



Navigating Complex Post-Colonial Trajectories and Realities: Soyinka and the ‘New Identity’ in *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*

Segun Alexandra Adeniyi

Department of English Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria

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Abstract— One of Wole Soyinka’s memoirs, ‘*You must set forth at dawn*’, in which he states that ‘the road and I thus became partners in the quest for an extended self-discovery’ (p.50), appears to mould a critical collection of history, politics, and culture in the collective ongoing post-colonial discourses. Possibly, different post-independence realities such as corruption and banditry facing various African nations have also made it incumbent on authors such as Wole Soyinka to use their lives’ stories for purposes such as agitations, activism and protests other than the conventional focus of autobiographical works. It is in the light of the above that this paper critically analyses Soyinka’s construction of a ‘new identity’ despite the challenges that impact such desire in a post-colonial African society. The paper argues that the agony of colonialism, the failure of ‘post-independence leaderships’, and the ‘lack of effectiveness in modern administrations’-all of which Soyinka demonstrates in his autobiographical work *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*-are among the major determinants of how a public life is represented in a post-colonial setting. Thus, by closely examining the memoir, the paper offers a critical perspective on Soyinka’s efforts to construct and deconstruct such realities that go/move beyond ordinary personal narratives. This is especially true given that Soyinka’s ongoing commentary on almost every aspect of or occurrence in his environment, no matter how close or distant, is almost, if not completely, habitually protestant.



Keywords— post-colonial identity, post-independence realities, African politics and culture, ‘*You must set forth at dawn*’, Wole Soyinka.

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars have worked hard to place African literature in the various forms of ‘poetry’, ‘drama’, and ‘prose’ as both a component of the world’s literary tradition and a separate category of art. However, autobiography is one literary

form that is quickly gaining popularity and that the literary community as a whole is still struggling with. Autobiography has been conceptualised in diverse forms by modern academics. As Reece (2014) notes, autobiography is the practice of writing a person's life story by

their own subject. She has also maintained that autobiographies are subjective in nature, presenting a person's distinct and felt experience as expressed in their own words (Reece, 2014). Similarly, in an earlier study, Viljoen (2006) argues that autobiography, which is conventionally defined as fictional shifts that takes the form of 'innovative non-fiction' or presented as a novel in disguise, can be established or interpreted as the "reification" of the author. However, autobiographies gain greater significance when they engage with events beyond the physical realm, thereby going beyond the author's "reification".

Furthermore, as an independent literary form, autobiography has also been acknowledged as a crucial arena for critical debates concerning a variety of topics, such as "selfhood", "representation", and the "distinction between fact and fiction" (Olney, 2014; Eakin, 2014). It is crucial to highlight that life writing, which Thurman (2006) refers to as a "necessary tautology," would include a variety of narrative forms that deal with the subjects' personal experiences, either as told by the authors themselves or by others, given that all writing is based on real or fictitious life experiences. These narratives may appear in the form of letters, diaries, or memoirs. However, when life writing is presented as 'a memoir', it can be further divided into biographies or autobiographies. The former is an account of a person's life, or a portion of it, written by someone else, while the latter is an account of an individual's life written by the author themselves. Therefore, a memoir and, implicitly, an autobiography do not purport to be a comprehensive history; rather, they are the testimonies of authors who have firsthand knowledge (i.e. personal encounter) of the events, the period, or the individuals that serves as its subjects (Buss, 2006; Larson, 2007). In light of the variety of literary forms, it is imperative that greater attention be paid to the study of autobiographical writing by African authors and that efforts be made to identify specific characteristics that might distinguish African

autobiography. Furthermore, it is necessary to start investigating the untapped potential of conducting scholarly research on autobiographical narratives by African writers, in order to develop a deeper comprehension of the cultural and sociopolitical values and manifestations that can be found in their deeds and literary writings.

