

Abstract

Concentrating on the majority of Soyinka's published plays, his two novels, two collections of poetry and the long poem Ogun Abibiman, and relating these to his critical and polemical writing, this study of Soyinka's art and ideas seeks to establish the socio-political basis of his works. Further, it posits that the nature of the influence of his socio-political milieu on his work was so decisive that it wrought a fundamental ideological change in his perceptions. This was in turn embodied in such later creative works as Season of Anomy, sections of A Shuttle in the Crypt and Ogun Abibiman. The study attempts to demonstrate also that throughout the various stages of Soyinka's development as artist and intellectual, there is a consistent concern with the social responsibility of the individual, a concern based on the prototypal action of the Yoruba god, Ogun, imitated by Soyinka in both his social and artistic activities and advocated for each member of society. The engaged characteristics of the later works mentioned would seem to suggest a need for a reevaluation of the nature of earlier works which might be better seen as the results of the artist's searching for a definite and effective social role. He has now defined a new role for himself as well as other groups such as intellectuals and women, and social forces such as religion. Any execution of this new vision is, however, hampered by the contemporary socio-political reality of a nation bent on reconstruction and consolidation, and hence averse to the radical changes which are a concomitant of Soyinka's new vision of society.