1989

Of Marx and Missionaries: Sopnka and The Survival of Universasm in Post-Colonial Literary Theory

Gareth Griffiths

David Moody

Follow this and additional works at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol11/iss1/10
Of Marx and Missionaries: Sopnka and The Survival of Universausm in Post-Colonial Literary Theory

Abstract
One of the most enduring projects in the criticism of African literature has been the attempt to define the exact relationship between the local product and the so-called 'universal' tradition. The early criticism was dominated by the Eurocentric tendency to assume a simple continuity between Western forms and artistic aims and those of African writing, a tendency echoed by many of the writers themselves. Christopher Okigbo, for example, claimed the right to 'belong, integrally' to European societies as well as his own. He argued that 'the time has come to question some of our prejudices, to ask ourselves ... whether there is such a thing as African literature'. This tendency exercised not only European but also African critics - for example, in the search for quasi-historical parallels such as those drawn by Emmanuel Obiechina between Africa and the mediaeval situation in which European vernacular literatures developed from the presumed universal originating Latin source. Chinua Achebe's early and decisive intervention in this dispute was crucial, and no one has stated the case against universals in post-colonial criticism with more forcefulness and accuracy since:
Of Marx and Missionaries: Soyinka and The Survival of Universalism in Post-Colonial Literary Theory

One of the most enduring projects in the criticism of African literature has been the attempt to define the exact relationship between the local product and the so-called ‘universal’ tradition. The early criticism was dominated by the Eurocentric tendency to assume a simple continuity between Western forms and artistic aims and those of African writing, a tendency echoed by many of the writers themselves. Christopher Okigbo, for example, claimed the right to ‘belong, integrally’ to European societies as well as his own. He argued that ‘the time has come to question some of our prejudices, to ask ourselves … whether there is such a thing as African literature’. This tendency exercised not only European but also African critics – for example, in the search for quasi-historical parallels such as those drawn by Emmanuel Obiechina between Africa and the mediaeval situation in which European vernacular literatures developed from the presumed universal originating Latin source. Chinua Achebe’s early and decisive intervention in this dispute was crucial, and no one has stated the case against universals in post-colonial criticism with more forcefulness and accuracy since:

In the nature of things the work of the western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only some others who must strive to achieve it. As though universality were some distant bend in the road you must take if you travel far enough in the direction of America or Europe.

Homi K. Bhabha provides us with a perceptive gloss on Achebe’s comments:

What Achebe’s criticism shows quite clearly is that within a Universalist problematic, criticism exists only to resolve the material significations of historical and cultural difference into a deeply ethnocentric transcendence.

The debate on universals, though, in all its implications, really came out into the open with the exchange of articles between Wole Soyinka and the so-called ‘troika’ of Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike, published in the early seventies. Despite the extreme tone of the troika’s attack, the debate,
at that time, was little more than a formalist dispute over what did or did not constitute the ‘essential’ nature of African writing (more especially, poetry). It was as if the quarrel were about which features could be interposed as the authenticating sign of Africaness between the terms ‘good’ and ‘literature’ – as if these surrounding terms were not, in themselves, problematic. There was little attempt by either side in the dispute to question the role played by sociological and ideological practices in the constitution of post-colonial literature, and by the institutions which reflexively sustained them, such as publishing networks, patronage systems, educational curriculae and the like. In other words, there was little attempt to make an analysis of ideology in the continuing power relations preserved by neo-colonialism within post-independent Africa society. What little analysis of this that did exist was present only at a fairly simple level – for example, the splenetic identification of the iniquities of the so-called ‘Leeds School’, an identification which did little more than generalise the theory of false values and corrupt influence from the level of the individual to that of a supposed group or cabal. In other words, a kind of melodramatic conspiracy theory replaced genuine analysis in the Soyinka-troika exchange. No theories encompassing the ideological influences on the construction of the various discursive practices emerged, nor was there any attempt to dismantle the underlying and stifling ideological assumption that criticism and indeed creative writing were supported (or even created) by a system of ‘values’ subject to no hegemony beyond that of the individual or group ‘sensibility’.