This paper recognises that several critical discourses have emerged in studies about Wole Soyinka's writings including some of his autobiographical works. For instance, Ufot (2015) performed a stylistic appraisal of Soyinka's *'Ake, the Years of Childhood'* (1981) and *'The Man Died'* (1972), demonstrating the 'linguistic, social and literary redemptive parallels' that exists between his fictional writings and autobiographical works. Similarly, Moawad (2016) looks into the conflict that exists between Nigerian cultures and the western societies in Soyinka's *'The Lion and the Jewel'* (1963), concluding that Soyinka successfully reflected the traditional culture as the most dominated globally. However, it appears that his fictional works have gained more scholarly attention than his autobiographies in the existing multitude of literature. This is even more characterised by the fact that several of these scholarly discourses that have one way or the other dealt with Soyinka's autobiographies, seem to either lump it together with authors' works that demonstrates similar themes and generic components, or examined alongside that of Soyinka's fictional writings. This particular approach, though efficient in establishing comprehensive comparative analysis of the works of divergent writers or diverse works by the same writer, tends to allow for an existing gap in an in-depth appreciation of some of Soyinka's autobiographical works.

This paper seeks to address this gap by critically analysing Wole Soyinka's *'You Must Set Forth at Dawn'* (2006), with a particular focus on his construction of identity. In particular, this paper argues that the agony of colonialism, the failure of 'post-independence leaderships', and the 'lack

of effectiveness in modern administrations are among the major determinants of how a public life is represented in a post-colonial setting. Thus, this paper examines Soyinka's construction of the postcolonial "radical iconoclast" identity in his reactions to particular issues and complexities in the typical post-colonial African state, through his appropriation of political, cultural, and social events that fractured or still fractures the historical, social and political development of his own country, Nigeria. This, according to Msiska (2006, p.190) is Soyinka's intention to present a "redemptive visionary self-agency by bringing to the fore once more the question of the radical political agency character", a type of radicalism that is consistent in the reactions of committed writers that finds it difficult to embrace the 'status quo' in the political sphere. By doing this, the author (Soyinka) integrates into this memoir the cooperative efforts of other people, groups, and members of diverse communities in the fight against the injustices imposed on the country by the different dictatorships that the reader encounters in *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*.

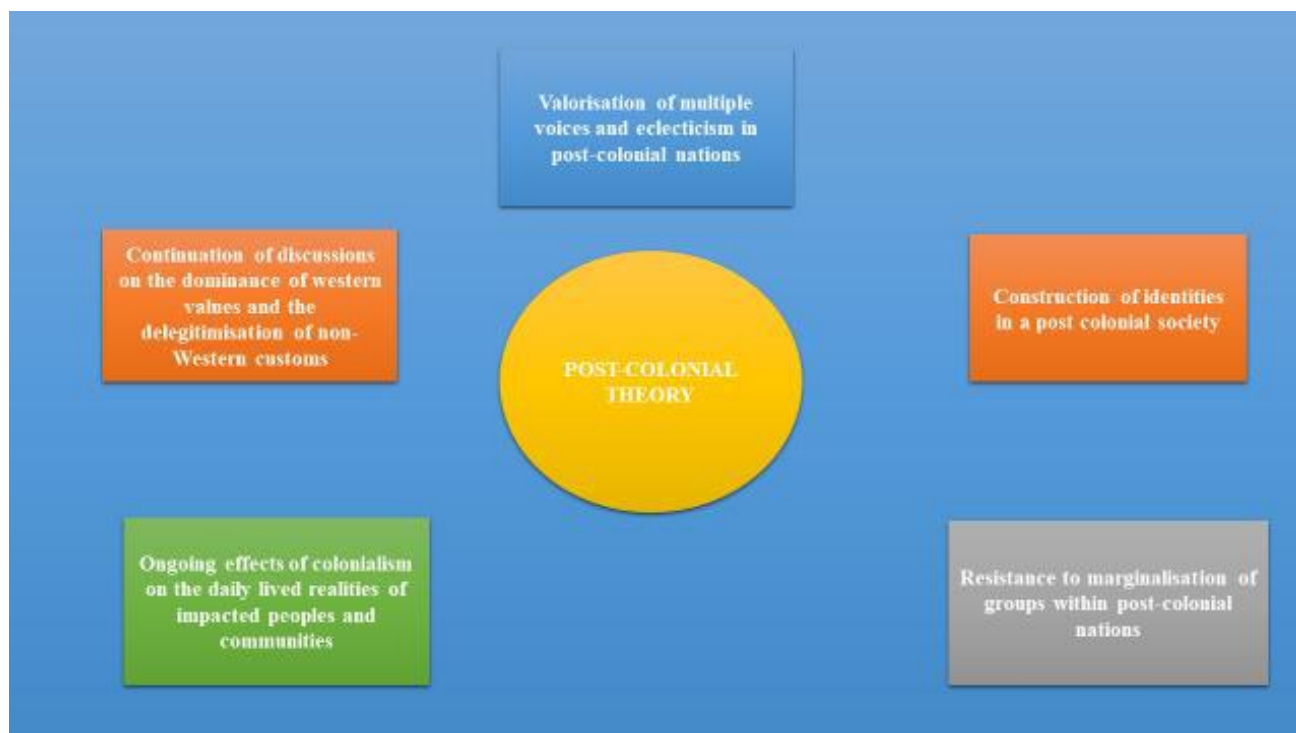
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Post-Colonialism

