CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Contemporary African literature has surpassed the phases of nationalism and Negritude and follows the commitments of a universal world order. Writers like Wole Soyinka have presented in their writings the human predicament resulting from cultural conflict, exploitation and political injustice.

Achebe and other African writers are deeply concerned with and about the society in transition, its political scenario and corrupt politicians. Wole Soyinka too speaks of suffering of common man in every period of African history.

The Interpreters and Season of Anomy testify to his profound sense of commitment to his society and concern for African masses and African elite who are shouldered with greater responsibility of bettering the society inflicted by social and political maladies. He has artistically presented the ongoing reality in fictional terms and in his own style. Soyinka does not approve of Ngugi's didacticism and his
advocating to discard what is foreign and to react immediately to the prevailing adverse political situation and to take to arms if necessary to meet the end. While exposing his society Achebe seems to have over simplified the Nigerian reality, especially in his artistic freedom without any commitment.

Soyinka in maintaining a balance between his art and social commitment, has upheld his artistic values in his novels, even risking sometimes the thematic content. The complexity in the novels is partly due to his idiom of expression, myth, symbolism and allegory which are woven into the texture of his novels.

The characters in Soyinka's The Interpreters live in their own world and are insulated from deeper contacts with others. Each one of them is engaged in his profession and there is not much common ground between them. Inspite of the difference they agree on basic issues, thus emerging as a solid front. Soyinka has given a convincing interpretation of the predicament faced by different characters in The Interpreters.
The Interpreters is an elaborate expansion of the complexities of the African past and the present. It is a description of the beliefs and spiritual crises of several characters. Soyinka has presented in his two novels his culture without any palpable design. But he does not talk about negritude. Soyinka's captured moment in the lives of a generation of post-independence, acquires epic dimensions.

In The Interpreters Soyinka portrays a dark vision of post-independent Nigeria. The novel presents a group of young intellectuals and others torn between the past and the present.

The impression of complexity and depth caused by multiplicity of themes presenting through multiple imagery and multiple flashbacks, reach the level of a certain confusion of effect as Gerald Moore calls it. The imagery in Soyinka's novels goes far beyond the conventional use of similies and metaphors emphasising points of comparison. In The Interpreters, the protagonists representing abstractions collectively produce a specific moment in the history of Nigeria.
Soyinka uses an elaborately worked out multiple metaphor representing power rather various forms of power - intense but abortive, unfulfilled, unrealized, abused or even unused. Sekoni is power incarnate, both as a scientist and an artist whose abortive power project before getting commissioned is thwarted by the forces of corruption. He, as one who creates 'that wrench within the human psyche which we vaguely define as tragedy', is the most powerful human symbol in the novel. Sekoni who symbolizes technical revolution which Nigeria is not yet ready to welcome and who is also the true path finder, gets crucified for the sins of others.

Egbo, the only major character in the novel is presented to link the ancestral world with the world of living and the world of unborn, passing through "the abyss of transition". He with mystic touch linking the two worlds, and going beyond, symbolizes a slave of indecision and passion going through the process of self realization. Bandele is portrayed for allegorical purpose, passive, with little action involving him directly - 'He is generally reticent but springs into action when necessary' ... He is the consoler too. He embodies the very significance of the title of the novel and asserts when asked by Egbo what he would gain from
the experiences, "knowledge of the new generation of interpreters". Bandele is painted in the pantheon in the image of Obatala or Orisa-nla the god of creation. He stands for the quiet, yet positive assertion of the human mind.

Kola both a creator and an interpreter, understands the meaning of power and his own limitations and of the power of art. His 'pantheon' connects the world of man and the world of gods and tries to reestablish the relevance of the outdated deities in the modern world. Sagoe, a journalist represents the voice of the people. He is the 'eye' and the 'ear' among the protagonists, a young man of ideas but rendered incapable of action because of indecision, a characteristic of his friends. His paper is ironically called 'The Independent viewpoint' but does not express its own voice of truth. Lasunwon, the lawyer does not make significant contribution; his views are suppressed by others. The lawyer whose instinct is sharp, questions the authenticity of Lazarus's claim of death and resurrection.