It must be admitted that at this stage in the debate even Soyinka’s contribution was largely formalist and essentialist. However, there was less than justice in the troika’s attack on Soyinka as being concerned with a conservative, mythic view inherently opposed to the more radical perspectives beginning to exercise the minds of his younger colleagues. The simplistic politics of such a division, which cast Soyinka as the conservative patriarch and the troika as the radical enfants terrible, ignored the fact that both their critical practices were informed by the same inadequate level of theoretical analysis, an analysis which took no account of the determining forces of social and cultural practice, nor of the need to relate this practice very specifically to the distinct articulations of the ruling class ideology (to use Althusser’s term) within which each specific historical response (‘text’) came into being.

Nevertheless, the view that Soyinka’s position was inherently conservative took hold. Andrew Gurr, for example, was led to suggest that Soyinka’s ‘mythopoetic’ vision inevitably undercut his assertions of a radical and modern programme for Nigerian culture. Such a view, of course, ignored
the fact that content or even 'metaphysic' (to use Biodun Jeyifo's paraphrase) is not locked inescapably into a specific function. No less a critic than Trotsky understood this clearly enough, and said so forcibly:

The quarrels about 'pure art' and about art with a tendency took place between the liberals and the 'populists'. They do not become us. Materialist dialectics are above this; from the point of view of an objective historical process, art is always a social servant and historically utilitarian. It finds the necessary rhythm of words for dark and vague moods. It brings thought and feeling closer or contrasts them with one another; it enriches the spiritual experience of the individual or of the community, it refines feeling, makes it more flexible, more responsive, it enlarges the volume of thought in advance and not through the personal method of accumulated experience, it educates the individual, the social group, the class, and the nation. And this it does quite independently of whether it appears in a given case under the flag of a 'pure' or of a frankly tendentious art.9

As a recent commentator on Trotsky's commentaries on literature and art has said,

Trotsky ... far from minimising the role of tradition in literature, insists upon it as much as does T.S. Eliot. He adds, however, that the continuity of literary history is dialectical, proceeding by a series of reactions, each of which is united to the tradition from which it is seeking to break ('artistic creation is always a complicated turning inside out of old forms'). Nor are these reactions merely mechanical, the eternal swing of the pendulum from 'classical' to 'romantic'. They take place under the stimuli of new artistic needs as the result of changes in the psychology of social classes attendant upon changes in the economic structure.10

As this suggests, a more complex model is needed to assess the political consequences of Soyinka's stand, or indeed to assess the function of 'traditional' versus 'modern' or 'reactionary' versus 'radical' elements in the work of all those engaged in the seventies debate on appropriate form and content.

This need can be diagnosed with even greater clarity by turning to the second stage of the debate over Soyinka's work, which stretched from the mid-seventies to the early eighties. The most recent crop of writers and critics, many of them deeply influenced by Soyinka,11 also failed to analyse fully the complex and contradictory features of Soyinka's position. What was missing from the alternative programme that these younger critics outlined was a genuine historical or chronological assessment both of the work of the earlier writers and critics in terms of the specific political and social forces acting upon them at the time of their production, and of the forces acting upon the critics at the time when they assessed those texts. In other words, what was missing from these accounts was a genuine sense, first, of the text as the product of an endless and changing dialectic involving writer, reader

76
and critic, and secondly of the larger mechanisms of production both of the
text *per se* and of the social text with which it engages. Instead, what emerges
is the importation of a relatively vulgar form of Lukacian determinism, in
which the social realist misapprehension that a text can 'lay bare' its social
conditioning is imported into the African debate at a time when it was already
long discredited in marxist critiques in much of the rest of the world. Once
again, the essential features of what has come to be called 'neo-colonialism'
can be detected, only in a 'radicalised' form and operating now in the sphere
of culture. The ex-colony becomes the dumping ground for the discarded
versions of Eurocentric 'truth', forced to accept that its liberation from its
marginalised position can only be achieved by its breaking out of its local
limitation into some wider perspective from which a modern, civilised (or in
the case of this particular version of the discourse, radically 'liberated')
perspective can be attained. The process involves the rejection of the
traditional society except as a subject for contrastive techniques with a new,
'liberated' model in which the signs of consciousness and modernity are
equivalent with those of the new authenticating centre. It is as if we must
add Moscow and, in the case of post-structuralism, Paris to Achebe's list of
destinations to which the road labelled 'universalism' must travel.

In fact, as this paper implies, what may have been needed in Africa in the
late seventies and early eighties was neither a new 'allegiance' of this type
nor a reflex rejection of traditional cultural and creative models, but rather
the development of a more conscious means of articulating the social and
cultural implications of literature - one requiring a more sophisticated
model of ideology and so a more effective appropriation of current Marxist
and post-structuralist theory to the African context in particular, and to
post-colonial societies in general.