A range of theoretical approaches could be applied to the study of autobiographical narratives in African literature. However, it is often necessary to make a deliberate decision in order to approach the questions posed from viewpoints that would significantly shed light on them. With the advancements in autobiographical writings over several years, the domain has gained attention and is now the subject of numerous competing theories. Therefore, when determining the theoretical direction of this research, the historical and environmental contexts served as important considerations, thereby positioning postcolonial theory as the central and most

effective analytical framework for this study. This is largely influenced by the fact that a major area of postcolonial theory focusses on the role of intellectual writers as both inadvertent participants in the oppression of the "Third World" subject and purveyors of truth (i.e., a universal truth or the various arguments surrounding the existence of a specific issue). As Mahmood Mamdani have stated, post-colonialism should be viewed as a reversal of colonialism rather than its replacement (Veracini, 2015; Bartiza & Zrizi, 2022). In this case, post-colonialism as a literary theory focusses on the literatures of the decolonised nations involved in modern, postcolonial arrangements as well as the literatures of the peoples who were formerly colonised by the European imperial powers (Hart & Goldie, 1993).

Ideally, there are two types of post-colonialism in literature: 1) the study of post-colonial countries, and 2) the study of countries that are still forging postcolonial national identities (Bartiza & Zrizi, 2022). However, the second category, which forms the basis of this paper, presents and analyses how "ethnic parochialism", which typically takes the form of 'machievellianism' about protecting the country, a variation of the "us-and-them" binary social relation, has led to the breakdown of civic and nationalist cohesiveness in postcolonial nations (like Nigeria) (Rukundwa & Aarde, 2007; Bartiza & Zrizi, 2022). Here, 'civic and national unity' deteriorate when an androcentric government arbitrarily establishes what constitutes "the national culture" of the decolonised nation. The nation disintegrates into either ethnically mixed social movements that advocate political separatism or social movements that espouse substantial political goals for the postcolonial nation, all of which were the postcolonial extremes Frantz Fanon expressed caution against in 1961 (Fanon, 1961).



Wole Soyinka, like many other African writers, adopts the idea of commitment in their works, assuming the role of a 'cerebral writer' and "purveyor of truth", particularly in a postcolonial setting. This commitment is particularly solidified in three main categories of analysis that Walkowitz (2006) identified as being important to take into account when analysing African literature (i.e. literary, ideological and historical analysis). According to Walkowitz (2006), the writer is a product of his or her unique history and place because various historical experiences have led to the formation of various types of writers and performers, who will then create various types of literary artefacts. Therefore, among other issues, postcolonial theory in a postcolonial literary text addresses "colonisation", "neocolonisation", "nationalism", "history", "exile", "globalisation", "resistance", "identity" and "agency" (Sawant, 2012; Bartiza & Zrizi, 2022). In this case, postcolonialism becomes a logical theoretical choice because the majority of the aforementioned issues are pertinent to this research.

This study engages postcolonialism to examine how *"You Must Set Forth at Dawn"* reflects Soyinka's construction of 'selfhood' as a radical

critic of 'authoritarianism', 'neocolonial complicity', and 'cultural homogenisation'. In addition to paralleling the current study's thematic concerns, post colonialism also provides a strong framework for analysing the literary, historical, and ideological aspects of postcolonial African writing in Wole Soyinka's memoir, *'You Must Set Forth at Dawn'*. Through this lens, the memoir is read not only as a personal recollection but as an ideological statement rooted in historical resistance and political engagement.

