is undeniable that Elesin has himself to blame for the delay in his death and the ultimate death of his son. This point has mythological implications.

One clear characteristic of Elesin in the play is his vitality. Soyinka says that Elesin "is a man of enormous vitality, speaks, dances and sings with that infectious enjoyment of life which accompanies all his actions." Even if nothing is said regarding the character of Olunde, there is more one gets when it is said that Olunde has been to England. And indeed when he appears, he is dressed in a western suit. Not only that, it is also important to point out that he first appears near the hall where the ball is taking place. It automatically happens that Olunde is associated with the western world. It can be concluded in this case that he has been turned into a western kind of young man.

The conclusion drawn above leads to a scrutiny of the dances of the westerners and Africans to ascertain the kind of performance and physical strength Olunde is likely to have. When the African dance is introduced, it is full of energy. The dancing of Elesin shows that he is very vibrant. On the other hand, the first time the western dance is introduced in the play, the dance is a tango which is not as agitated as that performed by Elesin. From the earlier conclusion, it can be said that

the dance just described is the one that belongs to Olunde. Elesin can thus be described as the extrovert and Olunde introvert in terms of the dances. Elesin is more energetic as opposed to Olunde. It is later revealed that Olunde, the introvert, comes on the slow feet of women after his death. Iyaloja says that Olunde rides on the slow weary feet of women.

Iyaloja: ... It drags behind me on the slow, weary feet of women. Slow as it is Elesin, it has long overtaken you. It rides ahead of you laggard will.

Here, Iyaloja shows the contrast between Olunde and Elesin. She shows that while there is slowness in Olunde, there is speed in Elesin. She shows that Elesin was supposed to be the preferred as speed is usually more approved than slowness. What is important in this idea regarding this study is the relation between the point raised and the myth of the beginning of death in Africa.

One of the most widely known myths in Africa regarding the beginning of death is about chameleon and lizard. This myth that has very important relations with the work under discussion has a number of variations which are discussed here before being applied to the text.

Schoffeleers and Roscoe (1985) present a number of them most of which have Chameleon and/or lizard featuring. In one of their stories, God, having created everything, asked chameleon and lizard to each make a wish that would really be granted to whoever would be first to reach him with the wish. People, thinking chameleon to be faster than lizard, decided that chameleon should wish that they live forever while lizard should wish that they should never come back to life when they die. To their surprise, lizard proved a much faster runner than chameleon and delivered his message. Chameleon, knowing that he had lost returned on the way without seeing God and men never lived forever.

In another myth used by the same authors, lizard and chameleon had an argument on whether man should return to life after death or not. Chameleon felt that he should while lizard argued against. When the cunning bat overhead the argument, he took advantage and lied saying that God had sent him to tell them that whoever

would get to God first would have his wish granted. Because of how slow he is, by the time chameleon got to God, lizard's proposal had been granted.

God was very wroth with bat for having played such a trick on them. He punished bat saying that he would never see the light of day again because of his wickedness. He said chameleon, because of his kind-heartedness would share God's power with him while lizard was neither good nor bad and was therefore neither rewarded nor punished.

Another story worth including is from the collection by Beier (1966) that says that when death first entered the world, men sent the chameleon to find out the cause. God sent chameleon to let men know that if they threw porridge over a corpse, it would come back to life. But chameleon was slow in returning and death was rampant. People therefore decided to send another messenger, lizard this time. God angered by the second message when he had already answered one told lizard that men should dig a hole and bury their dead in it. On the way back, lizard overtook chameleon and delivered his message first. When chameleon arrived the dead were already buried.

These myths put the blame of death on lizard without dissociating it from his speed. What this implies is that death is hidden in the speed of lizard while in the slowness of chameleon is life.

In the play, Olunde dies before his father, Elesin. This death was not anticipated at this stage. It would then be argued that the slow and less agile one, Olunde has overtaken the swift Elesin as Iyaloja put it. This related to the myth of chameleon and lizard seems to point to the fast one as having life and the slow one having death. Yet, it should be understood that the death of Elesin was desired; it meant life for the people while his living meant death. It should thus be taken that Olunde symbolises life while Elesin symbolises death. This brings the whole question of death in life and life in death which Soyinka (1988) discusses in his interview, *Post Mortem for a "Death..."*. It therefore leads to the idea that in life there is death while in death life.

Earlier in this dissertation, it was argued that from the old comes the new. This was said in reference to Head's *Maru*. Here it is the same concept applied by Soyinka. This goes on to give the element of the Cinderella myth; the myth of the girl who rose from being the basest to being a princess. This is the same myth of the phoenix discussed under *The Strong Breed* where in death there is life. On there being death in life, it can basically be looked at from the angle that whosoever is alive will die. In everything that lives there is death. Nothing living can be expected to be alive forever. Physicists have argued that everything that goes up must come down. While this reference is to the law of motion that whatever is thrown up must return to earth due to gravity, one realises that actually this to a literary person refers to life itself. Whoever lives must at sometime die.

Even though death in *Olunde* is seen as life for the people, it still remains a continuation of life on the other side. *Olunde* with the King are now going to join the rest. And, since *Olunde* has died before his father, he is going to take the position that was supposed to be taken by his father while his father is going to be on the receiving end eating what has been enjoyed by those that have got there on time as *Iyaloja* explains:

He is gone at last into the passage but oh, how late it all is.
His son will feast on the meat and throw him bones. The
passage is clogged with droppings from the King's stallion;
he will arrive all stained in dung.

Of course, any Soyinka critic needs to bear in mind that in almost all works by Soyinka, there is a mention of traditional Yoruba even though the works may seem so alien to that world. Even in plays like *Kongi's Harvest* where the setting is in an imaginary country *Isma*, issues of traditional leaders on which any other traditional African society is based take root. In the case of *Death and the King's Horseman*, the focus is now on how Soyinka brings the traditional Yoruba gods into the play. As usual, the play has *Ogun*, god of exploration, the road, war, hunting, and iron.

As was the case with *The Strong Breed*, *Death and the King's Horseman* also shows images of *Ogun* in it. For a start, the play is based on a road that can be taken

to be a path. This is said so because there is a journey through life from the unborn through the living to the 'not living' in death. The element of the road is also seen in the road that is used by Joseph to deliver Pilkings's message to Amusa. Here, one sees a number of errands being taken by Amusa as well as he tried to report to his superiors and also execute the tasks demanded of him.

There is also an element of exploration in the text. The Prince of England is on a tour of the colonies. This happens to be the reason why he is now in Nigeria. He is seen as an explorer of the English foreign territories, but the exploration does not start with the Prince alone. The presence of the colonial officers indicates the fruits and also elements of exploration going on in Africa. They have come to explore Africa and not only rip off her valuable resources but also learn more about her. What is more interesting is that this exploration also has a son of Africa in England where he learns about the world of the white man. Even though this idea is explored at length in the next chapter, it is clear that by the time Olunde returns to his homeland, he has learnt a lot about the white man and how he does not care about human life.

The next element is that of iron. When Elesin is arrested, he is locked up in a cell where slaves used to be kept before being transported. At the beginning of Scene Five, Soyinka says:

A wide iron-barred gate stretches almost the whole width of the cell in which ELESIN is imprisoned. His wrists are encased in thick iron bracelets, chained together; he stands against the bars looking out.

The iron is very vivid and shows just how much overpowered Elesin is once in this situation. The way he is chained, not unlike Prometheus, leads one to wondering as to whether at any point he will be able to break free of the iron on his wrists and in his midst.

The final element is that of war. As much as sacrifice in the text gives images of war, it is noticed that war is also brought to the fore by the arrival of Olunde from Europe. This leads the text to being filled with war and blood images. Wounded people are brought in just as it is in *The Road* where Ogun feasts on many that use

the road. This idea of war and blood appearing in the text is evidence of the Ogun's presence in the play. He is everywhere in the text hence the elements of exploration, blood, the road, and iron.

Death and the Kings Horseman has traces of other myths such as that of Prometheus who is chained and tries but cannot free himself, and that of Atlas who carries the heavens on his shoulders as Elesin carries the life of his people in his hands a thing that once fails brings calamity to his people unless someone comes in quickly to help resolve the situation. All the same, the most prevalent are the myths of chameleon and lizard, and of Ogun.

4.5 Conclusion

Mythology has been central to humanity and artists in particular have explored this element of life. In the texts studied, it can be argued that artists from all angles have explored the elements of mythology as they, just like God, are creators. Being creators, they fall in the category of mythical creatures as, as has already been said, myths are stories related to the gods. If artists then be seen as parallels of the gods, then they are mythical creatures too. This qualifies them to be more of myth makers if not myth pioneers.

Jonson and Soyinka have used mythology very adequately in their texts. They have brought myths into new plots but not forgetting the role of the mythological characters in their works. For instance, Jonson has used his characters in masques that deal with modern issues. In these masques, Jonson has shown that though retaining their qualities as mythical characters, the characters still remain relevant to their roles. It would even be argued that it is because the characters have maintained their mythical qualities that their roles have suited them and they have been successful. The myths used by Jonson have been very clear to identify as shall be explained further in Chapter Five while those by Soyinka, though easy to explain, have called for much use of association, the second of the two myth identifying methods used in this dissertation. Soyinka's is the use of parallels while Jonson's is the use of the actual characters even though he tends to mix the names between the

Greek and Roman ones. It should be remembered that the Greeks have their own names for their gods while the Romans also have their own. The gods remain the same but the names change depending on who is mentioning them. Jonson uses the actual names but does not stick to one 'language'. For example, in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, there are characters such as Hercules, Daedalus, and Mercury. At some point, Hercules, talking to Mercury (Mercury is the Roman name for the Greek god Hermes) refers to him as Hermes. This, though a bit confusing, could be seen to be his own way of using them or could be due to the fact that he probably did not spend so much time to distinguish between the two.

Soyinka's focus is on the god Ogun though he also has elements of European mythology as has been shown already. This is not surprising as it has been noticed that to schooled African writers, European mythology has been explored extensively. European mythology is found even in Zambian poetry as Chilala in his *The Valley of Poverty* mentions Sisyphus in the poem who tries to push the boulder up the hill but his pushing does not bear any results. The presence of both European and African myths in African works is evidence enough of Africans being able to combine these elements in what Moore (1978) has termed symbiosis. It has to be watched though, since certain writers could be seen to be doing this at the expense of their own African myths.

Over and above, it can be said that the use of mythology in drama so far, as has been learnt from these texts, is unquestionable. Both Soyinka and Jonson use myths in their works.

In the next chapter, the myths identified in the texts are explained in detail. The study discusses the myths by giving a background to each of them and even relating them to the context in which they have been used in the plays where they have been identified.

CHAPTER FIVE: MYTHS USED BY JOHNSON, AND BY SOYINKA

5.0 General

This chapter is a development of Chapter Four, which looked at mythology in the texts being investigated. This chapter looks at the individual myths as used by the dramatists and the background to the myths. While a number of the myths used in the texts have already been given a background, this chapter will try to give more information on the same where necessary and an illumination of the same myths especially as used in the works. Further, the chapter also looks at how the myths have been used in other related works available.

The relationship between the myths in question is very important. Eliade (1960) says that myth should be seen as foundation of social life and culture. This is in this dissertation understood as there being a relationship between the myths under discussion and the societies. This approach is similar to the one employed in Chapter Seven where the relationship between the allegorical elements in the texts and the societies the texts were produced in is discussed. The aim here is to see the relationship between the societies and the myths identified and discussed.

A number of people see mythology as divorced from religion while to others it is religion itself. It has been argued in this paper that mythology will be understood in this case as religion itself. This is because religion, as a belief in gods or a god, is designed to answer man's deepest question. These are the same questions that are answered by mythology. This argument is based on the fact that it is not possible for one to claim that there is one specific religion. All that can be said is that whatever one believes to be their religion is religion while the rest is mythology especially if it deals with primitive man.

Even the religions that have a great following such as Christianity and Judaism have been besieged by mythology without the followers of the religions knowing it so. McKenzie (1963) points to the Old Testament and says that it is not aware of the difference between mythology and religion. As far as the people of that time were concerned, the two were not different from each other. This signifies that it is only recently when mythology was detached from religion especially with the

advancement of academia. It is not the aim of this paper to discredit religion and bring it to the level of 'mythology' but simply to state that the two are inseparable except to those interested in detecting the difference. This therefore means that Christianity is mythology but to Christians themselves, just as Islam is mythology except to the Moslems. For example, Beier (1966: vii) refers to the biblical creation 'stories' as creation myths. He says: There is hardly an African child who is not familiar with biblical creation myths, but how many of them have been taught the creation stories of their own people? This shows that he acknowledges the fact that these Christianity and African tradition are not different but worlds of their people.

This chapter begins by identifying myths employed in Jonson's work before looking at Soyinka's. The work will try to show how the writers have combined their myths and the effects of the same.

5.1 Myths Used by Johnson

Jonson, it can be said, probably because of the orientation in the Greek classics, has Greek mythology spread all through his masques. This could be attributed to his erudition. Literary scholars, generally, are never complete if without a strong background in the classics. The classics have therefore been seen as a backbone to literary studies as they are taken to be central to the discipline. As it has been stated, Jonson has employed Greek myths which include the myths of Golden Age, Pallas the Titans, Cronos, and Zeus. There is also a collection of the myths of Atlas, Hercules, Antaeus, the Hesperides, Mercury, the pigmies, and Daedalus. Not all these myths are discussed in this chapter save for a few, here assumed, more important and relevant to the discussion.

5.1.1 The Myth of the Golden Age

The myth of the Golden age is more of a desire to get back to the past. It is somehow what can be termed as a nostalgic call for the past and a lack of satisfaction with the current world. This myth can be said dreams of a perfect world that existed. Jonson,

has used the myth in his work where the myth replaces Iron Age, an age of so much physical work.

This myth can be seen in the stories told by Moses the raven in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The significance of Moses in the text is unquestionable considering that Moses is a very important figure in the Old Testament. In the text, *Animal Farm*, he represents the myth of heaven that is preached by Christians. Both the myths of heaven and of the Golden age show man's longing for a better world. They reveal how much the life of today does not respond to man's quest for satisfaction.

Even as the myth of the Golden age is discussed with reference to Greek mythology, it remains a fact there even in African mythology there is a Golden age. For example, as Greene (2009) argues, there are very minor differences between the African and Greek Golden ages. Both say that during the Golden age, the earth needed no cultivation, there was no war, and man lived without sorrow, rich in flocks and free from toil. In one African myth talking about the separation of God from man, the end of the Golden age is explained. According to this myth, the earth and the sky were connected. Man did not have to grow crops. He simply reached into the sky and took the foods he needed from the sky god. But man abused this privilege by taking more food than he needed. He wasted much of the food, and this angered the sky god who was further angered when the women of the village would constantly hit the sky and cause huge chunks of it to fall when they were pounding the *fufu* to make bread. For that reason, the sky god moved his domain away from earth.