This wider perspective necessarily raises the question of how far, and to
what effect, these issues reach out to the larger relationship between
post-colonial criticism and modern European theory. Blind partisanship and
sloganeering is of little use here. Contemporary post-colonial critical
practice increasingly suggests the importance and meaningfulness of
appropriations from European critical discourse. European theory does not
(or ought not to) supercede or replace the local and the particular. To
suggest this, as Soyinka asserts in *Myth, Literature and The African World*, is
to engage in a new form of cultural missionary activity, replacing the
adherents of the Christian bishops with another generation of self-negating
'converts', this time to the post-structuralist or Marxist faith. To
suggest this, as Soyinka asserts in *Myth, Literature and The African World*, is
to engage in a new form of cultural missionary activity, replacing the
adherents of the Christian bishops with another generation of self-negating
'converts', this time to the post-structuralist or Marxist faith. It is
continually necessary, therefore, to avoid the facile assumption that such
theories are self-evidently superior to the local and particular varieties.
However, it is also necessary to avoid the pretence that theory in post-colonial literature in the 1980s is somehow conceived independently, free from all coincidents, or even that these theories have functioned merely as 'context' for the recent developments in post-colonial criticism (whose origins, it is implied, lie elsewhere in some prior and timeless dimension raised above history and its determinants). No simple theory of 'origins' is of much use here. If anything emerges clearly from the debate between Soyinka and the troika it is that the contemporary African intellectual inhabits a world of profound and inescapable hybridity. Soyinka, as he himself has said, does not inhabit a world in which African ontology, the mask, or the Ogun cult is hermetically sealed from the discursive practices which inform such modern African phenomena as engineering (oil rigs and trains, not 'iron snakes'), aviation, macro-economics, or critical theory. To use Edward Said's term, we may need to distinguish a large number of distinct and important 'beginnings', each with its own discursive practice and political consequence.

One such indigenous 'beginning' is identified by Dennis Duerden, whose early work on the relationship between African iconography and the institutional practices of 'traditional' society provides us with a way of situating the junction of ideology and textuality in the work of Soyinka. In its own local form, post-colonial criticism must appropriate the discourses of post-structuralist language theories and the recent theories of ideology and textuality while avoiding the tendency implicit in much recent usage to allow these theories to reincorporate the post-colonial difference into a new universalist and internationalist ('multi-national') paradigm. Powerful as such criticism is, it must be careful not to act in such a way that it becomes a coloniser (or rather neo-coloniser) in its turn.

Critics have begun to operate in these terms, exploring the texts of African writing in terms of the full complex of its definitive discursive practices. African writers such as Soyinka and Ola Rotimi exhibit, to use Northrop Frye's term, a 'displacement' of all these ideological discourses: a colourful, paradoxical and radical production of Yoruba and Greek heroes, Christian messiahs and modern existentialists. Rather than perceiving such displacements as the sign of a cultural betrayal or of a suspect pragmatism resulting from a liberal pluralism (both positions which lead to a monist view), such hybridities are read as the characteristic marks of the possibilities inherent in post-colonial discourse to escape the simplicity of binary opposition and to generate a new, powerful and creative synthesis of disparate and contradictory elements - a synthesis which embraces difference as a sign of possibility, not as a marker of closure. The presence
of these hybridities suggests what Wilson Harris calls the 'complexity of freedom': of how a writer limited, constrained and shaped by the historical conditions of his or her literary production manages within these limits to go some way towards expanding the borders.

In practice, unfortunately, most African criticism which adapts or exploits the possibilities of the European discourses — whether those of post-structuralism or those which seek to radicalise the analysis of texts from a Marxist or neo-Marxist perspective — shares a limitation in that it fails to recognise the continuing importance of Soyinka's cry for the preservation of a sense of self-identity. Despite recent advances in Marxist anthropology, the discourse remains profoundly Eurocentric, still locked into universalist assumptions in which terms as complex in their application to African conditions as 'masses', 'urban proletariat', and even 'class' are simply renewed without question in the new culture. Such a process, as Soyinka himself has argued, in effect replicates in an unconsciously ironic manner the transposition of cultural absolutes in the 'missionary' stage of colonialism. The development within the analysis of capitalist Europe and America of more sophisticated models for handling the complexities of late-capitalist societies (for example, Althusser's theory of varying articulations of the dominant mode of production within specific regional or subclass situations) has proven useful in articulating the practice of capitalism in the neo-colonial phase of Europe's expansion. But in Africa, the possibilities this has offered to date for a profound critique of the limitations of European theory have not been extensively developed.