Soyinka is incensed with the nature and attitude of politicians and administrators and intellectual class of
Nigerian society whom he blames to be responsible for political malice and social injustice and moral and economic corruption. In *The Interpreters* prof. Oguozor who delivers sermons on social morality is himself morally corrupt possessing an illegitimate child. Soyinka has exposed also Lumoye who is also morally corrupt. Lasunwon, the lawyer has not been given any function other than registering his own insensitivity to nuance and atmosphere in his night expeditions along with his friends. Soyinka ridicules at the behaviour of lecherous chief Winsala who makes advances towards a receptionist but fails. The behaviour of Sagoe at professor Oguazor's house on seeing the plastic fruits and his throwing of the fruits through the window is humorous. Soyinka does not approve of the colonial distance maintained by the Oguazors and their apostasy.

As Soyinka's myths run parallel to the main narrative in his novels, so his characters are given mythological dimensions. Egbo in *The Interpreters* is presented in Kola's pantheon in the image of Ogun, the Yoruba god of creation and destruction. Season of Anomy has a mythical framework as the Orpheus-Eurydice myth runs parallel to Ofeyi-Iriyese relationship. Apart from the Orpheus-Eurydice myth and a swarming haven of gods and goddesses, Soyinka has referred to
Soyinka has the prevailing conditions of contemporary Nigerian society as the setting for exploring his themes. The two novels present the society in the grip of turbulent modernity with people accepting the change and new values of life. Chief Winsala, the villager, drunken but respecting traditional wisdom is an unscrupulous member of a newspaper board. Egbo is an heir to Osa and a public servant in the foreign office, Sekoni is a devout Muslim and also an engineer and sculptor, Bandele has been patient with every
fashionable affectation in foreigners as well as Africans, but delivered his curse upon his superiors at the end in a traditional formula.

'I hope you all bury your daughters'.

Season of Anomy presents the two contrasting societies - the traditional Aiyero society and the modern society ruled by the cartel. 'The custodian of the Grain' of Aiyero and the minister PaAhime realize the need to change. Soyinka has created an ideal society called Aiyero. It is a society which an intellectual has long been dreaming about. Soyinka has not openly stated what Aiyero represents but it is a Utopia which every intellectual dreams about. But Soyinka, except some hints about the ideal society, hasn't defined its nature and complexion and thus leaving much to the reader's imagination. From the novel it is understood that Aiyero is a break away community of a larger Christian community, Aiyetomo on some religious aspect. Some of the converts would still like to continue the age-old customs of traditional society. The community is taken care of by 'the custodian of the Grain' and their young men though educated abroad do not like the attractions of big cities, instead, they have returned to their home country to serve their
community for its better future. Probably Soyinka had this in mind when he thought of an ideal community in Nigeria and created the Aiyero. He has presented in Season of Anomy a conflicting situation in the country with people given to divergent values of life and faiths. But the ways of Aiyero is always a dream of mankind all through the ages and unfortunately it has not come true in any part of the globe. Aiyero just remained as a unifying force unconcerned with region, wealth and religion but only exerting moral influence and giving its message to all and fighting against moral and monetary corruption in the society.

Soyinka looks for a better future via the past, for which he has juxtaposed the past and the present using the cinematic technique of flashback. In The Interpreters Egbo who is in the night club with his friends, is drifted to his past where Egbo and his friends participated in a canoe expedition. Similarly Sagoe lying in Dehinwa's apartment drifts back to his interview for a job at Independent viewpoint. In Season of Anomy Ofeyi mentions about his acquaintance with the Dentist to PaAhieme first and later the scene shifts to their first meeting with each other at the airport. Ravenscroft has observed that The Interpreters has 'a
bitterness of disillusion expressed through sardonic satire'. But the final impression of the novel can't be called disillusionment. Though there is tragedy caused by indecision, betrayal and corruption in abundance, the novel ends with a note of hope that the future of Nigeria rests with the young intellectual elite with a deep sense of commitment. Better future is envisaged in Sekoni's technical competence and artistic vision, Kola's awareness of the power of art and right self-assessment, Bandele's unshaken conscience even facing calamities, and in Egbo's desire though weak, to make the right 'choice' in dealing with the issues.