Autobiography as a New Literary Form of Post-Independence Revolution: Examining the Shift Through a Postcolonial Lens

It is undeniable that autobiographical and biographical writings provide an immeasurable chance to gain insight into the way people view life, their worldviews, and their reactions towards specific events that they have had to either directly or indirectly relate to. Such works as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *'Confessions'* (1782) and Gibbon's *'Memoirs'* (1796) all recounted their own life experiences and contributed to the popularity of this literary genre in the 18th century, particularly in Europe and North America. Furthermore, works written by African

slaves on the brink of freedom also came into question as a result of the renewed optimism of the abolitionist movements against the Transatlantic slave trade during this time. Similar to this, some people in colonial-era Africa used their privileged literacy skills to produce what Koretenaar (2011) calls "tin-trunk texts," which involved a passionate appreciation for the ability of reading and writing to improve social and personal existence and establish a specific type of civilised and civic community. Today, these texts which formerly came as diaries, obituary announcements, tracts among others, offer us with insights into other early examples of life writing in different African communities. Furthermore, these texts also give us a body of archives that have become very relevant in the study of African life writing, even though some of them were written by hand and others were only made public after the authors' deaths.

However, post-independence autobiographical writing has undergone a paradigm shift, with different authors trying to demonstrate their radical commitment in the important roles they perform in their societies' evolution. Radical African writers, as Lazarus (2011) argues, opted to follow Fanon's example by portraying themselves as revolutionaries and criticising the nationalists for confusing independence with freedom. This literary radicalism reflects the disillusionment that followed the collapse of the early postcolonial promise and the rise of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, as part of the postcolonial literary movement, African literature has provided us with African writers who blend writing and political activism. This is evident in modern autobiographies which presents itself as a literary space for African writers to assert themselves as agents of historical truth and political resistance.

Within the framework of postcolonial theory which encompasses conversations about a variety of experiences such as gender, migration and oppression among others (Childs & Williams, 2014), Soyinka clearly argues the fact that in

Nigeria, the hopes and aspirations of the populace, whose enthusiasm and optimism at independence were immense, have yet to materialise into tangible developments. This discourse, which can be viewed as a form of literary and overt activism, is similarly evident in works and critiques of writers from the 1960s onwards, including Wilson Harris, Chinua Achebe (Berkman, 2020; Ibiro, 2017; Edwards, 2012) and others. Furthermore, the emergence of scholars such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who consistently question the imperialist empire's traditional values, validates postcolonial theory and writing as a field of study that demands its own interpretation. Therefore, it is crucial to assess African autobiographies in light of the postcolonial contexts that influence them. This is because modern autobiographies such as Soyinka's *'You Must Set Forth at Dawn'*, frequently have two functions: they critique postcolonial failures and assert the author's role in nation-building.

Wole Soyinka and "*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*": An Overview

Within the framework of literary and historical allusions as conventions for the exposés of the societal injustice that pervades Nigeria under different political regimes, Wole Soyinka examines his lived realities of assault, imprisonment, betrayal, and exile in *"You Must Set Forth at Dawn"* (2006). Soyinka defines himself in the text in a challenging environment that has been made more perilous by the rise to political power of nine military dictatorships interspersed with short bursts of unstable civilian eras. The timeline of Nigerian political events since independence, which seems to take the place of the introduction in the text, makes it clear how urgent the situation the author aimed to reveal is. Therefore, in a way, the text exposes individuals and organisations that engage in what Soyinka refers to as profound disdain for the values that other freedom-lovers hold sacred (Soyinka, 2006). The author's conception of

power, or its uncontested manifestation, then emerges as a central theme in this text. The narrative is also permeated with his compassion for his nation and, by extension, for the typical postcolonial nation that finds itself unexpectedly in the hands of a political elite devoid of forward-thinking strategies that can help the state and its citizens.