In fact, with few exceptions, a fairly vulgar form of critique still dominates, one which lays stress on the notion of the 'real' forces of a given epoch, or which replaces the analysis of the complex interaction of ideology, institutional practice and individual 'aesthetic' in any textual situation with a dismissal of texts as flawed or inadequate because of their 'theme' or form. Even the most sophisticated and valuable of such recent accounts, for example that of Biodun Jeyifo, occasionally falls into this trap. For example, in discussing the limitations of Soyinka's play *Death and The King's Horseman* (which he finds wanting in comparison with the earlier Soyinka works, or with a work such as Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile*), Jeyifo stresses the choice of social group and class origin of the play's protagonist, Elesin, as a limiting factor in the text:

It is illustrative of the gaps and dents in Soyinka's present ideological armour that he selected this particular metaphysical and philosophical order to symbolise pre-colonial African civilisation and NOT other more egalitarian African cosmogonic and metaphysical systems, the erosion of which ideological and political progressives
can, with greater reason, regret. A metaphysic which idealises and effaces the conflicts
and contradictions in African societies, which rationalizes the rule of the dazzling
FEW (such as Elesin) over the deceived MANY (the women, the retinue, Amusa etc...)
is an extension, in the ideological sphere and in the realm of thought, of class rule
in the economic and political spheres.¹⁸

Despite the argument elsewhere in Jeyifo’s essays – especially the very
convincing account of The Road, which rightly recovers the theme of the
marginalised and dispossessed figures from what Jeyifo calls ‘pretentious
metaphysical non-meaning’ (p. 21) – the underlying critical practice here is
suspect since it is rooted in an equation of theme and subject with the political
project of the text. In itself this is to ignore the need stressed by
contemporary Marxist criticism to focus on the very complex relationship
between what a society thinks about itself – its own views of its choices and
practices – and the powerful influence of ‘ideologies’ and ideological
institutions on the shaping of this practice. To suggest that this problem can
be resolved by writers making the ‘right choices’ between approved or
disapproved themes and subjects (call them ‘metaphysics’ if you will) is to
resurrect the simplest form of textual reification. Significantly even the
persuasive Jeyifo must bend the material in a very overt way in order to
achieve his simplified readings of Soyinka’s work.

For example, in the case of Death and The King’s Horseman, Jeyifo ignores
the powerful satiric element in the text, notably in the presentation of the
young girls and their imitation of the white colonial society. Jeyifo also
ignores the fact that in the play Elesin is never rendered as a Hegelian ‘tragic
hero’, whose death can be simply attributed to the colonial intervention of
the evil ‘white’ Pilkings. Ignoring the prefatory note, which he quotes
seemingly without registering its ambivalence, Jeyifo argues that the
dramaturgy of the text itself insists on the self-contradictory function of
Elesin’s role as ‘hero’. Indeed, even when we adopt Jeyifo’s own mimetic
method of analysis, it is just as possible to see the work’s concentration on
the role of ‘the horseman’ as embodying a powerful critique of the failure
of the ‘traditional’ elite at a vital point in Nigeria’s colonial history. We would
argue that by broadening our analysis considerably, and by seeing the work
as being ‘inter-textual’ with Soyinka’s other productions, the play can be
seen as a radical and ironic ‘de-construction’ of the writer’s own aesthetic
mythology of Ogun. In its turn, this casts the stress onto Olunde’s ironic and
unwilling acceptance of Elesin’s ‘heroic’ traditional role, a role which the
text clearly shows Olunde regarding as necessary and yet open to change –
indeed, as having to be changed if the society is to survive the challenge of
colonialism. The role is necessary in that it helps to maintain the society’s
sense of 'self-identity', and yet it is false in so far as it contradicts Olunde's own clear commitment to the need for a radical change in the structure of Nigerian society and in the underlying ideological forces which operate to maintain the power both of the colonial society and of the indigenous elite which, in political practice, supports it. Olunde, the potential radical who has seen the white man's 'civilisation' for himself, is prevented from making a radical change or from responding to the changes which are already manifesting themselves in his generation (the young girls for example) by the equal if apparently opposed imperative to maintain a sense of the difference of his society from the European society which seeks to 'other' it.