What is appealing to a literary scholar is the idea of pounding fufu when there is no need to work. Of course this merely tries to connect the myth to the actual lives of people to give it more of a reality.

This is interpreted that man from everywhere has the same concept of the world, and is always interested in a better world.

5.1.2 The Myth of Pallas

Pallas is also known as Athene (which this dissertation uses), Athena, or Pallas Athena. She has been described as a god of war, and of wisdom. To prevent the Trojan War, Athene descended from Olympus and walked between the two warring parties and made both sides swear oaths to keep peace. Unfortunately, because of the cowardice of a Trojan soldier, Pandaros, the oath was broken as he let loose his arrow, thus starting the Trojan War. Even though she is seen as an arbitrator in this scenario, she also played the role of strategist. She is responsible for Odysseus's idea of the wooden horse that guaranteed them victory in the war.

An exceptionally important yet unappreciated aspect of Athene's life has to do with her childhood. It is said that she had a very close friend called Pallas. At one time, during a practicing session, Athene wounded Pallas. The wound led to the death of Pallas. From her grief and in honour of her childhood friend, Athene got the name Pallas and added it to hers becoming Pallas Athene.

The taking up of a new name after disaster gives Athene a special quality that appears even in Jonson's masque. This is so because here Jonson has shown a new image of the world after Athene banishes Iron Age from the face of the earth. This is a quality that Jonson probably brings in deliberately for allegorical reasons.

Athene has also been known as a goddess of wisdom because she was frequently involved in settling disputes between gods and various mortals. Her decisions are said to have been usually well-considered, highly ethical, and rarely motivated by self interest. Not only did her decisions demonstrate her wisdom but also her compassion. Once, a man called Teiresias walked upon her while she was bathing (this act was usually punishable by death), Athene took pity on him. Not wishing him dead, she instead covered his eyes with her hands which led him to becoming blind but gaining inner sight, that is the gift of prophecy. Hence, he became one of the greatest oracles in ancient Greece.

The great goddess Athene remains alive today through the capital of Greece, Athens that was named in her honour. She is a reminder that one can use their intellect and creativity in the pursuit of any goal they choose.

5.1.3 The Myth of Atlas

One of the firstborn sons of Earth, Gaia, Atlas was a Titan. When Zeus challenged his father, Cronus to war, Atlas sided with Cronus. Having won the war, Zeus punished Atlas by making him support the weight of the heavens using a pillar on his shoulders.

The only time Atlas was relieved of this burden was when Heracles needed his aid in procuring the Golden Apples of the Hesperides.

The encounter of Atlas and Heracles came about when Eurystheus, the great hero's cousin and taskmaster, with the help of Juno, Heracles's stepmother, challenged Heracles to retrieve the Golden Apples of the Hesperides. The apples were kept in a grove surrounded by a high wall and guarded by a dragon named Ladon. The grove was located in some land in the mountains named after Atlas.

Heracles had been told that he would never get the apples without the aid of Atlas who was only too happy to oblige, as it meant being relieved of his burden. He told the hero to hold the pillar while he went into the garden of the Hesperides to retrieve the fruit. Heracles took the pillar while Atlas went to get the apples. He was successful and returned within a short while though with the realisation of how pleasant it was not to have to strain for eternity keeping heaven and earth apart. So he told Heracles that he would have to fill in for him for an indeterminate length of time. And the hero feigned agreement to this proposal. He tricked Atlas into getting it back and left never to return.

The myth of Atlas shows that even where one is strong enough to face insurmountable pressure, they have the wish to live a better life. They hunger after being rid of their misery so that they should be free. Apart from that, what one sees again is what is born out of inadequate intellect. Even though Atlas is so powerful, he makes wrong judgements. The first wrong judgement he makes is to side with his brother, Cronus which earns him unending punishment. He was unable to calculate the chances of emerging victorious. The second time he makes wrong judgement is when he helps Hercules but only to be tricked into continuing with his miserable life.

It can be argued that if he had thought about getting the cushion himself, he would probably have not have been tricked by Hercules into getting the heavens back on his shoulders.

Atlas remains remembered today in that his name has been given to the book in which maps have been drawn because of his knowledge of the world. Jonson, in the masque, through the chorus, has asked him Atlas to teach men his knowledge of the world.

5.1.4 The Myth of Hercules.

Hercules, whose Latin equivalent is Heracles, and therefore referred to by the same name in other discussions, was the son of Jupiter and Alcmene. His jealous stepmother, Juno, tried to murder the infant Hercules by putting a serpent in his cradle. Luckily, for Hercules was born with great strength, he killed the serpent. By the time Hercules was an adult, he had already killed a lion. Eventually, Juno drove Hercules insane. Due to his insanity, Hercules killed his wife, Megara, and their three children. Hercules exiled himself because of the shame that he had brought upon himself through his lack of sanity.

Hercules decided to ask the Delphic Oracle what he should do to regain his honour. The Oracle told Hercules to go to his cousin Eurystheus, king of Mycenae, and serve him for twelve years. King Eurystheus could not think of any tasks that might prove difficult for the mighty son of Jupiter, so Juno came down from her palace on Olympus to help him. Together, the twosome came up with twelve tasks for Juno's mortal stepson to complete.

These tasks, the eleventh of which has already been discussed, are now known as the twelve labours of Hercules. His first labour was to kill the menacing Nemean Lion; Hercules strangled the creature and carried it back to Mycenae. The second task was to overcome the nine-headed snake known as the Hydra; Hercules's cousin Ioloas helped him out by burning the stumps of the heads after Hercules cut off the heads. Since the ninth head was immortal, Hercules rolled a rock over it. The third task was to find the golden-horned stag and bring it back alive; Hercules

followed the stag around for one full year; he finally captured the stag and took it back alive. The fourth labour was to capture a wild boar that terrorized Mycenae's people; Hercules chased the boar up a mountain where the boar fell into a snow drift, where Hercules subdued it. The fifth task of Hercules was to, in a single day, clean the Augean stables, where thousands of cattle were housed; Hercules diverted two rivers so that they would flow into the Augean stables. The sixth labour was to destroy man-eating Stymphalian birds; Hercules drove them out of their hiding places with a rattle and shot them with poison-tipped arrows. The seventh task was for Hercules to capture a Cretean savage bull; Hercules wrestled it to the ground and took it back to King Eurystheus. The eighth labour was to capture the four man-eating mares of Thrace; Hercules threw the master of the mares to them; the horses became very tame, so Hercules safely led them back to Mycenae. Hercules's ninth labour was to obtain the girdle of the fierce Amazon warrior queen, Hippolyta; Hippolyta willingly gave her girdle to Hercules, but Juno convinced the Amazons that Hercules was trying to take Hippolyta from them, so Hercules fought them off and returned to his master with the girdle. The tenth labour was to capture the cattle of the monster, Geryon; Hercules killed Geryon, claimed the cattle, and took them back to the king. The eleventh task was to get the golden-apples of the Hesperides; Hercules told Atlas that if he would get the apples for him, he (Hercules) would hold the heavens for him; when Atlas returned from his task, Hercules tricked him into taking back the heavens. The final labour of Hercules was to bring the three-headed watchdog of the underworld, Cerberus, to the surface without using any weapons; Hercules seized two of Cerberus's heads and the dog gave in. Hercules took the dog to his master, who ordered him to take it back. Finally, after twelve years and twelve tasks, Hercules was free.

Hercules went to the town of Thebes and married Deianira. She bore him many children. Later on in their life, the male centaur, Nessus, abducted Deianira, but Hercules came to her rescue by shooting Nessus with a poison tipped arrow. The dying Nessus told Deianira to keep a portion of his blood to use as a love potion on Hercules if she felt that she was losing him to another woman. A couple of months later, Deianira thought that another woman was coming between her and her husband, so Deianira washed one of Hercules's shirts in Nessus's blood and gave it to

him to wear. Nessus had lied to her. The blood acted as a poison and almost killed Hercules. On his funeral pyre, the dying Hercules ascended to Olympus, where he was granted immortality and lived among the gods.

Hercules has gone beyond the level of heroism as he has reached immortality. Jonson's comparing himself to Hercules who became immortal at the time of his death implies that he foresaw himself becoming immortal as an artist. The fact that his works are still studied today hundreds of years after his death is proof enough that this comparison is not misplaced.

5.1.5 The Myth of Antaeus

The myth of Antaeus is rarely discussed independent of that of Hercules. What is known though is that he was a Titan who renewed his strength by touching the earth. Just like Atlas, his mother was Earth. His father, though, was Poseidon. Mother Earth, not yet sterile after her birth of the Giants, had conceived Antaeus in a Libyan cave, and found more reason to boast of him than even of her monstrous elder children, Typhon, Tityus, and Briareus.

The king of Libya, Antaeus was in the habit of forcing strangers to wrestle with him until they were exhausted, whereupon he killed them. This was due not only to the fact that he was a strong and skilful athlete, but also because whenever he touched the earth, his strength revived. He saved the skulls of his victims to roof a temple of Poseidon.

The giant is also known to have been living in a cave beneath a towering cliff, where he feasted on the flesh of lions, and slept on the bare ground in order to conserve and increase his already phenomenal strength.

The fall of Antaeus was caused by the same desire to wrestle with strangers which led him to wrestling with Hercules. In preparation for the wrestling match, both combatants cast off their lion pelts, but while Heracles rubbed himself with oil in the Olympic fashion, Antaeus poured hot sand over his limbs lest contact with the earth through the soles of his feet alone should prove insufficient.

Hercules planned to preserve his strength and wear Antaeus down, but after tossing him full length on the ground, he was amazed to see the giant's muscles swell and a healthy flush suffuse his limbs as Mother Earth revived him.

As the match went on, the combatants grappled on, and presently Antaeus flung himself down of his own accord, not waiting to be thrown. Hercules, realising what Antaeus was at, lifted him high into the air, then cracked his ribs and, held him aloft until he died.

In Jonson's masque, Antaeus is brought in once again to show the strength of Hercules. Antaeus has been used as a foil of Hercules. Jonson also brings Antaeus in to qualify that the pigmies are against Hercules but because of their small size and being related to Antaeus who Hercules crushed, they cannot face him. It is for this reason that they run into holes when they see Hercules. Jonson qualifies his own greatness as an artist.

The myth is among the most widely read in European or Greek mythology. Antaeus's name has been preserved through the naming of products such as a men's perfume that is named after him.

Antaeus also seems to be a reminder of the importance of Mother Earth. Most war-dances involve stamping the earth in performance. An example of such a dance is the Ngoma war dance of the Ngoni. Of course this is just one of the many war dances that involve stamping the earth. This stamping of the earth can be paralleled with Antaeus who threw himself down so as to be revived. The match between Hercules and Antaeus seems to be a reminder that if one stays committed to Mother Earth, they surely succeed.

5.1.6 The Myth of the Hesperides

In the two Jonsonian masques discussed, the Hesperides are not given a prominent role. They are merely mentioned in relation to Hercules and Atlas. It would therefore not be of any good to discuss them in great detail. This section will therefore bring out only a little information regarding them and relevant to the discussion. Jonson

mentions the Hesperides when he reminds his audience of what Hercules went through to complete his twelve labours.

Mercury's mentioning of the Hesperides is also intended to show the relationship that existed between Hercules and Atlas. It is interesting to mention that Mercury does not mention the trick Hercules played on Atlas after Atlas helped Hercules as was expected of him.

The Hesperides were the four daughters of Hesper, the evening star. Their names were Aegle, meaning radiance; Erytheia, translated as red; Hesperie, evening; and Arethusa, war-swift all who sang sweetly. They lived in a kind of Eden.

The garden they kept for their father contained a tree where the golden apples of the sun were grown. Anyone who ate this fruit gained eternal youth and immortality.

In another version of the myth, The Hesperides were the daughters of Atlas. In this story, Hesperis is the maidens' mother, and an unsleeping hundred-headed dragon named Ladon helps them guard the marvellous tree. It is believed by some writers that the dragon kept the sisters from eating the fruit themselves.

While with different versions, this myth still remains applicable to Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* in that the position of the Hesperides is not very paramount in the masque. There is, however, the element of keeping guard of whatever is deemed important and worth guarding. Even if this myth has not been so publicised, it makes good reading and can play an important role in the teaching of human beings' need for eternal life and how closely the gods have kept guard of it.

It is possible to relate this myth to the myth of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived. What seems to be the parallel chiefly is the fruit being eaten in Eden leading to death while that eaten in the garden of the Hesperides leads to immortality.

5.1.7 The Myth of Icarus and Daedalus

Daedalus was a highly respected and talented Athenian artisan descendent from the royal family of Cecrops, the mythical first king of Athens. He was known for his skill as an architect, sculptor, and inventor, and he produced many reputable works. Despite his self-confidence, Daedalus once committed a crime of envy against Talus, his nephew and apprentice. Talus, who seemed destined to become as great an artisan as his uncle Daedalus, was inspired one day to invent the saw after having seen the way a snake used its jaws. Daedalus, momentarily stricken with jealousy, threw Talus off the Acropolis. For this crime, Daedalus was exiled to Crete and placed in the service of King Minos, where he eventually had a son, Icarus, with the beautiful Naucraste, a mistress-slave of the King.

Minos called on Daedalus to build the famous Labyrinth in order to imprison the dreaded Minotaur. The Minotaur was a monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man. He was the son of Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, and a bull that Poseidon had sent to Minos as a gift. Minos was shamed by the birth of this horrible creature and resolved to imprison the Minotaur in the Labyrinth where it fed on humans, which were taken as 'tribute' by Minos and sacrificed to the Minotaur in memory of his fallen son Androgenos.

Theseus, the heroic King of Athens, volunteered himself to be sent to the Minotaur in the hope of killing the beast and ending the 'human tribute' that his city was forced to pay Minos. When Theseus arrived in Crete, Ariadne, Minos's daughter, fell in love with him and wished to help him kill the Minotaur. Daedalus revealed the mystery of the Labyrinth to Ariadne who in turn advised Theseus, thus enabling him to slay the Minotaur and escape from the Labyrinth.

When Minos found out what Daedalus had done, he was so enraged that he imprisoned Daedalus and Icarus in the Labyrinth themselves. Daedalus conceived to escape from the Labyrinth with Icarus from Crete by constructing wings and then flying to safety. He built the wings from feathers and wax, and before the two set off he warned Icarus not to fly too low lest his wings touch the waves and get wet, and not too high lest the sun melt the wax. But the young Icarus, overwhelmed by the

thrill of flying, did not heed his father's warning, and flew too close to the sun whereupon the wax in his wings melted and he fell into the sea.

Daedalus escaped to Sicily and Icarus's body was carried ashore by the current to an island then without a name. Hercules came across the body and recognised it, giving it burial where today there still stands a small rock promontory jutting out into the Aegean Sea, and naming the island and the sea around it after the fallen Icarus.