In addition to covering Soyinka's childhood and adulthood, *"You Must Set Forth at Dawn"* also appears as a sequel to *"Ake: The Years of Childhood"* (1981) and shares similarities with *"Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years"* (1994). Soyinka presents the reader with a very personal recount of political events, completely with sketches of his supporters and opponents as well as fierce responses to his critics, in order to illustrate the value of intellectualism through the portrayal of a life of literary and political activism spanning more than sixty years. While doing all of this, the author tries to put himself in a different position by describing the reasons behind the choices he made and the actions he took at specific points in his life. On a deeper level, *"You Must Set Forth at Dawn"* offers a counterpoint to the dominant narratives surrounding Nigeria's sociopolitical evolution. One significant period in Nigerian history that has been extensively written is the civil war. Soyinka describes the war as "uncivil wars" in *You Must Set Forth at Dawn* because he conceives it in different perspectives. According to the author, the ruthlessness with which the war was waged cannot be considered civil. For example, Obasanjo had previously discussed his meeting with Soyinka in his memoir, *"My Command"*. However, when Soyinka describes his interactions with Olusegun Obasanjo during the war, a significant counter-narrative emerges at a time when Obasanjo is ruling the nation as an elected president:

"I had crammed my lines so efficiently that I still remember them years afterward, when Obasanjo published his account of the war in "My Command." There, among other lies, he claimed that I had asked him to name his price for letting

Banjo's troops through the West!" (Soyinka, You Must Set Forth at Dawn, p.132).

For Soyinka, nothing could be more agonising than letting the perception of him and his encounter with Obasanjo during the conflict linger in the public setting uncontested or ultimately become a part of Nigerian history. In this context, the author offers a counter-narrative by stating emphatically that what he finds totally intolerable and unacceptable were Obasanjo's *"constant attempts to rewrite and tendentiously to boot! a history of which I had been a part, in no matter how minor a role"* (Soyinka, p.133). As a result, the author considers it a duty to set historical records straight as he was drawn into the *"excruciatingly boring and frustrating imposition of setting him right"* (Soyinka, *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*, p.133).

The above demonstrates that Soyinka is acutely aware of how easily public perception can be manipulated, and he takes up the memoir as a political responsibility: to 'correct', 'clarify', and 'contest'. In particular, Soyinka's response shows how counter-narratives can be an effective instrument in the hands of autobiographical writers, whose goal of creating the self is vulnerable to hegemonic narratives if they are not contested. For example, in addition to accusing public intellectuals like Soyinka of rebellion and deviation, the state also uses violence as a characteristic for discrediting radical elements in society. Therefore, the two main concerns that emerge from this autobiography is the author's (Soyinka) aim to resist the frequent depiction of him as 'violent' or 'subversive', and to reveal anarchical and political insincerity as the main causes of Africa's predicament in a postcolonial era. In this case, Soyinka tries to persuade the reader of his attachment with peace in response to a frequent criticism of his character as a man who is strongly inclined towards violence. Furthermore, even though his actions both personally and in various organisations—from his holding up of a radio station, to his founding of the Pirates Confraternity—are frequently the

subject of debate, Soyinka vehemently tells the reader that his responses were primarily meant to preserve the inviolability of justice, without which no society can truly be at peace. In a way, this text gives the author a unique chance to respond to various insinuations about his identity and character.

Reinventing the Postcolonial Self: The 'New Identity' in Soyinka's *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*

Initially, commitments appeared to be entirely aligned with nationalism. In the postcolonial world, however, contemporary historical and social developments seem to have given things new dimensions. Thus, in order to address the question of creating a "new identity," it is crucial to embrace the various nationalist strands, particularly solidarity and "populist nationalism", in order to examine the various ways Soyinka presents himself as a person whose passionate concern for his community, country, and self all contribute to defining the "self" and, consequently, his public image. In this paper, "nationalism" is defined as a phenomenon in which a person feels and expresses a sense of relatedness to a specific group, whether that group is real or fictitious, in order to forge an identity or satiate an inner desire. Soyinka's portrayal of this sense of belonging in "*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*" suggests a love for the country that also appears as a struggle against various forces that the author believes are harmful to the development of the nation and its people. In a similar vein, "populist nationalism" stresses the manifestation of the democratic process that enables the general public to join with others in establishing standards of equality and dignity throughout the nation. In this case, the nation's smaller groups and individuals' interests are perceived as elements which are able to combine to create an aggregate that can stimulate economic growth and well-being for the entire political system.