The issue here is less the correctness of Soyinka's choice of subject or of the revolutionary character of the 'class' of his protagonists than the project which the choice of subject and protagonist serve. It seems to us that Soyinka's is a profoundly de-colonising project, and that Jeyifo has lost sight of this in his demand that an alternative (although not actually opposed) project be undertaken by African writers: that is, the need to celebrate and dramatise those figures and groups dispossessed in post-colonial society though the material practices of neo-colonialism. However, the route forward in Nigeria, as in all post-colonial societies, is in part through a preservation of what Soyinka has called 'self-apprehension' in relation to imported ideology: the recognition that the class struggle or the formation of ideology is part of a continual process of the production of texts in a mutual and inherently dialectical enterprise. In this dialectic, the reader, the writer and the critic are all engaged in the task of unravelling how the meanings they produce come about, not in affirming that one or other 'inherent' meaning is or is not acceptable to some universal, determining theory. This process, difficult enough, and requiring the most scrupulous and detailed attention to the particulars of any moment of production and consumption and to the social and professional practices which traverse the site of the text at such moments, is even more complex than usual in the case of the post-colonial text.

With post-colonial texts there is a need for the theorist to take into account the specific material and ideological realities of the colonised society, including the unique 'self-apprehension' of the indigenous 'masses' themselves. To blandly apply the same Marxist theoretical discourse to a materialist discussion of Nigerian literature is to repeat the 'Eurocentric' crimes of the metropolitan critics themselves. These latter critics speak of the 'growth' of African literature as if it were a branch of the colonial tree; they talk of its 'emergence' as if it were from a lower evolutionary stage; and they analyse its 'development' as if it were a child of the British Mother.
Similarly, to describe Nigerian literature simplistically in terms of 'masses', of the 'proletariat', of the 'bourgeoisie', and even of 'mystification' is to assume that Nigeria is merely a branch of metropolitan capitalist operations, without its own alternative roots of ideological nourishment. This is itself only another expression of the ideology of colonialism itself, which sees the colonised culture as an appendage, region, mine or plantation. Colonialism, however, works its own peculiar damage: a damage that must be analysed locally, within each colonised situation. It is 'colonialism', therefore, and not the more general notion of 'capitalism' at this stage of African history, which must provide our primary, definitive, historical and critical discourse. The story of post-colonial literature is the history of the struggle for de-colonisation.

We would argue that this is what Soyinka means when he insists on the need to preserve 'self-apprehension' within any critical model. This is the larger, important insight in Soyinka's criticism – a criticism which in other registers can be seen to be profoundly tainted with essentialism. And because of this insight, we cannot therefore dismiss Soyinka's critical work as representing merely the falsified and falsifying product of a liberal, pluralist and anti-radical position.

The crucial difference between Soyinka's position and that of the younger Marxist writers lies in the former's perception of the need for a radical transformation of society to remain rooted in a specifically Africa practice. This, despite the stress on mythic and ontological imperatives in Soyinka's work (not least in the essays in *Myth, Literature and The African World*), is not, finally, 'mystifying' in its effect. In practice it expresses a very direct and pragmatic philosophy, one which recognises that the real threat to post-colonial societies at large resides in a broad-scale internationalist incorporation which erases differences in the name of some new universalist imperative. For Soyinka it is of little consequence or comfort that this new imperative wears the garments of recent Marxist theory when in practice its effect is to deny Nigerians their dignity and self-identity yet again.

Of course, it is not only Marxist criticism which is open to these charges. If this paper concentrates on some Marxist examples of this practice, it is because they have dominated the scene in Africa in recent times. Nevertheless, the contemporary critical practice of critics such as Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Abdul JanMahomed, which lays stress on the need to dismantle colonialist discourse and expose the subversive possibilities it contains, is itself open to strong criticism from the perspective of the politics of its practice. Benita Parry's recent critique of these anti-colonialist theorists draws attention with some force to the limitations of their critical
discourse and to the effects it may unconsciously produce in denying the
tradition of national liberationist narrative. Parry notes especially the
neglect in recent years of the perceptive analysis of Fanon, whose stress on
the stages by which a post-colonial society de-colonises itself is at least as
crucial to any real understanding of Nigerian literary texts as are the
theories of Marx or Hegel. The latter pair's concerns are articulated in terms
which are sometimes inimical to an effective analysis of societies in
pre-capitalist or neo-colonial, multi-national, capitalist modes.