Soyinka deals with religious apostasy when he makes Lazarus choose Noah, the sinner, to transform into a goodman. He satirizes Lazarus's church service and his sermon delivered at church. In Season of Anomy Ahime points out to Ofeyi that in Aiyero religion has become an integral part of the life of people and a unifying force. Noah's tragic sacrifice reflects the cannibalism prevalent in the society. In Season of Anomy Soyinka has further stretched the animal instinct of men when they hunt people to butcher mercilessly. Soyinka has used classical mythology to illustrate the man's bestiality. Soyinka seems to have denounced
them in the novel. He blames the police, army and other law and order forces for their inaction and lack of ability to prevent the massacre of people. Demakin alone has strong conviction of curbing violence with violence and is a man of action and not of mere words. He ventures to rescue Iriyese from Temako prison. But Soyinka doesn't appreciate the principle of tit for tat of the Dentist which would spread more violence, not peace and harmony in the society.

Soyinka's main purpose in making the intellectual his protagonists in his two novels is to bring awareness among the intellectual class of society to take up the responsibility of perfecting the society and protecting it from all social and political evils and to preserve its morality. Soyinka has chosen five protagonists belonging to different fields to educate the people.

Though they have failed in their endeavour to check the corruption, they have gained an understanding of the society. Season of Anomy which can be taken as a sequel to The Interpreters deals with the theme of the earlier novel. The protagonists of the first novel could not become
revolutionaries either probably the situation didn't warrant them to act so. In *Season of Anomy* Soyinka might have felt that it is time for his intellectual to set aside his dilemmas and inhibitions to involve himself in the task of changing the society for the better. Eventually the men of 'ideas' in *The Interpreters* have stopped but positively involved in the struggle for the liberation of the enslaved spirit of the people, as represented by Ofeyi and the Dentist in *Season of Anomy*.

Soyinka as in a 'situational novel' is concerned not with the individual but with the group consciousness to represent the specific moment of the history of the country. Sekoni the engineer turned sculptor, Bandele the university teacher, Sagoe, the journalist, Egbo, a civil servant in the foreign office, Kola, the painter and arts instructor and Lasunwon, the lawyer constitute the group of the 'Interpreters'. None of them is a 'hero' in the western sense. Each gives only a partial view. But Soyinka uses in the novel the myth of 'superhuman hero' identifying the potential in the intellectual to take up the assigned role of guiding his people. But the new heroes fail in their task, satisfy themselves only with the wisdom of the intensity of malice in
Soyinka might have faced problems with multiple protagonists of The Interpreters, as each character needs elaborate portrayal and deep involvement in the action. But much elaborate treatment would make the novel too lengthy. In Season of Anomy, Soyinka has just superficially used the classical allusion of Orpheus and Eurydice without properly linking it to the theme of the novel. This creates a suspicion in the mind of the reader if he is interested in writing a seminaturalistic novel about civil war or an allegorical novel. As opined by Arthur Ravenscroft, to call The Interpreters a satirical novel is in a sense to undermine its value, just because Soyinka has made it a torrent of satire. But it tries to be more than that and is an indictment of a sick society. Perhaps Soyinka takes delight in dwelling on the sickness and moral bankruptcy that he is highlighting presumably for healthy ridicule.

Soyinka's vision of the novel as a series of images to present a single idea gives it a distinctly dramatic quality. As Charles Larson has observed Soyinka instead
of basing his narrative on the orderly progression of events to suggest a goal, gives his narrative form and pattern repeating certain scenes and images used as leitmotifs by incorporating them into the texture of the novel.

In The Interpreters, Soyinka uses imagery dealing with abstractions that has more intellectual than emotional appeal and giving the novel a touch of morality flavour.

Though Soyinka has only two novels to his credit he is duly acknowledged as one of the prominent pioneers of modern African novel and a novelist with unique distinction to reckon with.