The aforementioned is demonstrated by the way in which "*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*"

galvanises widespread movements against the misdeeds of the state and military dictatorship. Post-colonial African writers like Soyinka typically provide the leadership and complementary force required to encourage the general public to take action against the state's and its agencies' oppressive dispositions. This is because the concept of commitment has been a challenge for African writers both in the early post-independence period and during the decolonisation struggle. As evidenced by the condemnation of human trafficking and the demand for the abolition of slavery, there has been an increasing need to explore themes that reflect group concerns even since the days of slave narratives. However, the various contradictions of contemporary African society and individual African states have suggested a change in the way authors, such as Wole Soyinka, attempt to conceptualise issues of commitment and nationalism. In any event, the African continent is no longer the same as it was during the Pan-Africanist nationalism and liberation movement. Therefore, it is important to note that the concept of nationalism frequently undergoes a reevaluation in postcolonial writers' works as the urgency created by the colonial order of oppression, which was primarily based on racial lines, constantly vanishes and is replaced by an entirely novel form of subjugation that is characterised by social strata, ethnic background, and gender.

Soyinka deviates from the tradition of historical African writers, particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s, who frequently attribute the numerous disruptions impeding the progress of various African states to colonialism, by highlighting the inefficiency of post-independence leadership. Even though Soyinka attributes the African continent's fragmentation and its ensuing catastrophic effects to colonial adventurers, he does not believe that this issue cannot be resolved if a new wave of leaders are truly dedicated. For instance, Soyinka explicitly assigns the colonisers their own portion of responsibility for the resulting national crisis by mentioning the

colonial authorities' involvement in the rigging of the 1959 preliminary federal election in which he says "*the elections that placed a government in power at the centre were rigged by the British!*" (Soyinka, *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*, p.54).

However, given the current situation, the leadership immediately following independence and subsequent African regimes have persisted in using the tools of 'colonial hybridity', which enable educated separatists with both Western and indigenous expertise to irrationally oppress their own citizens. As such, 'post-liberation' African society encounters new difficulties in nation-building and, for African writers, in representing reality and intellectual concern, as contemporary nations forge beyond just old colonial legacies. This situation leads to a crisis of representation, which diminishes the enrichment of traditional ideals. Thus, "*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*" demonstrates a form of dedication to the country and humanity by simultaneously rejecting war and secession. It demonstrates an effort to literarily settle the dispute between the country and some of its periphery. This is because naturally, neither the possibility of a civil war nor the possibility of the geographical entity becoming fragmented so soon after the imperialist colonialists left seemed desirable. This is evident prior to the civil war, in which Soyinka expressed sympathy for the post-colonial nation in *A Dance of the Forests* (1963), as it fell into the hands of a political elite that either had no idea how to utilise power in a changing economy or simply saw their rise to power through a mandate from the electorate as a great opportunity to reenact, frequently more fiercely, the culture of colonial domination that some of them had opposed as purported nationalists. The fact that these leaders are represented in the book further demonstrates Soyinka's concern and solidarity with those who have entrusted their mandates to those they deemed sufficiently civilised to understand what was best for a growing country. In the book, he specifically mentions these leaders' "*ostentatious spending, and their cultivated condescension, even disdain, toward the people they were*

supposed to represent" (Soyinka, 2006, p.42). Furthermore, he gives more strength to his description of these leaders as unprogressive thinkers by revealing that "*visiting politicians financed lavish parties for one sole purpose—to bring on the girls! They appeared to have only one ambition on the brain: to sleep with a white woman*". (*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*, p.42). This was the case with many newly emerging African countries during this time (i.e. a period in which independent African states were run by native Africans themselves following independence) which suffered from much more severe injustices committed by those who were initially thought to be on the side of the people due to their actions and declarations of nationalist beliefs. This situation thus contributes to Soyinka's establishment of a 'new identity' in his post-colonial memoir.