Fanon's long-neglected analysis forces us to ask the central question,
'What is decolonisation?' This is not the place to engage in a complex
economic discussion; however, if we are not to use the term merely as a
slogan, we must at least try to give it some substance. Generally, colonialism
is the complete domination of one people by another for material profit. The
power of the coloniser, its 'hegemony', extends over all aspects of the
exploited people's life: the latter are 'colonised' economically, culturally and
psychologically. Economically, the colony supplies raw materials, cheap
labour and a new market for the metropole's manufacturing industries;
culturally, the colony is seen as primitive and peripheral to the mainstream
of 'tradition'. Because of this, a psychological dependency can emerge within
colonised space — a denial of one's own identity. Political independence does
not substantially alter this relationship; colonialism is merely supplanted by
'neo-colonialism', where the coloniser rules through local deputies. Real
nationhood must be struggled for on several accounts. Bhabha's reminder
that the simplistic 'coloniser/colonised' antithesis is a misleading one does
not alter the central, quite material reality which no amount of theoretical
gymnastics can avoid: that is, if the 'coloniser' is in practice a complex of
fragmented economic, cultural and institutional practices, and the
'colonised' is compromised in its own servitude, it is nevertheless true to say
that it is the people of the post-colonial state who quite materially suffer in
the final analysis.

It need hardly be said that the 'underdeveloped', completely dominated
nature of neo-colonial society, a society which nevertheless still possesses its
own internal ideologies and institutions of cultural and political authority,
complicates the task for the materialist critic. For example, where does a
writer belong in the radically mobile, fragmented and dependent Nigerian
'comprador' middle-class? How does the powerful remnant of traditional,
pre-colonial social authority influence the ideological conditions under
which a text is produced?

It is at this point that Marx may need to be strongly supplemented, if not
supplanted, by Fanon as our principal theorist in this regard, at least in the

83
'present phase', for Fanon's 'phases' of de-colonisation provide us with an hypothesis with which we can test the case of each post-colonial society's specific and particular struggle for liberation. In the first phase of colonial culture, Fanon argues, all criteria for legitimacy are based on the standards, both overt and covert, of the metropolitan culture. The educated African adopts the habits of the master, even though the 'hybrid' manner of the product of that adoption itself radically 'interrogates' the universalist pretensions of the colonialist sign. In the second phase of the dialectic, the nationalist culture protests against its subordination by celebrating its own distinct identity; therefore, theories of indigenous aesthetics, even personality, are promulgated. While this vocal self-promotion restores a sense of pride, it nevertheless reinforces the colonial lie itself— which is that the colonial culture is 'other', incapable of being one of the 'us' of the metropolis. In the third, more truly liberated, phase, the ex-colony 'appropriates', or annexes, those parts of its former master's culture it finds useful, having less need of the rhetoric of nationalism, and being more immediately concerned with the material welfare of its citizens.

Many contemporary critics working in the field may believe that the task facing the post-colonial world today is less that of dismantling colonialist criticism than of addressing the more complex, insidious and hidden controls which characterise contemporary neo-colonial practice and the operation of multi-national capital which it sustains. It is in the light of this task that we can sympathise with the desire of critics, such as Jeyifo, who forcibly direct our attention to the task of dismantling those assumptions which in barely modified form have survived through the transition from a colonial to an indigenous ruling elite. Nevertheless, the task will not be helped by exchanging one set of crude and vulgar assumptions for another, nor by assuming that in seeking to discover the prevalent 'modes of articulation' of societies such as Nigeria, a continuing sensitivity will not be needed towards the specific cultural and social continuities which inform and 'overdetermine' the expression of their material basis. In this context the re-evaluation of Soyinka continues to be an important site for the struggle to articulate the critical issues for contemporary post-colonial criticism.

NOTES


12. As Soyinka puts it in *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. xi, ‘The man who because of ideological kinship tries to sever my being from its self-apprehension is not merely culturally but politically hostile. ... When ideological relations being to deny ... the reality of a cultural entity which we define as the African world while asserting theirs even to the extent of inviting the African world to sublimate its existence in theirs, we must begin to look seriously into their political motives’.


17. Althusser and Balibar, *op. cit.*


23. For a full elaboration of these theories, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; London: Pluto Press, 1986).