While Icarus is not really mentioned by Jonson, Daedalus is mentioned as a wise man. He is a guide who gives his dancers laws. The reference to him as wise is due to his immense abilities in art and invention, which as can be recalled helped him escape from the labyrinth. As a leader of the group of dancers, Daedalus tries to reconcile Pleasure to Virtue.

His wisdom in mythological information is brought into the text by Jonson. This discussion has included Icarus because it is due to Icarus as well that Daedalus is famous. It is also in the presence and with the support of Icarus that Daedalus's wisdom is seen as he escapes from the labyrinth using waxen wings.

5.1.8 The Myth of Cronus

Cronus, also spelled Cronos or Kronos, was the leader and (in some myths, the youngest) of the first generation of the Titans. His mother was Gaia, and his father was Uranus, whom Cronus envied. Uranus hid the youngest children of Gaia, the one-hundred armed giants (Hecatonchires) and the one-eyed giants, the Cyclopes, in Tartarus so that they would not see the light, rejoicing in this evil doing. This caused pain to Gaia as Tartarus was her bowels. So she created grey flint and shaped a great sickle and gathered together Cronus and his brothers to ask them to obey her. Only Cronus was willing to do the deed, so Gaia gave him the sickle and set him in ambush. Cronus jumped out and lopped off his father's testicles, casting them behind him. From his blood on the Earth came forth the Gigantes, Erinyes, and Meliae. From the testicles of Uranus in the sea came forth Aphrodite. For this, Uranus called his sons Titans, meaning 'strainers', for they

strained and did presumptuously a fearful deed, for which vengeance would come afterwards.

After dispatching Uranus, Cronus re-imprisoned the Hecatonchires, the Gigantes, and the Cyclopes and set the monster Campe to guard them. He and Rhea took the throne as King and Queen of the gods. This time was called the Golden Age, as the people of the time had no need for laws or rules; everyone did right.

Cronus sired several children by Rhea: Demeter, Hera, Hades, Hestia, and Poseidon, but swallowed them all as soon as they were born, since he had learned from Gaia and Uranus that he was destined to be overthrown by his own son as he had overthrown his own father. But when Zeus was about to be born, Rhea sought Uranus and Earth to devise a plan to save him, so that Cronus would get his retribution for his acts against Uranus and his own children. Rhea gave birth to Zeus in Crete, handing Cronus a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes which he promptly swallowed. Then she hid Zeus in a cave on Mount Ida in Crete where he was raised by a nymph named Adamanthea. Since Cronus ruled over the earth, the heavens, and the sea, she hid him by dangling him on a rope from a tree so he was suspended between earth, sea, and sky and thus, invisible to his father.

One day, as a grown up, Zeus fed Cronus a drugged drink leading him to throw up the other children in reverse order of swallowing: first the stone, which was set down at Pytho under the glens of Parnassus to be a sign to mortal men, then the rest. Then Zeus released the brothers of Cronus, the Gigantes, the Hecatonchires, and the Cyclopes, who gave him thunder and the thunderbolt and lightning, which had previously been hidden by Gaia. In a war called the Titanomachy, Zeus and his brothers and sisters with the Gigantes, Hecatonchires, and Cyclopes overthrew Cronus and the other Titans. Cronus and the Titans were confined in Tartarus, a dank misty gloomy place at the deepest point in the Earth. Ironically, Zeus also imprisoned the Hecatonchires and the Cyclopes there as well.

Cronus was worshipped as a corn god, from his association with the Golden Age. He was a god of the harvest, grain, nature, and agriculture. He was usually depicted with a sickle, which he used to harvest crops as well as castrate his father. In Athens, on the twelfth day of every month (Hekatombaion), a festival called Kronia was held in honour of Cronus and to celebrate the harvest.

The myth of Cronus shows that when one sees wrong, they will do anything to right it no matter who the doer is. If a son can castrate his own father for his wrongdoing, nothing can stop someone from punishing any other wrong doer.

It is also important to notice that as much as people are good, they are never completely good. From the example of Cronus who is central to the Golden age and is unexpected to be tainted in any way, it becomes difficult to expect him to do wrong. All the same, what is learnt is that nothing is perfect in life. Everything has to do with the extent to which it gets to be where it is. The bad are so only to a certain extent as they still will do something good. The same applies to the good who, like Cronus, are also prone to doing wrong.

Cronus who lived during the Golden age is referred to as Time in the masque. He is the father of Jove whose age is also referred to as Golden. Pallas in *The Golden Age Restored* says:

Which deed he doth the rather
That even Envy may behold
Time not enjoyed his head of gold
Alone beneath his father;
But that his care conserveth,
As Time, so all Time's honours too,
Regarding still what heav'n should do,
And not what earth deserveth.

Cronus is in this case associated with time throughout. The Golden age cannot be mentioned without mention of Cronus.

5.2 Myths Used by Soyinka

Soyinka, it has been said several times, is seen as a midpoint between western and African traditions. He is responsible in this case for weaving in his works African and western traditions.

For this reason, Soyinka has both African and western, classical myths in his works. The myths identified so far in the two texts studied include the myths of chameleon and lizard, Ogun, the Phoenix and/or Cinderella, Prometheus, and Atlas.

5.2.1 The Myth of Chameleon and Lizard

The myth of chameleon and lizard is one of the most famous African myths dealing with the origin of eternal death. Its primary argument is that speed has a contribution to death. There are many versions of the myth but an attempt will be made to study them as a single myth with variants of the same.

The myth states that in the beginning when God created the world, there was no death. But one day, chameleon and lizard were arguing. Lizard was claiming that man would die and never return while chameleon claimed that man would always return after death. This argument went on for so long that bat, having overheard, decided to take advantage. He told them that, not being comfortable with arguments, God had decided that whoever would go to him and get there first would have his wish granted. The two debaters presently left for Heaven, God's abode. Being a fast walker, lizard got there first and had his wish granted.

When chameleon got there, the wish had already been granted to lizard, and it could not be undone. Realising what bat had done, God was angered and decided to punish him. He told bat that he (bat) would never see the light of day because of how evil and wicked he was. For chameleon was good hearted, he was told that he was going to share with God his powers. He was thus given the ability to change into any colour he wished. Lizard was seen as neither good nor bad. For this reason, he was neither rewarded nor punished.

The other variant of the myth which is much closer to this one is that when God created the world, he asked chameleon and lizard to make a wish and whoever would reach him first would have his wish granted. For this reason, people, thinking chameleon was a faster runner than lizard asked him to wish that when people die they should come back to life while they told lizard that any creature that died should remain dead forever.

To their surprise, lizard proved a much faster runner than chameleon and he made it to God before chameleon. On his way back, he found chameleon who therefore decided to turn back as he was too late already. From this day, people started dying and not returning to life.

The final version states that when death first entered the world, men sent chameleon to find out the cause and possible remedy. God told the chameleon to let men know that if they threw baked porridge over a corpse, it would come back to life. Unexpectedly, the chameleon was slow in returning and death was rampant in their midst. As a result, men sent a second messenger, lizard.

The lizard reached the abode of God soon after the chameleon. God, angered by the second message, told lizard that men should dig a hole in the ground and bury their dead in it. On the way back, lizard overtook chameleon and delivered his message first. By the time chameleon arrived, the dead were already buried. Thus, owing to the impatience of man, he cannot be born again.

In this myth, it is clear that it is not just the question of speed being addressed but also that of patience. It can be argued that had he been patient, man would have lived on. This argument does not dispel the argument of speed. It can be argued that appropriate speed is what life and death are anchored on. It is possible to conclude that it is the lack of speed in chameleon that led man to dying forever. Therefore, it can be argued here that had chameleon had the speed that lizard has, man would have lived on forever. The myth could still be interpreted as saying that the message of life being given to the slow one indicates that there is life in slowness. The popular saying that 'if you rush you crush' can be referred to in order to argue that those that hurry a lot are likely to pay with their lives while the calm ones see more days. It has been said many times that leading a fast life is not any safe.

The myth can therefore be argued in both ways and still end up saying that appropriate speed guarantees life while inappropriate speed leads to death or loss of life. Therefore, in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, we can safely say that the rate at which someone moves as evidenced by Olunde (chameleon) and Elesin (lizard) determined whether they have life or not.

5.2.2 The Myth of the Phoenix

The phoenix, according to a mythology-related website http://www.factsmonk.com/phoenix_greek_mythology is Greek mythology's most famous bird. It is a mythical (and mystical) firebird that is seen in many cultures, not just Greek society. The originating culture that started the myth of the phoenix is the ancient Egyptian culture – and all other myths regarding the phoenix seem to have sprung from this one. The phoenix is a sacred creature, a firebird that is said to live for 500 (or 1461) years, depending on the specific cultural myth. It is coloured crimson and gold, and is much larger than other birds. At the end of its life span, the phoenix, Greek mythology's bird of regeneration, is said to build a nest of cinnamon sticks, and light them on fire; consequently, both the nest and the bird burn to ashes.

A new baby phoenix rises from these ashes, and embalms and stores the ashes of the old phoenix in an egg of myrrh. This egg is then deposited in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis (Greek for the “city of the sun”). The phoenix can also regenerate parts of its body when wounded, further continues the properties of regeneration and rebirth. The Egyptians closely associated the phoenix with fire and the sun, and he was often seen with their sun god Ra.

The Greeks adopted the phoenix from the Egyptians, first using their term for the bird, bennu, and then adapting their word for the colour crimson (and the name of a city) Phoenicia, into the name phoenix for the bird. They associated the bird with their sun-god, Apollo, and said that the bird resided in Arabia next to a well, where it bathed and sang. The Romans also continued the tradition of the phoenix – they changed the image of the bird to look more like a peacock or eagle.

While the Greeks were not the first culture to have the phoenix featured in their myths, they were also not the last. The Romans, later Greeks and even Russians all revered this bird. Hypothesised to represent either a true bird that lived on hot salt flats (said to be too hot to survive on) or the total eclipse of the sun, the phoenix is a major part of many myths and legends.

Taking into account the fact that the myth of the phoenix is Egyptian in origin, one is made to look at a related myth, that of Osiris. This is also Egyptian and makes reference to the sun god, Ra. It is here reproduced as narrated by Scott (2000) on his site: <http://www.touregypt.net/godsofegypt/legendofosiris.htm>.

O my brothers and my sisters, gather around me that I may tell the tale of the Before-Time, of the Golden Age when the gods walked upon the earth with us. Know then that in those ancient days, long before even the grandfather of our Pharaoh's grandfather was born, Osiris the great-grandson of Ra sat upon the throne of the gods, ruling over the living world as Ra did over the gods. He was the first Pharaoh, and his Queen, Isis, was the first Queen. They ruled for many ages together, for the world was still young and Grandmother Death was not as harsh as she is now.

His ways were just and upright, he made sure that Maat remained in balance, that the law was kept. And so Maat smiled upon the world. All peoples praised Osiris and Isis, and peace reigned over all, for this was the Golden Age.

Yet there was trouble. Proud Set, noble Set, the brother of Osiris, he who defended the Sun Boat from Apep the Destroyer, was unsettled in his heart. He coveted the throne of Osiris. He coveted Isis. He coveted the power over the living world and he desired to take it from his brother. In his dark mind he conceived of a plot to kill Osiris and take all from him. He built a box and inscribed it with wicked magic that would chain anyone who entered it from escaping.

Set took the box to the great feast of the gods. He waited until Osiris had made himself drunk on much beer, then challenged Osiris to a contest of strength. Each one in turn would enter the box, and attempt, through sheer strength, to break it open. Osiris, sure in his power yet feeble in mind because of his drink, entered the box. Set quickly poured molten lead into the box. Osiris tried to escape, but the

wicked magic held him bound and he died. Set then picked up the box and hurled it into the Nile where it floated away.

Set claimed the throne of Osiris for himself and demanded that Isis be his Queen. None of the other gods dared to stand against him, for he had killed Osiris and could easily do the same to them. Great Ra turned his head aside and mourned, he did not stand against Set.

This was the dark time. Set was everything his brother was not. He was cruel and unkind, caring not for the balance of Maat, or for us, the children of the gods. War divided Egypt, and all was lawless while Set ruled. In vain our people cried to Ra, but his heart was hardened by grief, and he would not listen.

Only Isis, blessed Isis, remembered us. Only she was unafraid of Set. She searched all of the Nile for the box containing her beloved husband. Finally she found it, lodged in a tamarisk bush that had turned into a mighty tree, for the power of Osiris still was in him, though he lay dead. She tore open the box and wept over the lifeless body of Osiris. She carried the box back to Egypt and placed it in the house of the gods. She changed herself into a bird and flew about his body, singing a song of mourning. Then she perched upon him and cast a spell. The spirit of dead Osiris entered her and she did conceive and bear a son whose destiny it would be to avenge his father. She called the child Horus, and hid him on an island far away from the gaze of his uncle Set.

She then went to Thoth, wise Thoth, who knows all secrets, and implored his help. She asked him for magic that could bring Osiris back to life. Thoth, lord of knowledge, who brought himself into being by speaking his name, searched through his magic. He knew that Osiris' spirit had departed his body and was lost. To restore Osiris, Thoth had to remake him so that his spirit would recognize him and rejoin. Thoth and Isis together created the Ritual of Life, that which allows us to live forever when we die. But before Thoth could work the magic, cruel Set discovered them. He stole the body of Osiris and tore it into many pieces, scattering them throughout Egypt. He was sure that Osiris would never be reborn.

Yet Isis would not despair. She implored the help of her sister Nephthys, kind Nephthys, to guide her and help her find the pieces of Osiris. Long did they search, bringing each piece to Thoth that he might work magic upon it. When all the pieces were together, Thoth went to Anubis, lord of the

dead. Anubis sewed the pieces back together, washed the entrails of Osiris, embalmed him wrapped him in linen, and cast the Ritual of Life. When Osiris' mouth was opened, his spirit reentered him and he lived again.

Yet nothing that has died, not even a god, may dwell in the land of the living. Osiris went to Duat, the abode of the dead. Anubis yielded the throne to him and he became the lord of the dead. There he stands in judgment over the souls of the dead. He commends the just to the Blessed Land, but the wicked he condemns to be devoured by Ammit.

When Set heard that Osiris lived again he was wroth, but his anger waned, for he knew that Osiris could never return to the land of the living. Without Osiris, Set believed he would sit on the throne of the gods for all time. Yet on his island, Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, grew to manhood and strength. Set sent many serpents and demons to kill Horus, but he defeated them. When he was ready, his mother Isis gave him great magic to use against Set, and Thoth gave him a magic knife.

Horus sought out Set and challenged him for the throne. Set and Horus fought for many days, but in the end Horus defeated Set and castrated him. But Horus, merciful Horus, would not kill Set, for to spill the blood of his uncle would make him no better than he. Set maintained his claim to the throne, and Horus lay claim himself as the son of Osiris. The gods began to fight amongst another, those who supported Horus and those who supported Set. Banebdjetet leaped into the middle and demanded that the gods end this struggle peacefully or Maat would be imbalanced further. He told the gods to seek the council of Neith. Neith, warlike though wise in council, told them that Horus was the rightful heir to the throne. Horus cast Set into the darkness where he lives to this day.