However, beyond political critique, Soyinka's construction of the 'new identity' is deeply rooted in cultural recovery. For example, Soyinka reminds us of the value of cultural identity when he recounts the story of 'Ori Olokun', which went missing, and the deception that was imposed on the community by the falsification of this artefact of genealogical significance, particularly to the Yoruba. The difficulties and dangers Soyinka faces while leading his group of recovery expeditionists—which includes highly exposed people and intellectuals—only serve to highlight how important cultural retrieval is in post-colonial societies. Therefore, in the book, Soyinka describes his emotions after learning that the original head is in the private gallery of a Brazilian, highlighting the need for restoration and even purification that results from the impious falsification of the original 'Ori Olokun'. Here, Soyinka says he heard "*only interlocutors briefly into three sons of Oduduwa. Their plea for the restoration of their being, my being, to its original repleteness*". (*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*, p.192)

Therefore, 'Ori Olokun' serves the role of a metaphor for the increasing need to restore and

purify the desecrated cultural values that now permeate the African continent. Soyinka's continual reliance on ethnically specific artefacts is a sign of Yoruba nationalism, which highlights the varied character of nationalism in multiethnic societies. Furthermore, the predicament of 'Ori Olokun' strongly suggests the issue of exile and return, a defining characteristic of postcolonial writings and cultures. In a sense, the conflict that arises from contact with foreign cultures in every community that was once colonised frequently forces that community to desecrate some of its traditional beliefs and practices, which should normally help to stabilise and give the community and its members an appropriate sense of identity. It is therefore reasonable to view the pursuit of restoration as an essential act of solidarity aimed at replacing all such values that may have been lost during the colonial experience. Additionally, Soyinka demonstrates a greater concern for a problem that has frequently put Africans in a difficult situation: applying Western medical therapies to African problems. He specifically highlights the effectiveness of traditional African medicine in treating conditions that consistently resist therapeutic approaches from Western medicine. By using Tai Solarin's condition during imprisonment as an example in which "he was refused access to his accustomed medication for asthma, one that had been prepared for him for years by a traditional herbalist and had proved a hundred percent effective, whereas Western medicine had failed" (p.223), Soyinka makes it apparent that African remedies for illnesses—and consequently, other problems that African peoples face—should be adopted.

In addition, highlighting the struggles of Tai Solarin under military rule is a sign of solidarity with the community of revolutionaries (either as people or organisations), which is a common trait in societies attempting and working hard to overcome the ongoing effects of colonialism. Lastly, Soyinka's support for Ogun, his patron deity, is highly insightful in this specific work. His compassion for the many individuals who die every day on Nigerian roads is strongly related to

this. Soyinka finds a sort of "reunion" in his solidarity with Ogun and, consequently, with those who encounter his anger on the road for no fault of their own as "*The road and I thus became partners in the quest for an extended self-discovery,*" (*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*, p. 47). Soyinka thus decides to "dine with the devil" by agreeing to take charge of the establishment of a road safety commission under a military tyrant, despite his contempt for military dictatorships. Perhaps this is one of the concessions that must be made in order to show support for the average citizen, who suffer from the indifference of those in positions of power who do not always implement the necessary reforms for the good of their constituents.

III. CONCLUSION

This paper critically explored the construction of a "new identity" in Wole Soyinka's memoir, "*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*". This identity is framed as a form of postcolonial self-hood that emerges from colonial disillusionment. In particular, this paper's framing of Soyinka's 'new identity' concept moves beyond nationalist ideas from anti-colonial resistance, acknowledging that in a postcolonial African state, colonialism is no longer the only source of oppression; the failures of African post-independence elites are now central. This 'new identity' is tied to the reclamation of cultural artifacts, values, and spiritual heritage. Most significantly, Soyinka's construction of the "new identity" in *You Must Set Forth at Dawn* is defined by a blending of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems rather than by an outright rejection of the West. Furthermore, instead of endorsing the existing power structures, his involvement with them (such as taking on leadership positions under military regimes), is presented as a show of solidarity with the populace. Thus, this shift marks a potential trend in postcolonial African autobiographical writing: from one which remains rigidly loyal to the nation to one which demands for societal development and the right

leadership in a postcolonial state. In this case, Soyinka sees the self as not just a private entity, but an ethical agent charged with acting in the public interest, even at personal risk. This is not to say, however, that the author disregards the "self" in order to assume agency for his people. The self specifically persists, becomes more valuable, and attracts a lot of attention in African writers' autobiographical works. Overall, this paper concludes that the multicultural approach (i.e. literary, historical and ideological) employed in '*You Must Set Forth at Dawn*' establishes a non-fictional pathway for direct representation of reality pertaining to the author's identity and person, and eventually becomes an instrument for creating a "new identity" that vividly depicts a postcolonial African autobiographical writer who genuinely cares about the country and its citizens.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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