And so it is that Horus watches over us while we live, and gives guidance to the Pharaoh while he lives, and his father Osiris watches over us in the next life. So it is that the gods are at peace. So it is that Set, wicked Set, eternally strives for revenge, battling Horus at every turn. When Horus wins, Maat is upheld and the world is at peace. When Set wins, the world is in turmoil. But we know that dark times do not last forever, and the bright rays of Horus will shine over us again. In the last days, Horus and Set will fight one last time for the world. Horus will defeat Set forever, and Osiris will be able to return to this world. On that day, the Day of Awakening,

all the tombs shall open and the just dead shall live again as we do, and all sorrow shall pass away forever.

Lo, this is my tale. Keep it in your hearts and give it to others, as I gave it to you.

5.2.3 The Myth of Cinderella

Cinderella is a well-known classic folk tale embodying a myth-element of unjust oppression/triumphant reward. Thousands of variants are known throughout the world. The title character is a young woman living in unfortunate circumstances which suddenly change to remarkable fortune. The word "cinderella" has, by analogy, come to mean one whose attributes are unrecognised, or one who unexpectedly achieves recognition or success after a period of obscurity and neglect.

The encyclopaedia, Wikipedia on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinderella> narrates the myth saying that there once was a widower who for his second wife, married a proud and haughty woman. She had two daughters, who were equally vain. By his first wife, he had a beautiful young daughter who was a girl of unparalleled goodness and sweet temper. The Stepmother and her daughters forced the first daughter to complete all the housework. When the girl had done her work, she sat in the cinders, which led her to be called "Cinderella". The poor girl bore it patiently, but she dared not tell her father, who would have scolded her; his wife controlled him entirely.

One day the Prince invited all the young ladies in the land to a ball so he could choose a wife. As the two Stepsisters were invited, they gleefully planned their wardrobes. Although Cinderella assisted them and dreamed of going to the dance, they taunted her by saying a maid could never attend a ball.

As the sisters swept away to the ball, Cinderella cried in despair. Her Fairy Godmother magically appeared and vowed to assist Cinderella in attending the ball. She turned a pumpkin into a coach, mice into horses, a rat into a coachman, and lizards into footmen. She then turned Cinderella's rags into a beautiful gown,

complete with a delicate pair of glass slippers. The Godmother told her to enjoy the ball, but return before midnight for the spells would be broken.

At the ball, the entire court was entranced by Cinderella, especially the Prince, who never left her side. Unrecognized by her sisters, Cinderella remembered to leave before midnight. Back home, Cinderella graciously thanked her Godmother. She then greeted the Stepsisters who enthusiastically talked of nothing but the beautiful girl at the ball.

When another ball was held the next evening, Cinderella again attended with her Godmother's help. The Prince became even more entranced. However, this evening she lost track of time and left only at the final stroke of midnight, losing one of her glass slippers on the steps of the palace in her haste. The Prince chased her, but outside the palace, the guards had seen only a simple country wench leave. The Prince pocketed the slipper and vowed to find and marry the girl to whom it belonged. Meanwhile, Cinderella kept the other slipper, which had not disappeared when the spell had broken.

The Prince tried the slipper on all the young women in the land. When the Prince arrived at Cinderella's villa, the Stepsisters tried in vain. When Cinderella asked if she might try, the Stepsisters taunted her. Naturally, the slipper fit perfectly, and Cinderella produced the other slipper for good measure. The Stepsisters begged for forgiveness, and Cinderella forgave them for their cruelties.

Cinderella returned to the palace where she married the Prince, and the Stepsisters also married two lords.

In another version, the stepsisters try to trick the prince by cutting off parts of their feet in order to get the slipper to fit. The prince is alerted by two pigeons who peck out the stepsisters' eyes, thus sealing their fate as blind beggars for the rest of their lives.

The moral of the myth is that beauty is a treasure, but graciousness is priceless. Without it nothing is possible; with it, one can do anything.

The myths of the Phoenix, of Osiris, and of Cinderella have been used in both texts *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King's Horseman* in that both texts have a bias towards regeneration. In all these myths the idea of the old dying and being followed by the birth of the new is portrayed.

In *The Strong Breed*, Eman dies for the village to have life. This same death brings about change in the lives of the people. Jaguna realises the strength his daughter has while she (Sunma) accepts Ifada as a human being worth human treatment.

In *Death and the King's Horseman*, Elesin has to die on the burial day of the king to avoid a calamity that, without his death, will befall the people of his village. It is only this death that guarantees continuity and a better life for their people. When Olunde dies in place of the father, it becomes clear that the worlds of the living, the dead and the unborn have come to a balance and, ultimately, a balanced life in all the three realms.

5.2.4 The Myth of Ogun

Ogun, or Ogun Onire, is the god of war and iron of the Yoruba people of West Africa. In Yoruba tradition, Ogun and the other gods climbed down to earth on a spider's web. When creation was completed, the gods realised that people needed to clear more land in the forest where they lived. Unfortunately, the only tools available were made of soft metal, a material not suitable for cutting down trees. However, Ogun had been given the secret of iron by Orunmila, son of the supreme god Olorun, and he used an iron axe to clear the forest. Ogun later shared the secret of iron with the other gods and with humans. He also showed them how to shape the iron into weapons and tools.

Though a fierce god, Ogun is not evil and will help those who pray to him. Blacksmiths in society have traditionally sacrificed dogs to Ogun. Each year the Yoruba hold a three-day festival in his honour. It should not be misunderstood if due

to lack of a blood sacrifice Ogun gets a human being as replacement. This is all blamed on human beings themselves for not having been able to sacrifice.

The same can be mentioned in regard to Soyinka's other play, *The Road*, where a character Samson before getting to drive on the road says to Kotonu, "Kill us a dog before the hungry god lies in wait and makes a substitute of me...serve Ogun his tit-bit so the road won't look at us..." This is clear that Ogun is a god of blood and to appease him, blood sacrifices should be made.

5.2.5 The Myth of Olorun

The myth of Olorun is not given any central treatment in the texts studied in this dissertation. Olorun is discussed in this paper because of his position in Yoruba mythology hence having a bearing on the dissertation's subject god, Ogun.

The site <http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/Ni-Pa/Olorun.html> says that in the mythology of the Yoruba people of West Africa, Olorun is the most powerful and wisest deity. The all-knowing god takes an active role in the affairs of both heaven and earth. Head of the Yoruba pantheon, Olorun is also known as Olofin-Orun (Lord of Heaven), Oba-Orun (King of the Sky), and Olodumare (Almighty).

According to Yoruba legend, Olorun was one of two original creator gods. The other was the goddess Olokun. In the beginning, the universe consisted only of sky and a formless chaos of marshy water. Olorun ruled the sky, while Olokun ruled the vast marshy waters below. There were thousands of other gods, but none had as much knowledge or power as Olorun.

Although Olokun was content with her watery kingdom, a lesser god named Obatala had ideas about improving her kingdom. He went to Olorun and suggested the creation of solid land, with fields and forests, hills and valleys, and various living things to populate it. Olorun agreed that this would be good and gave Obatala permission to create land.

Olorun's agreement can be attributed to the fact that water is a symbol of life. The presence of a watery body where Olokun ruled could have given Olorun the idea that Olokun was more powerful than him. The creation of land could hence be seen as a reduction of Olokun's strength.

Obatala went to Orunmila, the eldest son of Olorun, and asked how he should proceed. Orunmila told Obatala to gather gold to make a chain that could be lowered from the sky to the waters below. When the chain was finished, Orunmila gave Obatala a snail's shell filled with sand, a white hen, a black cat, and a palm nut. Obatala lowered himself on the chain and poured the sand on the waters. He then released the hen, which scratched at the sand and scattered it in all directions. Wherever the sand fell became dry land. Stepping onto the land—known as Ife—Obatala built a house, grew palm trees from the palm nut, and lived with the black cat as his companion.

Obatala later became lonely and built clay figures. Olorun made these figures into humans by breathing life into them. Many gods descended from the sky to live on earth, and Olorun told them to listen to the prayers of humans and protect them.

Not pleased by these acts of creation, the water goddess Olokun tried to flood the land to regain the area she had lost. However, Orunmila used his powers to make the waters recede. Angry that the sky god's son had defeated her, Olokun challenged Olorun to a weaving contest to see who was the more powerful.

Olokun was a weaver of unequalled skill and knowledge, but every time she made a beautiful cloth, Agemo the chameleon—who carried messages for Olorun—changed the colour of its skin to match her weaving. When Olokun saw that even Olorun's messenger could duplicate her finest cloths, she accepted defeat and acknowledged Olorun as the supreme god.

Obatala has been well utilised in Obotunde Ijimere's *The Imprisonment of Obatala* where he is imprisoned by a fellow god, Shango due to a trick by Eshu. In the play, a host of the four main gods in Yoruba mythology: Shango, Eshu, Obatala, and Ogun are encountered.

5.2.6 The Myth of Prometheus

Prometheus was a Titan from Greek myth, born from the union of the Titan Iapetus and the Nymph Asia. He was one of four children born to the pair. The siblings of Prometheus included his twin brother Epimetheus, Menoetius, and Atlas, all Titans. While it seems to be argued on the library thinkquest website <http://library.thinkquest.org/C005321/tq/Myth%20Library/The%20Myth%20of%20Atlas.htm> that Atlas was Mother Earth, Gaia's, son, here the site http://www.studyguide.org/prometheus_myth.htm says that he was born from Prometheus's parents hence being siblings with him.

The name Prometheus means "foresight," and his twin brother's name Epimetheus means "hindsight."

Their father, Iapetus led a revolt against the Gods. His children Menoetius and Atlas joined with him, while his other two sons, Prometheus and Epimetheus sided with the Gods. Menoetius was killed during the revolt and Atlas was given the weight of the world to bear for his actions during the revolt.

Prometheus and Epimetheus journeyed from Mount Olympus to Earth and visited the Greek province of Boitia where they made clay figures. Athena took the figures and breathed life into them. The clay figures that Prometheus had created became Man and honoured him while those that his brother Epimetheus created became the beasts, which turned and attacked him.

Zeus was angered by the brothers' actions of creating people and animals, and he forbade the pair from teaching Man the ways of civilisation. Athena chose to cross her father Zeus and taught Prometheus so that he might teach Man.

Zeus was angered by the actions of Man and Prometheus. He forbade the Gods to give fire to Man. Prometheus was upset with Zeus's proclamation and was determined to bring fire to Man, but Zeus had guarded the entrance to Olympus. Athena told Prometheus about an unguarded back entrance to Olympus where he would be able to enter with ease. Prometheus wanted Man to have all the benefits and progress that fire would bring.

Prometheus covertly entered Olympus at night through the back entrance that Athena had told him about. He made his way to the Chariot of the Sun and lit a torch from the fires that burned there. He touched the torch to coal before extinguishing the torch. Later, he carried the still hot coals down the mountain in a pithy fennel stalk to prevent anyone from discovering the fiery coals. Upon reaching the lands of Men, Prometheus gave them the coals, breaking Zeus's order by giving fire to Man.

Zeus was extremely angered by Prometheus' actions since he had not wanted fire to be given to Man. He therefore set out to make a trap for Prometheus. He gathered the gifts of the Gods and created Pandora and her box. Into the box he placed all the horrors of the world. Pandora was sent to Prometheus as a gift from Zeus himself.

Prometheus (with his foresight) saw the curse that Pandora and her box carried. He refused the gift, giving it instead to his brother Epimetheus who opened the box and released the chained horrors upon the world.

Zeus was upset at having his plan thwarted though in the guise that Prometheus had refused a direct “gift” from the chief God. At Zeus’s order, Prometheus was chained to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains where his torture was to be carried out. Every day a great Eagle would come to Prometheus and eat his liver, leaving only at nightfall when the liver would begin to grow back once more. At daybreak, the eagle would return to the chained Prometheus and again attack his body, eating his liver. The daily ritual would repeat itself into eternity...or so it seemed.

Zeus offered to free Prometheus (who still had the gift of foresight) if he would tell the secret of the prophecy that told of the dethroning of Zeus one day. Prometheus refused. Prometheus’s mother, the Nymph Asia, also had the gift of foresight. Her son’s continuing torture so plagued her that she finally went to Zeus and told him the secret of the prophecy. The prophecy explained that the offspring of Zeus and the Nymph Clymene would one day rise up and destroy Zeus and Gods.

Zeus sent Hercules to free Prometheus from the rock once he learned the revelation of the prophecy. He still required that Prometheus be bound to a rock for the rest of eternity. A link of the chain he had been bound with was set with a chip of the rock. Prometheus was required to carry it with him always. Men on Earth also created rings with stones and gems set into them to empathise with him and to honour Prometheus for the actions he had taken on their behalf.

Therefore, according to the myth of Prometheus that we see in the chained Elesin, whenever man is chained, progress stops.

5.2.7 The Myth of Atlas

The myth of Atlas will not be discussed under **Myths Used by Soyinka** as it has already been discussed under Jonson's section. It is still necessary to be reminded that just like the myth of Prometheus, the myth of Atlas reveals an Elesin, Olunde and Eman preoccupied with carrying the problems of their people. We realise that these people are going through these problems because of the people they stand for.

5.3 Conclusion

It is not much of a point of discussion any more that the plays discussed have used mythological elements. Various myths have been discussed in terms of meaning and how applicable they are to the world today. This has chiefly had to do with the moral aspect of the myths. The Myths discussed in this chapter have been those of the Golden Age, Pallas, Atlas, Hercules, Antaeus, Hesperides, Icarus and Daedalus, Cronus, Chameleon and Lizard, Phoenix, Cinderella, Ogun, Olorun, and Prometheus.

What has been shown though already pointed out in the earlier discussion is that while Jonson has used Greek myths alone in his texts, Soyinka has employed both Greek and African myths. Most of the myths used by Soyinka are African though the chief one is that of Ogun who features prominently in many of his works.

Most African writers use African myths in their texts. Even those such as Okigbo who have spoken against negritude and that even poetry (here taken to refer to literature in general) should not be seen as being either African or not have also used African myths in their texts.

Generally, the dramatists Jonson and Soyinka have used the myths appropriately in their works and the myths have helped in extending meaning in their texts.

The next chapter examines the dramatists' use of allegory in their dramatic works. As per tradition, the dissertation analyses allegory in the four subject plays: Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*, and *Death and the King's Horseman*, and Jonson's *The Golden Age Restored* and *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*

CHAPTER SIX: ALLEGORY IN THE TEXTS

6.0 General

This chapter investigates the use of allegory in drama, particularly the texts under study. The chapter will begin by giving a general relationship between literature and society. The literature could have been produced at times much later than the times they portray. This means that there is a relationship between the literature and the society of the time it portrays.

The understanding of such literature therefore calls for fairly profound knowledge of the worldview of the time being discussed in the text. For this reason, it is important for one to look at the history of the society on which the text is set. We should understand here that setting refers to place and time portrayed in a literary text. For example, *Death and the King's Horseman* is set sometime in 1942 while it deals with events that took place in 1946. More interesting is the fact that the play was written in about 1975 and continues to enjoy popularity today. Here, there are three dimensions from which to view these texts in order to see the relationship between the text and the society in question. Among what to study are: the time the text was written, the time it portrays, and when it is read.

As it has already been stated, literary studies will, in this case look also at the histories of the texts. The idea of history in a text is not as easy as it sounds. While Booker (1996) argues that the reading of, for instance William Shakespeare should be done in the context of the culture of Elizabethan England, he also notices that history itself is difficult to reconstruct. It is not possible to have a completely accurate picture of what could have been prevailing then.

This should mean that writers do not attempt to reconstruct history exactly in the manner it could have happened. In this case, writers should not be seen as historians but mere portrayers of aspects of history. Even with historians themselves, it is not possible to tell history in its entirety. This is because there is always a lot that is never recorded.

In looking at allegory in these texts then, the study will relate the works to the times portrayed and chiefly, the expected consumers of the literary works being

studied. The work seeks to show what the writers could have meant by what they portrayed in their works.

Allegory, according to Leggett (1989: 809), refers to “a story that can be read on two different levels.” What this means is that characters or events in an allegory stand for something else. The writer uses these characters and events to convey another message which we may term as a moral.

This section of the dissertation therefore endeavours to identify the allegorical elements in the texts studies which are: *The Golden Age Restored*, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, *The Strong Breed* and *Death and the King’s Horseman*.

6.1 *The Golden Age Restored*

A masque, though initially not intended to be seen in the form of drama, had dramatic elements hence the responsibility for scripting them being given to playwrights like Jonson. It should not be ignored here that the Elizabethan audience did not see the masque as drama but as courtly entertainment in which of prominence were music, dance and splendid costume. The costume included masks, hence the masque also meaning masquerade.

Among major elements of the masque is the use of allegory as Abrams (1999) has stated in his definition of the masque. While Abrams has called it an allegorical production, Peck and Martin (2002) say that though meant to provide entertainment for the courts, the masques were also meant to glorify the court as ideal, orderly and virtuous. They go on to say that in the masque where the plot is usually symbolic, virtue triumphs over vice. For this reason, they say, the masque is educative and moral.

Based on the above argument, this dissertation strives to show how the masque in question is symbolic, allegorical and ultimately how it glorifies the court as ideal, orderly, and virtuous. As can be recalled from Chapter three where the synopses of the texts have been given, it is clear that the main character is Pallas who

has been discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, section 5.1.2. since one of the masque's aims is to elevate the court and show it as virtuous, it becomes imperative now to see the relations between the main character in the masque, Pallas, and the head of the court, the king.

When Jonson wrote these masques in the early seventeenth century, the reigning king was James I. The study will now analyse the relations that existed or would have been expected or desired to exist between Pallas and James I to show the presence, if any, of allegorical elements in the masque.

From the information outlined in Section 5.1.2 of this paper, Pallas was raised in a patriarchal environment and has interacted with males in many cases. The only female person mentioned in her life is her closest childhood friend, Pallas from whom she adopted the name to add to her Athene making her Pallas Athene. She was the goddess of wisdom and war apart from many other roles of hers. Pallas played the role of judge in a number of disputes. She is mostly associated with divine intervention

King James, on the other hand, was crowned King of Scotland at the age of one when his mother was jailed. The jailing of his mother when he was still young allegorically has a bearing on Pallas whose mother was swallowed together with her when Pallas was still in the mother's womb. At birth, Pallas was already dressed for war in her amour. According to the online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia on James I, on June 19, 1566, James was born Prince James, the person he remained to be until July 24, 1567 when he was crowned King of Scotland, James VI. It is also important to notice that James was actually Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, and Lord Renfrew during the same period. This shows James being born with four titles at the same time which are Prince James, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, and Lord Renfrew. It would not be wrong then, based on this assumption to say that indeed, there are relations between him and Pallas.

Another important aspect of James's life to look at is his intimate relations. According to the Greatsite website (2008) in the article *English Bible History; King James I.*, even though James was married to Anne of Denmark, it was believed that he was homosexual. It has therefore been concluded that he must have been bisexual

regarding the fact that he had healthy sexual relations with his wife Anne with whom he had several children.

People joked that while Elizabeth was king, James was queen. This was not meant to show that he was feminine but merely to show that instead of being attracted to females, he was attracted to fellow males. James was a male person whose relations with males were highly questionable.

On the other hand, Pallas was female. Even though she was female, she behaved more like a male. She was inclined more to males and generally was as powerful as males themselves according to the dictates of society. She is therefore regarded as an equal of males in this case. Being a 'male' or masculine in nature, Pallas is therefore expected to be attracted to females, which is not the case. The only female person in her life is her childhood friend named Pallas. Even in James's life, the only female is his wife Anne. This is another, though easily questionable, relation between James and Pallas.

It was said earlier that Pallas is seen as a Judge apart from being very wise. James as well is king. Greatsite has said he is one of the most intelligent kings England has had. This creates a parallel relationship between the two regarding leadership and brilliance in terms of wisdom and intelligence.

In the masque, Iron Age is held in war. What Iron Age is interested in is war, something Jove is not happy with and cannot endure. For this reason, there is need to bring in an age of better metal. The metal referred to here is gold, hence the coming in of Golden Age. This shows replacement of an age that does not please the people with what is best for them. What Jonson could have been saying is that this equal of Pallas was expected to bring about this change or that he had actually done this.

The site Wikipedia states that the English golden age of literature flourished during James 1's reign. This therefore means that James 1 is responsible for the Golden age of English literature. This could be the more reason why Jonson could have thought of showing his greatness in his being equivalent to Pallas.

After Pallas calls Golden Age and Astraea, and they descend, she calls on to the poets to descend also and the poets do so. This is a sure sign of the age of

literature flourishing under King James. It is Golden Age, Astraea and the poets who acknowledge the change in the world when Iron Age and her evils vanish as they say:

Astraea. Now Peace,
Golden Age. And love,
Astraea. Faith,
Golden Age. Joys,
Both. All, all increase.
Two Poets. And strife,
Two Poets. And hate,
Two Poets. And fear
Two Poets. And pain
All Four. All cease.

While this is said in agreement with the truth that Pallas has restored the Golden age, the poets say that their ‘best of fire, is that which Pallas doth aspire’ an indication of the prosperity of the arts during the reign of King James.

In this masque, it is seen that Pallas is an embodiment of King James himself. James has been elevated to the status of the gods as he claimed himself that kings closer to gods than mere men according to Wikipedia.

It is possible, therefore, to say that according to Jonson, James was as great as Pallas and the relations can be seen starting from their birth to their adulthoods. This masque therefore is an allegory of James’s greatness as an equal of the gods.

6.2 *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*

Since the masque generally was intended to elevate the king; portraying him as the highest example of virtue, it also was required to lead to these virtues being found in him. This means the masque was also responsible for criticising the king in case there were character traits that were deemed not worth being found in the king.

This is one element that is seen in this particular masque. In fact, the masque was repeated with additions. As Jonson has indicated as a note at the end of the masque saying: “This pleased the king so well, as he would see it again; when it was presented with these additions”, the masque was repeated. Because masques were

generally never repeated, it can be argued that repeating this one could have been in an effort to get it right. This getting it right could here be taken to mean that the king was not very pleased with the presentation because it could have been taken to be criticising him. According to an article on the site http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasure_Reconciled_to_Virtue, the masque could have failed because of a number of vices that it criticised. For example, the criticism of pleasure over virtue seemed to be a direct attack on King James who had excessive fondness for George Villiers, the Marquis of Buckingham upon whom he lavished titles, wealth and sexual favours. It is said that his continuous drinking, and constant use of court revenues on over-lavish banqueting and drinking was under criticism.

Peck and Martin (2002) say that Jonson seems to espouse an idea that people are lustful, and liars and that society is governed by vice rather than virtue. These writers see him as an advocate for traditional behaviour. From this, it would be argued that Hercules represents the king himself who is in a dilemma of choosing between duty or virtue and pleasure. As the opening hymn, addressing Comus, the god of festivity, is being presented, Hercules's bowl is before Comus. The hymn praises the belly and all that goes with it feasting:

Room, room! make room for the bouncing belly,
First father of sauce, and deviser of jelly,
Prime master of arts, and the giver of wit,
That found out the excellent engine, the spit,
The plow and the flail, the mill, and the hopper,
The hutch, and the bolter, the furnace, and copper,
The oven, the bavin, the mawkin, the peel,
The hearth and the range, the dog and the wheel.
He, he first invented the hogshead and tun,
The gimlet and vice, too, and taught them to run.
And since, with the funnel, an Hippocras bag
He's made of himself, that now he cries swag.
Which shows, though the pleasure be but of four inches,
Yet he is a weasel, the gullet that pinches,
Of any delight, and not spares from the back
Whatever to make of the belly a sack.
Hail, hail, plump paunch! O the founder of taste
For fresh meats, or powdered, or pickle, or paste;
Devourer of broiled, baked, roasted, or sod,
And emptier of cups, be they even or odd;
All which have now made thee so wide i' the waist

As scarce with no pudding thou art to be laced;
But eating and drinking until thou dost nod,
Thou break'st all thy girdles, and break'st forth a god.

Clearly, this hymn has been shared in line with praise for food. The beginning has to be with grain from which food and drink is taken. For example, the hymn says:

Prime master of arts, and the giver of wit,
That found out the excellent engine, the spit,
The plow and the flail, the mill, and the hopper,
The hutch, and the bolter, the furnace, and copper,

Here, the beginning is the praise of Comus's invention such as the spit, a rod put through food such as meat before it is put over a fire for roasting. Comus is also seen as the inventor of the machines used in the production and preparation of food from the plow to the pot (copper), which could be interpreted as from the field to the mouth. The masque then opens with food as the main desire.

From there, Comus is praised for inventing the hogshead and the tun, large casks for liquor. He also invented the hippocras bag which is a cloth for filtering wine. It is finally said that the most important activity in his life:

But eating and drinking until thou dost nod,
Thou break'st all thy girdles, and break'st forth a god.

Unquestionably, this is not mere eating and drinking but doing it in excess. The Bowl-bearer seems to suggest that this kind of feasting is not to be encouraged as it has a negative effect on duty. He talks about himself saying:

Pardon me for my two senses; for I that carry Hercules's
bowl i' the service may see double by my place, for I have
drunk like a frog...I say men that drink hard and serve the
belly in any place of quality...are living measures of drink
and can transform themselves and do every day, to bottles or
tuns when they please; and when they ha' done all they can,
they are, as I say again...but moving measures of drink.

The Bowl-bearer seems to recognise the fact that drinking too much has negative effects on any human being who changes to becoming a mere measure of drink.

Humans begin to be equated with drink. This means that people who drink too much are looked at in terms of people who drink and not merely people.

The king having been so much into inebriation is obviously the subject in this masque. He is being asked to avoid too much pleasure and focus on work. If he goes into much drinking and pleasure, just as Hercules's Bowl-bearer suggests, he will not perform well in his service.

The coming in of Daedalus, who uses dance to bring a compromise between pleasure and virtue seems to be the compromise the king needs.

From the songs he sings, Daedalus is the mean between the two. He understands that people need both entertainment and work as well. Pleasure should not as it cannot be avoided in life. Though, what remains important is that it should be handled with care so that work does not suffer.

On the other hand, the relationship between Hercules and the pigmies gives a lot of information. Jonson was said to be very pompous and showed great mastery at his work. Of course, his mastery at his work should not be read as pomposity.

Bellinger (1927) says that Jonson was brilliant though neither amiable nor lovable. She says that he had a reputation for being pompous and arrogant. She further says that even though he was manly and honourable, he lacked sympathy. Abrams and others (2000) say that he once killed a fellow actor in a duel. He is said to have had a number of feuds with fellow dramatists.

On the other hand, Jonson was successful as an artistic creator in that he was England's unofficial poet laureate and received honorary degrees. His works show a lot of learning. His theory, it is argued, demanded design and the perfection of literary finish and he believed that Apollo could only be worthily served in singing robes and laurel crowned (Jamieson; 1966).

Jonson later became involved in what has come to be termed the War of the Theatres. This, in fact, according to Garnett and Gosse (1904) was due to his explosive temperament and conviction of his superior talent. This goes on to suggest that Jonson really was talented and a great artist. For this reason, these feuds he was

involved in makes him feel he was fighting with nonentities. It is with this background in mind that the encounter between Hercules and the pigmies is seen as a re-enactment of his experiences with the other artists here termed nonentities.

The pigmies taunt Hercules as if to say they can bring him down:

1st Pigmy. Antaeus dead! And Hercules yet alive!
Where is this Hercules? What would I give
To meet him now? Meet him? nay three such other,
If they had hand in murder of our brother?
With three? with four? with ten? nay, with as many
As the name yields? Pray anger there be any
Whereon to feed my just revenge, and soon:
How shall I kill him? hurl him 'gainst the moon,
And break him in small portions? Give to Greece
His brain, and every tract of earth a piece?

But, to show the greatness of Hercules, when he awakes, they all run into holes. This shows how the other artists fail to compete with Jonson. He is the first artist to have collected his works and had them published.

If Jonson, then, be seen in Hercules, Daedalus, who, mythically, was a great artisan and architect (more information on Daedalus is found in Chapter Six section 6.2.7 of this paper), therefore will be seen as Jonson's collaborator in the making of masques, the designer, Inigo Jones. The masque can therefore be seen as an allegory of Jonson himself.

Jonson used mythology in this masque to portray the life of seventeenth century England that comprises the king of England and himself as an artist.

6.3 *The Strong Breed*

While the main theme in *The Strong Breed* could be seen in terms of sacrifice, the play is in no doubt talking about predestination when Eman, his father the Old Man and Eman's son are meant to carry the evils of their villages for the purification of the village.

The Strong Breed is a play that talks about people who have managed to do what they can simply because they have been meant to do it. The play seems to say that one cannot do anything they were not meant for. Soyinka seems to argue in this play that there are certain people who cannot avoid what is required of them. The idea of fate as can be seen in Greek tragedies such as those of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus has been central to discussions bordering on tragedy. In this play, Soyinka ponders the question and tries to see it in an African sense. What basically seems to come out is the idea that fate is an all-encompassing concept found in all human societies.

In this play, Soyinka has brought together two great related subjects of fate and sacrifice. The theme that takes root even in the other discussion play *Death and the King's Horseman*, sacrifice in *The Strong Breed*, is seen as an unavoidable and important act for not only the people for whom it is performed but also for the performer. For it is only after the performer has performed it that they tend to have freedom.

In *The Strong Breed*, sacrifice operates at two levels in Sunman's village, the sacrifice that is central to the play: Eman sacrificing for Ifada, the idiot, and also for the rest of the village. Eman in the first place has denied his fate as a carrier, the person to perform the role of carrier. Through illusionary flashbacks, Eman is shown to have failed to perform his role of carrier. He runs away from his village where he is required to be a carrier after his father. In this case, it is shown that there is the handing over of authority from one to the other.

Eman, has given his life to the service of Sunman's village. In this village, Eman is a healer and teacher. When time comes that the village gets a sacrifice, they pick on their healer and teacher Eman. It does not matter to them that the person to be sacrificed does not have to come back to the village but be left in the forest and never return to the village.

The clear representation in Eman is that of Jesus Christ, the greatest sacrifice Christians have acknowledged. Jesus Christ, like Eman was born special. He was born from a virgin. The birth means he was born an average human being. He was born special making him what can be called a superhuman. Eman, on the other hand,

was born special in that he was born of the Strong Breed. His mother died giving birth to him. So was it with his father and his son with Omaa. The two characters Jesus Christ and Eman are archetypes of the 'called'. They have been called to be what they are. Jesus Christ for example was prophesied long before his birth as it was said that a prophet was going to be born from a virgin who happened to be Mary, much later.

The above two analogies have shown a relationship between Christ and Eman. Going further into the text, it is shown that the two characters have even more similarities in that Christ was both a healer and a teacher. The teaching of the word of God in Christ is in Eman the teaching of modernity through modern education which in fact came with Christianity. While Christ is seen as a saviour of the Jews, Eman is seen as a saviour of the Africans.

The Holy Bible says that before becoming ready for his tasks, Christ went for training in the wilderness where he was for forty days and forty nights fasting. There he was tempted by the devil three times. All the same, the devil failed to overpower him. The same temptation is seen in Eman's temptation by his tutor at the circumcision site. It should be remembered here that in Africa, the circumcision site is very sacred as it is the place of transition from boyhood to manhood. It is a place where the gods (or ancestors) mingle with humans for the development of humanity.

In the case of Eman, it is at the circumcision that he has to prove that he is ready as a man. It would in fact be important to note the pun on the name 'Eman' and 'a man', the man that he is expected to be. The time of maturity is besieged by tests that one has to undergo. For example, one does not have to cry when they are beaten. Crying means that they have failed as a man. Eman uses this time to claim his power as a man when he stands before his tutor for his girl. In this act, he shows that he is ready to take on the world as just after being ready to face shame for the sake of his girl, he leaves the village and now faces the world. This is seen in the way Christ returns after his self-imposed exile of prayer and fasting. His return is merely to work. He comes back to teach and to heal which if closed with the final sacrifice for the uncaring humans. The following passage shows Eman's refusal to be reduced to a boy when he knows he has become a man. He is now able to stand

his ground and makes decisions that are personal and not swayed by anybody. He expects people to look at him as an independent man. Much later in the text, this obstinate behaviour is seen in his response to Sunma who tries to get him away from her village where they work as teachers and healers.

OMAE: [*cooly.*] Aren't you glad to see me?

EMAN: I am not.

OMAE: Why?

EMAN: Why? Do you really ask me why? Because you are a woman and a most troublesome woman. Don't you know anything about this at all. We are not meant to see any woman. So go away before more harm is done.

OMAE: [*flirtatious.*] What is the secret about it anyway? What do they teach you.

EMAN: Nothing any woman can understand.

OMAE: Ha ha. You think we don't know eh? You've all come to be circumscised.

EMAN: Shut up. You don't know anything.

OMAE: Just think, all this time you haven't been circumscised and you dared make eyes at us women.

EMAN: Thank you – woman. Now go.

[...]EMAN: [*nearly screaming.*] ... Do you think this is only a joke or a little visit like spending a night with your grandmother? This is an important period of my life. Look, these huts, we built them with our own hands. Every boy built his own. We learn things, do you understand? And we spend much time just thinking. At least, I do. It is the first time I have had nothing to do except think. Don't you see, I am becoming a man. For the first time, I understand that I have a life to fulfil. Has that thought ever worried you?

[...]TUTOR: Eh? What is that? Now now, don't make me angry. You should know better than to talk back at your elders. Come now.

[*He takes her by the arm, and tries to drag her off.*]

OMAE: No no, I won't come to your hut. Leave me alone you shameless old man.

TUTOR: If you don't come I shall disgrace the whole family of Eman, and yours too.

[*Eman re-enters with a small bundle.*]

EMAN: Leave her alone. Let us go Omae.

TUTOR: And where do you think you are going?

EMAN: Home.

TUTOR: Te-he-he...As easy as that eh? You think you can leave here any time you please? Go right back inside that hut!

[Eman takes Omae by the arm and begins to walk off.]

TUTOR: Come back at once.

[He goes after him and raises his stick. Eman catches it, wrenches it from him and throws it away.]

OMAE: *[hopping delightedly.]* Kill him. beat him to death.

[Alarmed, Eman clamps his hand over his mouth.]

EMAN: Old tutor, I don't mean you any harm, but you mustn't try to harm me either. *[He removes his hand.]*

TUTOR: You think you can get away with your crime. My report shall reach the elders before you ever get into town.

EMAN: You are afraid about what I will say about you? Don't worry. Only if you try to shame me, then I will speak. I am not going back to the village anyway. Just tell them I have gone, no more. If you say one word more than that I shall hear of it the same day and I shall come back.

This extract shows Eman's passage into a different world. In the first place, he moves from being a boy to being a man. Then he physically moves from his village to a place where he is going to be sacrificed. His movement has shown maturity. It has shown that he is now ready to perform his task. It is for this reason that he says that he has now seen that he has a purpose in life. He says he has a life to fulfil.

During the time he is sacrificed, Eman is betrayed by someone he trusts. The sick young girl whom he gave his bubba to so that it carries her sickness away is the one who betrays him. She reports him to the elders, Oroge and Jaguna, who use this information to track him down until he is seen dead, hanging in the leaves. This is not unlike the death of Christ who is betrayed by one of his own, Judas Iscariot. Judas uses a kiss, a sign of affection, to betray Christ while the young girl uses water, a sign of life to betray Eman.

An interesting element of the sacrifices of Eman and Jesus Christ is the innocence of the individuals being sacrificed. Eman has committed no sin against the village but it has picked on him. Of course there are no questions regarding his being fit for sacrifice. This is because he is meant to do it. He is meant for the role and cannot escape it in any way even though he continuously tries to escape. This is a similar case with Christ who even asked his father to 'take the cup of suffering

away' because as a human being he could not bear what it required. He too felt this call was too much for him. Despite the desire to get rid of the task, the person meant to do it cannot escape the call. It is from this point that both Eman and Jesus Christ cannot escape the impending doom, if it can be termed so.

The final crucifixion of Christ on the cross is not very different from Eman's hanging in the leaves of the tree where the trap was set. They are both seen as hanging from a tree. It cannot be argued that Eman the healer and teacher sacrificed to bring change to the world, in *The Strong Breed* is Jesus Christ in Africa.

In *The Strong Breed* Soyinka was probably telling both Europeans and Africans that Jesus Christ is not for Europeans alone but for Africans as well. He could have done this to show the Europeans that there was no need for them to come over to Africa and start preaching the Christ Africans have in their own sacrifices. He could have been saying that there is no need to blame other cultures when similar sacrificial rituals take place in the different cultures. Soyinka could as well have been hinting on Europeans's calling African religion pagan when actually their practices are not any different from those practised by Africans that they have termed pagan.

Soyinka probably tried to look at this more than it is seen. The idea of escaping duty by Eman needs to be more closely looked at. It could be argued that Soyinka sees Eman as the African who is unable to defend his cultural traditions. Eman, it is known, is meant to be a carrier just as is Jesus Christ. He first escaped this role when he left his village saying the role is not for him. We later see him buried in the modern world. The clinic and worn text-books at the beginning of the play are a symbol of modernity though the reason why the books are worn out still gives an idea this modernity will not take root. The worn text-books show the weakness or wearing out of the modernity in Eman. This clearly shows that he will not succeed at his trying to be modern when the modernity he has taken up is in a village where people do not appreciate it as much as they appreciate their traditions. Soyinka shows that it is up to the Africans themselves to uplift their cultures as no one will do it for them. He further shows that by trying to escape one's role, one ends up losing all that he has as can be seen in Eman who dies just because he took too long to accept his role of carrier and carry the sins of the village. Had he

accepted his role earlier, he would not have been killed. He would merely have been sent to the forest never to return to the village again. His delaying the process of fulfilling the prophecy lead to his losing his life.

In this allegorical text, therefore, it can be argued, Soyinka shows the relations between African traditional religion, Yoruba in this case, and Christianity. Soyinka tries to say that there are more similarities than differences between human beings of different ancestry. He allegorically goes on to call upon the modernised African to pick up his Africa or no one will do it for him. He further warns the African that if he delays to perform his task of bringing his Africa where it belongs, he risks losing himself in the process. The allegorical elements in this text are very complex. Soyinka hints on a number of issues of culture that other writers such as Achebe, Okigbo, and p'Bitek among others are so concerned with.

It can be concluded that this text has focussed on cultural differences and how they can be harmonised. Soyinka, through Eman, has brought the world to be one while still saying we should not forget that there are differences that need to be maintained in the world for the other parts of the world to be complete such as the cultural aspects.

6.4 Death and the King's Horseman

Death and the King's Horseman is a play based on actual events that took place in Oyo the ancient Yoruba city of Nigeria in 1946. *Death and the King's Horseman* is therefore an historical play whose parallels with society should be looked at with care because it is an actual representation of what has taken place before. Soyinka could be seen as having re-enacted an actual event and not talking about other issues allegorically.

Notwithstanding this idea, as it has already been stated, this play based on the 1946 events has been set about three years earlier. The alteration of such details has a bearing on this study and hence the understanding of the play. The changing of the details makes this be more of a creative piece of work and not a mere recreation of historical events. Soyinka, in this play, creates a play that is 'merely based' on events

that took place. He does not play the role of a historian whose purpose is not to embellish the narration but to narrate events as they took place. Soyinka's is to focus on the aesthetics of the work apart from recounting facts.

The above cause makes this play be seen not in terms of history alone but chiefly in line with creativity and hence making it a piece of literary art for an audience to consume. The work is therefore expected to say what could not have been said by the playwright plainly such as criticism of the governments.

Having mentioned that, the dissertation will therefore now investigate instances in the play that could have duo meanings, that is to mean those instances that could be allegorical in the text.

The discussion of Wole Soyinka's biography showed that the Nobel Prize winning playwright was born in Africa but obtained education both at home in Nigeria and abroad in England. This combination of two cultures in his growing up has appeared in his works. This same combination has been said to be his strength. He has been seen as a symbiosis of African and English traditions inherent within him. Soyinka can then be regarded as a midpoint between African in general and Nigeria in particular, on one hand and Europe in general and England in particular on the other. It would then be argued that where there is a clash of cultures, it is Soyinka who would be taken as an intermediary between Africa and Europe. This could be the reason why Soyinka himself says that this play should not be seen as a clash of cultures. To him doing this is wrong because two cultures are seen as being given equal prominence when it is clear that of the two cultures, one is indigenous while the other is alien and the indigenous seems to be an equal of the alien culture yet on its own soil.

Soyinka has argued that *Death and the King's Horseman* is not about a clash of cultures. This is because he believes that this can be solved as there is an intermediary in Olunde. Olunde is a young man who has been sent to England to study medicine. The teaching of medicine to Olunde has a semi-duo meaning in the text. It gives the meaning that Olunde is a subject of modernisation. Olunde is clearly being inducted into the English culture and yet it is clear that he is responsible for the continuation of the Yoruba culture being a first son of King's

horseman, Elesin Oba. The sending to a modern institution of such people is the deliberate cultural dilution of a group of people. One wonders why it actually had to be done so forcefully. Pilkings, the District Officer sends Olunde away from Nigeria without the consent of the parent. This shows disregard for indigenous culture by the 'aliens', in the words of Soyinka. It therefore is Pilkings's idea that with the sending away of the person at the centre of the continuation of the culture, there is a complete break and hence death of a tradition.

Yet, when looked at closely, this sending of Olunde to England is for the sake of healing. Olunde has been sent to England to study (we can as well say *learn*) medicine. The whole essence of learning medicine is to be a healer. Since there can never be a healer if there is no sickness, we can well argue that Pilkings sees the African society as a sick society in need of healing. He sees one of their own is the best to bring about this healing. We should hence agree that Olunde is the one who will one day come in and heal this ailing society once he has learnt medicine. The medicine that Olunde learnt is not mentioned except in his telling of what he has learnt in terms of sacrifice and wastage of human life in line with sacrifice. Olunde says that he has seen greed in the actions of the generals who remain at home and send young people to fight in the war. He believes that the Europeans have no right to call African customs barbaric when they are not any different from theirs.

[...]OLUNDE (mildly): And that is the good cause for which you desecrate the ancestral mask.

JANE: Oh, so you are shocked after all. How disappointing.

OLUNDE: No I am not shocked Mrs Pilkings. You forget that I have spent four years among your people. I discovered that you have no respect for what you do not understand.

JANE: Oh. So you've returned with a chip on your shoulder. That a pity Olunde. I am sorry.

(An uncomfortable silence follows.)

I take it then that you did not find your stay in England altogether edifying.

OLUNDE: I don't say that. I found your people quite admirable in many ways, their conduct and courage in this war for instance [...] you white people know how to survive; I've seen proof of that. By all logical and natural laws this war should end with all

the white races wiping out one another, wiping out their so-called civilisation for all time and reverting to a state of primitivism the likes of which has so far only existed in your imagination when you thought of us. I thought all that at the beginning. Then I slowly realised that your greatest art is the art of survival. But at least have the humility to let others survive in their own way.

JANE: Through ritual suicide?

OLUNDE: Is that worse than mass suicide? Mrs Pilkings, what do you call what those young men are sent to do by their generals in this war? Of course you have mastered the art of calling things by names which don't remotely describe them.

JANE: You talk! You people with your long-winded, roundabout way of making conversation.

OLUNDE: Mrs Pilkings, whatever we do, we never suggest a thing is the opposite of what it really is. In your newsreels I heard defeats, thorough, murderous defeats described as strategic victories. No wait, it wasn't just on your newsreels. Don't forget I was attached to hospitals all the time. Hordes of your wounded passed through those wards. I spoke to them. I spent long evenings by their bedside while they spoke terrible truths of the realities of that war. I know now how history is made.

In this passage, Soyinka shows the learning of Olunde and his conclusion of the lifestyle of the whites and their view of other cultures. He does not criticise their culture but is able to say what is wrong in their culture for instance when it comes to the war which he believes is a path to primitivism. Olunde's idea is that it is primitive to have a war like this that leads to the white race being wiped out. He goes on to say that living like this is primitive and pointing to the fact that whites thought of primitivism only when they thought about Africans.

This learning of Olunde we see in the play is clearly Soyinka's own. It becomes clear as one reads that just like Benson in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* includes himself and Jones as Hercules and Daedalus respectively, Soyinka also brings himself into this text. Shakespeare has also been seen to introduce himself in his concluding work, *The Tempest* where Prospero ends the play declaring that all the charms he has are overdone and all he has now is his own power.

The reasons that lead to the conclusion that there is Soyinka's presence in the text is the multiplicity of the similarities between Olunde and Soyinka himself. In the first place, Olunde is noticed as being brilliant in school by Pilkings. This implies that Olunde was in an academic institution in Nigeria before being sent to England. The idea that he was sent to study medicine shows that Olunde was sent only for university education implying that he had already done his high school education. This is evident in Soyinka who did the first part of his education in Nigeria before proceeding to England for his further education. This implies that Soyinka would be exposed to the English culture which would be seen as an attempt to wipe out his 'tribal memory'. While Olunde is expected to be the custodian of the culture in the absence of his father, the symbol of continuity of culture, Soyinka was introduced by his grandfather to the pantheon of Yoruba gods and other figures of tribal folklore which should be seen as a symbol of continuation. In both, it can be said, there is that element of continuity.

While in England, Olunde learns the culture of the whites. He does not despise them but sees that there is something admirable about their culture though he is still able to pick out what is important. He praises the captain who sacrifices his life for the sake of the people. He sees this as something worth it. Soyinka similarly gets aspects of the English culture that he shows in his drama. He is one poet cum dramatist who has been praised for effectively weaving both the African as well as English literary conventions in his works.

While it is expected that Olunde will sacrifice his life for the sake of not only his culture but also his people, he does it long before the coming of his time. Olunde takes the role of his father when his father delays in doing it. Similarly, Soyinka sacrifices his life when he notices that the lives of the people of Nigeria are at stake when dictatorship takes root in the country. He tries to broker a deal between warring parties for the sake of his country's freedom. Soyinka shows a non-selfish move when he is sent to jail and still stands his ground and believes he has to fight for his country. The Promethean myth that he portrays in his *The Man Died* as discussed by Munatamba (1981) in his paper *The Promethean Myth in Soyinka's The Man Died*, shows Soyinka to be a giver to his society. Just as Prometheus stole fire for humans, Soyinka fights for freedom for the people of Nigeria. This is the

same element brought out in *Death and the King's Horseman*. We can therefore conclude that Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horseman* shows himself to the world. He shows what is expected of him and how really he sees himself. He therefore explains that even though he is seen as a meeting point for different cultural expectations, Soyinka is a symbol of continuity regarding African culture.

As can be recalled from the second chapter, writers such as Moore (1978), Jones (1988), and Wilatec (2006) say that Soyinka is interested in public affairs. They say he is interested in taking part in activities that affect people in general. In his *The Writer in a Modern State* (1988), Soyinka argues that the writer has a role to play in the activities of governments. This means that the writer's writing should have a bearing on the happenings of society. Other works of Soyinka such as his *The Beautification of Area Boy* and *King Baabu* have been said to satirise the Abacha regime in Nigeria and military tyrants in general, (Banham, 2005). This could mean that Soyinka sees his involvement in these public affairs as a crucial objective in his writing. It is therefore imperative to look for any expected political allegorical elements in his *Death and the King's Horseman*.

It is not a matter of question already that the work is political in nature looking at the fact that it is dealing with colonialism. At the centre of the work is a colonialist who, in all general goodness, tries to thwart the death of Elesin. This, to him, is a favour. All the same it raises questions that have to do with desire to listen. It shows that the colonialist, because of his power, is not ready to listen to the other party. To them, this is some barbaric custom that ought to be stopped. While this work shows the view that the colonialists do not understand native tradition, there is a very strong image of stiff-neckedness in Pilkings. Despite the fact the Elesin, and Olunde have explained the importance of this ritual and that the ritual has been ongoing for a very long time, Pilkings still is not interested in listening. What matters to him is the law – the modern law. This clash between modernity and tradition should not be seen in line with colonialists alone. It should be seen further to be bent on modernised Africans who have been educated and now begin to despise their traditions. One major elements of modernity at this time in Nigeria was politics. Politics had taken root though because of the selfishness of particular

individuals, democracy could not take root but be uprooted by frequent cases of coups and dictatorial governments.

As a number of writers cited so far have insisted, Soyinka was against the military governments. He was against dictatorship and wanted to see the rule of the people in place. It could then be argued that the Pilkings here represent the dictators whose say, they believe, is the only important one, in his view.

Around the 1970s when the play was written, military rule was the order of politics in Nigeria until about 1998 when Nigeria returned to democracy. This writing about a self-imposed leadership of colonialists can surely be taken to represent the self-imposed military government. The play therefore talks about the inability of the leaders to listen to the desires of the people. These governments believe that they are the only ones in the right. The people are meant to be lead and not be involved in the leadership. Soyinka could be taken to have taken this stance because of his exposure to modernity and hence believing that all members of society have the right to contribute to the running of their affairs. Above all, he could be arguing that people have freedom to run their lives in what suits them best regarding their lives no matter how inappropriate it may seem in the eyes of the leaders. The leaders should therefore be expected merely to facilitate this fulfilment of the people's wishes.

Even if this has not been said so directly by Soyinka, it could be argued that his focus is on leaders performing what is expected of them by the people they lead. For example, the performance by Elesin is a clear indication that leaders should take up what has been assigned to them. Elesin's delay in committing suicide and further his seeking sexual pleasure when he is most required to perform a ritual required of him not only by the people he leads, but also by the gods who he has to join within a few hours shows failure on the part of the leaders. Soyinka could as well show this as a failure on the part of the leaders to help in the continuation of the African culture. He seems to say that as leaders, they are responsible to facilitate the continuation of the culture but they fail to do so because of selfishness. They are interested in immediate pleasure, the pleasure of the flesh such as sexual pleasure. These sexual pleasures could represent modern values that have no bearing on the

people's lives in terms of the edification of Africa. Soyinka in this text is therefore arguing that for Africa to see its culture develop, it needs leaders who will be dedicated to its dictates. It needs leaders who will be committed and perform their roles as is required of them by the people they lead.

On the other hand, there is need to pay attention to Elesin's need for continuity as seen in his desire to leave a seed behind. To Elesin, this was the best way of ensuring continuity. The passing on of Olunde at the end of the play qualifies Elesin's desire to leave a seed to be a symbol of his love for his people. Elesin should then not be seen ultimately as a selfish individuals burning with sexual desires, but a lover of his people who, he believes, need a leader to carry them into the future.

Even if this has already been argued, this text could be seen to be placing much emphasis on the regeneration of the culture of Africa through handing over from one generation to another as is expected of Elesin to Olunde. The text further calls on the young (who could also be seen as mere citizens as opposed to leaders) to take up the role of development if the leaders seem to be lagging in their steps. This surely shows that Soyinka is disillusioned with the leaders of the day. Some elements in the play are aimed at them but come out in the Elesin Olunde nexus.

As an allegory of Soyinka himself, this play shows what he stands for and above all, it shows what has been expected of him by society and how he has handled it. The play has also shown that there is need for leaders to have a listening ear to the people they lead. It has been shown that Soyinka has little faith in their ability to lead to the development of the continent. For this reason, he is calling upon the young and all those not involved directly in politics to come in if they are really interested in the development of the continent.

Soyinka has given prominent roles and speeches to African characters. While others may argue that women have been shown as a tool to be exploited by men, Soyinka has, actually, given adequate space to Iyaloja, the mother of the market. Iyaloja is a fearless character who equals a man in the play even though she has her own flaws.

Regeneration, a mythological theme in the play, is also central to the development of Africa. The coupling between Elesin and his bride represents regeneration. Even if the bride was set to marry a fellow young person, she does not hesitate to sleep with the old man. Just like Bale Baloka in *The Lion and the Jewel*, Elesin is a symbol of cultural development and continuity in Africa.

6.5 Conclusion

Allegory focuses on the almost invisible relationship between a text and society. In this chapter, it has been shown that the texts have a bearing on the societies the works were produced in (though this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven).

The work has revealed that Jonson generally focuses on the role of the king in the affairs of the kingdom. He presents the king as the ultimate regarding the virtues of the society. He not only portrays this but also elevates the king to that position in *The Golden Age Restored* while in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, he brings himself into the text. His long time collaborator, Inigo Jones also comes in alongside Jonson.

Soyinka shows the linking of African with European traditions in his texts. In *The Strong Breed*, he brings images of Jesus Christ who shows ultimate sacrifice while in *Death and the King's Horseman*, like Jonson has done, he also comes into the text in the name of Olunde. In this text, he goes further to talk about the role of leaders in development, chiefly, the preservation of culture. He argues that where the leaders are too interested in modern pleasures and too stiff-necked to listen to the wills of the people, the people should rebel and take the law in their hands. He argues that they should be able to perform what is required of them in the absence of the leaders and be able to move Africa forward.

In the next chapter, the dissertation shows how allegorical elements as used by the dramatists relate to the world the dramatists lived in at the time of writing.

CHAPTER SEVEN: A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ALLEGORICAL ELEMENTS AND THE SOCIETIES THE WORKS WERE PRODUCED IN

7.0 General

In Chapter Six, this study tried to identify allegorical elements employed in the texts under study. A number of elements were identified and said to be related not only to the dramatists being studied alone, but to the societies in which the works were produced as well. The current chapter intends to show a more direct relationship between the allegorical elements identified in the texts and the societies in which the works were produced. This relationship will be limited to the elements alone. What this implies is that the societies of the time will be looked at not as broadly as they are but only as they are related or reflected in the texts.

As much as it is appreciated that this implies looking at the historicity of the text or what might as well be seen as the textuality of history, it should also be understood that it has been argued that the interpretation of a work of art in relation to its history affects its efficacy. McGann (1985) says that this leads to the beauty of the piece being ignored and only the relationship with history being appreciated. While this is appreciated, there is no reason why the work of art should not be interpreted in historical terms when it is fully known that artistic works are produced as part of a culture and are not only created by the culture but also edify the culture that produces them.

To this end, this section of the study will proceed by looking at the relationship between Jonson's allegorical elements and the English society of his time, before looking at Soyinka's allegorical elements and Nigerian society.

7.1 The Relationship between Jonson's Allegorical Elements and the English Society

Focussing on the relationship between the allegorical elements and the societies portrayed, the paper undertakes to see whether what has been identified really is allegorical taking into consideration that what appears to be unrelated to the entire text may actually be central to the text, (Barish, 1953).

The first important allegorical image to discuss in Jonson's work is the imager of the king as the ultimate ruler of England in *The Golden Age Restored*. The reigning king of the time was James I, who, as king of Scotland, was referred to as *His Grace* James VI, King of Scots as king of England, he was referred to as *His Majesty* King James I of England. As King of England and Scots, James's full title according to the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia retrieved from the site http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_I_of_England, was *His Majesty, James VI, by the Grace of God King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc.,*).

James therefore was king not of Britain alone but of Scotland as well. He began as king of Scotland and proceeded to succeed Elizabeth I as the closest living relative of the unmarried childless English monarch, through his descent from one of Henry VIII's sisters. Earlier, we see a number of plays such as *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare written just before Elizabeth's death, dealing with problems of leadership and succession in general. One wonders if Shakespeare was writing about succession wrangles that were likely to rock England in the absence of a legal successor to the throne seeing that the queen had no issue to inherit her.

If this was the reason behind such plays, which could really have been seeing that we are here dealing with the element of allegory in drama, it would then be argued that as much as James was the only rightful heir to the throne, there should have been another who was supposed to be more rightful than him. Had Elizabeth had a child, the child would definitely have succeeded her as leader of the monarchy. This could therefore be taken to diminish the authority James had seeing that he was not completely the rightful heir to the throne except by mere opportunity because of Elizabeth having no issue to succeed her.

Even if this work had not encountered any sources to suggest that there were problems regarding his kingship as the very rightful ruler of Britain, it could still be right to agree with the Greatsite article which suggests that since James inherited the throne of England after the death of his mother's cousin, Queen Elizabeth I, he was never a very popular monarch among the people of England. He laid much of the groundwork that would eventually lead to the beheading of his heir Charles I during

the English Civil War. But because of his political skills, his rule was relatively stable.

With this in mind, Jonson, in the masque, was trying to reaffirm to the citizens that James was the only rightful ruler of all England. Jonson could have been trying to strengthen the monarchy's popularity by elevating the king so much. Jonson could also have, as James himself ever suggested, that the monarch was closer to God than the rest of humans hence the authority in it.

According to Wikipedia, James was in the habit of drinking and over-spending on banqueting and drinking. This could possibly not be the virtue that Jonson was trying to portray in the masque. It is not debatable that Jonson as well as other citizens was not pleased with this lifestyle. Jonson was probably interested in helping the king to a better life.

The element of the allegory of a king who has to make a choice between pleasure and virtue should here mean that the society demanded that a king should be virtuous and not seek pleasure over virtue. While it has already been acknowledged that Jonson was trying to portray the monarch as being virtuous, from the knowledge that the king was so much into inebriation and squandering court revenue on banqueting it is concluded this was undesirable and that Jonson was speaking against it.

The next issue to discuss is the idea of Jonson inserting himself in his work. His image in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* has far reaching reasons that have to be viewed in terms of the relationship with his society. One obvious point is that in the masque, his image appears in the main masque and not the antimasque. Had he appeared in the antimasque, there would have been other issues to discuss. The question, in the first place has to do with reasons why he appears in the main masque and not the antimasque. Cunningham (1955) says that in the masque, Jonson gave comic materials and characters. As has been seen already in the masque, the pigmies have been put in the antimasque. Here Jonson is saying something regarding the status of the pigmies. He is saying that he is more important than they are.

The pigmies in the masque represent nonentities in the literary arts. Jonson, it has been established, is trying to show the difference in status between the pigmies and the big mythological figures such as Hercules and Daedalus. He is saying that though brothers to giants such as Antaeus, the pigmies are of a much smaller size and cannot compete with Hercules, the one who killed Antaeus.

The knowledge that Jonson was the first poet laureate and masque writer for the court gives him an advantage over other poets and artists in general. Stetner (?) writes in *Ben Jonson and His Folio* that Jonson uses this opportunity to raise his personal profile. For this reason, it means Jonson is separated from the rest of the artists. This could be telling us that the artist in 17th century England is very important but he is more important if attached to the court. This will be taken to be so considering that the court is the highest authority in the land.

Jonson has therefore in this allegorical writing in the masque said that any artist in the land is important. He has suggested that all artists should be of high standing in society. It is for this reason that great artists like Daedalus are behind the reconciling of pleasure with virtue. Above all this, the masque's allegorical use has shown that the writers who have connections with the court are of more prominence hence of higher status.

7.2 The Relationship between Soyinka's Allegorical Elements and the Nigerian Society

A study of *The Strong Breed* has shown that the main theme in the text is sacrifice. This has been seen from the idea that sacrifice seems to hover over the entire text. There is sacrifice in the case where Eman takes the position of Ifada, and where Eman is flogged in order to cleanse the village of the evils of the previous year. Sacrifice is also seen when Sunma is ready to lose her family and her village for the sake of being away with Eman and detaching herself from age-old evil traditions. Eman also sacrifices his relationship with Omae just to get away from the onerous toil of being a carrier, the role played by his father and also yet to be played by his son after him. The role of carrier was meant for people who were chosen to play it. Even if in Sunma's village's case it was different as a carrier was supposed to be a

stranger, this role was difficult to play. It was not an easy one. The carrier was expected to be beaten, spat on, but receive all that without hitting back.

While it is accepted that this work is about sacrifice, and, above all, sacrifice in an African traditional sense, the image of Jesus Christ keeps on appearing as the work moves on. This Christ figure in *Eman* leads to questions as to why a western hero should so appear in African cultural works. One idea that comes to mind already is Soyinka's deliberate way of showing the cultural hybrid in him. Having discussed earlier that Soyinka, as has been seen in *Olunde* in *Death and the King's Horseman*, is a symbiotic product of African as well as western values, it becomes clear that the two cultures that represent his making are shown. In an interview with the regents of the University of California on the contribution of the Yoruba culture of his ancestors, Soyinka had this to say:

Well, I was thoroughly surrounded and immersed in aspects of the Yoruba culture. Even the Christians understood that they had to come to terms with what they called "pagan" cultures. For instance, to win over adherents, one grand-uncle of mine found that his best bet was to set Christian lyrics to traditional pagan tunes. That way the sense of estrangement was not very heavy, not too distanced. In addition, you had the ancestral masquerades constantly parading the streets of Abeokuta, passing in front of the church. And I asked for their significance, what was their meaning? What did they do? I was very curious. And if you recollect from *Ake*, I even grew to superimpose the masquerades, the masks themselves, to identify them with the figures of the saints of the stained glass window of the church. So there was this fusion, constantly, of images. And I found no contradiction between them.

In this situation, Soyinka does not seem to talk about himself alone; he gives an entire picture of the fusion of the cultures in Nigeria. He shows a case where both cultures have to accommodate the outside, to create room for harmony for the success of universal harmony. Soyinka shows that the Nigeria of the time was

compounded by a hybrid of culture or what can be termed cultural diversity. This diversity is not limited to religion alone but also other issues of modernity as well as politics where modern politics was taking root in a place of traditional leadership.

This could be contrasted with Senghor's assimilation that was preached by the French in their colonisation process. It is this same concept of assimilation where colonies were expected to be totally assimilated into the French culture that led to the Africans introducing and coining *negritude* a concept that Soyinka and Okgibo spoke against.

This play relates further to the coming of the Europeans with Christian messages. The presence of the Europeans, the reducing of the efficacy of traditional religion, and the images of Christ appearing every now and again in the form of sacrifices all reproduce the coming of the Europeans to Africa. One should still recall that even if Soyinka recreates the coming of Europeans to African through images of Christ recurring in the texts, he still has had reservations regarding the culture of the Europeans. For example in *The Trials of Brother Jero*, he criticises modern religion, here seen in Christianity. He shows that there are high levels of pretence where the people to be respected at merely using the people who follow them for personal gain. One wonders why God does not punish them for using His name for personal satisfaction. It could be said that Soyinka in this view tries to say that there is little difference between different religious groupings.

This symbiosis mentioned is the same we see in Soyinka as he appears in *Death and the King's Horseman*. The image of Soyinka in Olunde seems to also magnify the duality of cultures in Nigeria. As Olunde comes into the text, we see an African who is between two cultures. The hope of harmony is seen in the decision to be made by this one man. This is not different from the position held by Waiyaki in Ngugi's *The River Between*.

From Ngugi, one sees in the very Nigeria in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* similar themes of cultural clash and cultural erosion coming into play. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo fails to accept the new culture that comes to his village, Umuofia. His rigidity in an era of change costs him his relationship with his son and, above all, his life. His suicide at the end of the novel is largely due to his

failure to acknowledge the changes that have taken place in his land that require change on his part as well. It is his inability to change with time that costs him so much.

His grandson, Obi Okonkwo, now in *No Longer at Ease*, on the other hand, deals with change differently. He follows the change that has been accepted by his people. Like Olunde, Obi Okonkwo goes to England to study Law. While in England, he changes his major to English. Upon return to Nigeria, he works for the Scholarship Board where due to a culture of bribes, he ends up on trial in court. This is the trial that opens the book and we learn the rest through a flashback. We see here that the change he accepted has had serious repercussions on his life. Firstly, the change of learning the Europeans' way of life and secondly that of his major at university seems a little too much on his part.

While in these texts including Ngugi's *The River Between* the results are disastrous, in *Death and the King's Horseman* Soyinka merely shows that there is still a future for Africa. Soyinka shows that the young Africans who learn about other cultures are the best to continue with the struggles Africa is making in recovering her lost cultural identity; the identity that was lost at the coming of the European when he introduced Christ to Africa. He seems to suggest that once they learn about other cultures, the Africans should be able to mix the good elements with theirs and then have a good combination.

Despite this cultural dilemma, the leaders are still enveloped in greed and selfishness. The military dictators in the likes of Abacha and Obasanjo are not interested in furthering the aspirations of the people, but merely frustrating their efforts to build a better world. These are the same dictators we see in the names of Kaunda in Zambia, Banda in Malawi, Mobutu in Zaire (now Congo DR), and Mugabe from Zimbabwe. They may not be military men but their actions warrant them being called dictators because of their selfishness and desire to hold on to power forever. Their view of the countries they lead is that they (the dictators) own the countries and can do what they ever wish. They have elements of the monarch where once they assume power, they have to be there forever. They are fond of oppressing people with opposing views no matter how significant the views are.

Soyinka, in these texts, uncovers all the experiences of Africa. He is not limited to Nigeria alone as what Nigeria has been through is a fraction of what the entire Africa has been subjected to by her own children. The cultural dilemmas, oppression of the masses and people with opposing views are among the many issues that Africa has had and still struggles to contend with. This is the area that Soyinka has focussed on.

7.3 Conclusion

The relationships between the literary works and the societies in which the works were produced are very relevant to the understanding of the text though, of course, not implying that it is done at the expense of the artistic quality of the work. What is outstanding is the multiplicity of meaning in the text.

The works by Jonson focus more on the court as it is known that masques were for the courts. As much as the works focus on 17th century England, they still give more information about the monarch. Questions regarding the legitimacy of the monarch and its effectiveness in terms of representation of the ideals of the people are raised. The works, despite raising these questions still attempt to say there still remains the greatest monarch alive. They try not to show failure of the monarch but to suggest corrections as the people would want it to be and, above all, to elevate the monarch to unprecedented heights so as to elevate the English world altogether.

Soyinka on the other hand is more concerned with the general populace. His focus is on the way the average African fits into society. He tries to say that the world should revolve around the average human being for the world to achieve maximum effectiveness. The role of the leader is merely to facilitate what the general populace advocates for. At the centre of the average human being's life, Soyinka suggests, is his culture. He shows cultural dilemma as a deterrent to personal identity. The human being who has no culture, the culture in which his since the entire human being wholly grounded in culture, one who does not have a culture ends up a failure. The argument here would be that Soyinka blames the political leaders who are unable to listen to the wishes of the people. He sees them as

having been rocked by desire for modernity and hence sidelining their own cultural and social needs.

This view seems to suggest that Soyinka is trying hard to speak for the average human being. His arguments have to do with what the average human being will benefit from everything that concerns him. It is for this reason that it will be reiterated that Soyinka, in his works, celebrates life. It would be concluded that Soyinka has a personal myth, one that runs through almost all his works. This is raised from the idea that he argues in all his works, including his sketches, that the average human being has to be at the centre of all that goes on in life.

In the texts studied, Soyinka has bemoaned the lack of sacrifice from the adult population. The adult population here represent those entrusted with authority and duty. The leaders should be servants of the people and not oppressors. He has given an example by playing that role himself both as a writer, political activist, and even as a character in his writings.

Even as Achebe in his *A Man of the People* shows the exploitation of the people by their leaders, it can be argued that politicians are merely interested in reaping from the country. Chief Nanga, who is known as “A Man of the People” as a Minister is expected to protect the traditions of his country. Unfortunately, he uses his position to accumulate personal wealth. It is this same kind of leadership that Soyinka speaks against in his works.

The works’ portrayal of the societies they were produced in, though limited to the critic’s interpretation, seem to be different in the sense that even if they all focus on the beliefs of the average man, Soyinka’s focus on culture and development in relation to the role of the leader while Jonson’s focus on the expectations of the court and its status in the world.

In the next chapter, the study examines the use of mythology and allegory in literature particularly in drama. The study also analyses the relationship between literature and society with allegory uniting the two.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.0 General

In this chapter, discusses the use of mythology and allegory in drama based on the works studied. The approach taken will be that of merely making a conclusion based on the provided evidence from the cases of Soyinka and Jonson. The section will also try to make out the efficacy of this approach to literary studies even if it has been used extensively and almost exclusively in this paper.

The discussion will go on to look at how and allegory in literature and society marry. This, just like the earlier topic, will be a conclusion drawn from the discussion in the previous chapter. The final conclusion will be drawn from the final discussion which follows.

8.1 Mythology and Allegory in Drama

The discussion in this study has shown that mythology and allegory are prevalent in the works of Soyinka and Jonson. The myths, that scholars discussed in the text have stated explain the world, have done more than that. As Daiches (1981) observes, mythology transforms nature into literature. The use of mythology in literature relates the natural world to the literary world.

While mythology was meant to basically explain natural phenomenon, it has come now to connect the natural world with that of literature. The characters in literature have joined mythological characters or have taken up qualities of mythological characters for their full potential.

In Jonson's masques, mythological characters like Hercules and Atlas have been used to give prominence to issues of life. What was regarded to be the world that Atlas carried on his shoulders could be viewed as issues that human beings have to deal with everyday. The strength of Hercules could also be seen in line with the power with which literature can be used to oust tyranny as is the case with the literature of Soyinka.

The conclusion of the previous chapter mentioned that literary analysis has limitations in the sense that certain literary explanations are limited to the critic's views. This is because as a text is read, the critic usually brings his own background, fear, aspirations, and so on. For this reason, the reading on allegory and mythology in drama, though quite enriching as regards the extension of meaning in the text, should be very cautiously handled. The critic might go out of their way and attach meaning to the text because they have thought it necessary that the text talks about what they want it to talk about. With the exception of the first method identified in the text in the application of the mythological approach in literary analysis, where the writer mentions the mythological characters the work is based on, the application of methods merely on the basis of association is detrimental to study because it would be very possible to firstly, leave out more appropriate myths simply because the critic is not aware of them and secondly, misapply myths because they are the only ones available in the repertoire of the critic.

Drama, on the other hand, is basically allegorical in nature. This idea is based on the understanding that drama is meant to be performed on stage by actors (or players). The actor playing any role in a play does not play themselves (in the normal sense of drama). Their role is merely to impersonate someone who may have existed, exists, will exist, or will never exist. Any dramatic piece on stage is unquestionably playing two roles, which is the basic allegorical purpose of drama, at play. Just like what was said under the mythological method, the chief allegorical interpretation of a text can be misapplied if generally approached with no concrete evidence from both the text and the represented society.

The critic should therefore become increasingly aware that the method used here requires a deep understanding of the subject, subject terms and, above all, subject elements while relating them to the text carefully and accurately, if not to say appropriately.

In as much as the use of mythology and allegory in the texts has been identified, the application of the same should be chiefly tied to historical records of the works. The critic needs to have a detailed understanding of historical issues in relation to the drama being discussed and use that to make the interpretations. The

relations based on loose relations might end up making the text mean what can never be meant and being used merely for propaganda and not actual literary achievement.

Based on the study, even if the elusiveness of the method of mythology and allegory in relation to the study of dramatic texts is acknowledged, the methods still holds as evidenced from the analysis and multi-applicability of the same. The meaning obtained has called for a careful understanding of the dramatist's styles, the historical and general cultural makeup of the society in which the work was produced, and close and careful study of the text.

The reliance on interpreting characters as symbols and allegorical representations is based on more than just the use of the same by Jesus Christ in his parables which include *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*. While in Christ's case there was no actual representation in individuals that could be pointed at, this work has pointed out actual individuals and has shown the relations between the experiences of the characters and those of their referents.

The treatment of the subject in this study has been successful and would remain usable provided caution is, as was in this study, taken regarding the issues that have been mentioned in this section. These include erudition at universal level, because it could be seen as an umbilical cord for humanity.

8.2 Allegory in Literature, and Society

Being one of the three genres of literature, drama cannot be detached from any discussion on literature. Even as dramatists, the writers discussed have proved successful at the other two genres of literature as well; prose and poetry. Even though the focus of the discussions in this case is drama, it would be inappropriate not to say that it applies to literature in general. This is not just because the dramatists are well versed in other genres of literatures but mainly because drama is also an important and solid genre of literature.

From the background of literature, every literary piece is a product of society. For this reason, it is expected that literary pieces reflect the societies that produce

them. The relevance of these pieces to societies is that their role is not merely to mirror the societies that produce them but also to enlighten the societies in question.

8.3 Conclusion

The main role of this chapter was to conclude the discussion on mythology and allegory in drama and its place in society. The chapter has shown that the idea of drama being allegorical stems from its nature of impersonation through actors who take up the roles of the persons (persona) in the drama. This goes on to look at how drama is created from the material that is society itself and that same material is what it is fed on before it gets to feed the society itself.

The interpretation of these relations, from the issues and characters from the masques of Jonson and plays of Soyinka is that there is a very thin line between literature or drama and society. Drama is based and drawn from the society that it represents and feeds. Whatever is discussed in drama is a reflection of the society. Drama is, in this case, used to show members of society what they would not see without the mirror which is drama itself.

The conclusion is that because of this interpretation and interdependent nature of literature (or drama) and society, every dramatic piece is allegorical while the mythological aspects ought to be handled with care because there has to be concrete evidence in both the text and the world of mythology to prove the relationship of the two. Therefore, while not all dramatic or literary pieces are based on mythology, all are allegorical.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since this study is confined to identifying the myths and allegorical elements used in drama and not giving reasons why the playwrights have used the myths and allegorical elements in their dramas, it is imperative for scholars to carry out studies into why playwrights use mythology in their works.

The study has given more attention to mythology in drama with little emphasis on the archetype while knowing full well that the two are employed together in literary terms. A study into the archetypes as used in literature would not only suffice but further the depth of the current study and the reader's understanding of the world.

It has been noticed in the process of this study that while Jonson uses European-originated myths, Soyinka uses both European and African-originated myths. Research could be carried out into whether European dramatists use African myths and if they do the extent to which they do so.

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