

# The Overtones of Resistance: Reflections on Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died: Prison Notes*

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## Abstract

The prison life writings of political prisoners showcase the collective spirit of dissidence against oppression of the state. The study of such writings becomes all the more important to identify the political scenario of the nation as well as to understand the first-hand experiences of incarceration from the victims of power. While focusing on the master pieces of writings of the well-acclaimed authors like Wole Soyinka, the scholars and critics overlook the works derived out of their carceral experience. Prison writing is a new avenue for resistance wherein the author dismantles the power and authority of the state by making use of all the possibilities inside the bars. In this paper the focus is laid upon Soyinka's prison memoir *The Man Died* (1971) to look at how the author transcends the adversities inside the bars with the aid of various strategies as a means of resistance. The way in which these strategies contribute to his survival is also a concern of the study.

**Keywords:** Authority; Political prisoner; Power; Prison memoir; Resistance.

## Introduction

Yenna Wu's classification of political prisoners is based on the nature of offense to which they are a part of. She brings together the individuals who are incarcerated for both political and non-political activities under the term political prisoners. In this way, her definition of the term is not just confined to the political aspects of imprisonment but it also includes its non-political aspects. She exemplifies the case of the prisoners of conscience to stress their role in the non-political activities like religious practices (1). As Barbara Harlow points out, re-definition of the self and the individual in terms of collectivity are the unique features of the memoirs of

the political prisoners (120). It implies that the political prisoners remain adherent to their ideology and work for a common cause, unlike other prisoners. Prohibition of books and pens was most commonly associated with the intellectuals being held as political prisoners. For them, the pen becomes a kind of weapon through which they express their disagreement with the ruling regime.

It has also become their emotional need to inscribe the miseries of prison life as a way of ensuring their survival. Nawal El Saadawi writes about the remark made by the prison head, rejecting the request of the political women prisoners for pen and paper. He commented that it is "Easier to give you a pistol than pen and paper" (*Memoirs from the Women's Prison* 49). At this point Saadawi realizes the power of writing and further says "I had not imagined that pen and paper could be more dangerous than pistols in the world of reality and fact" (49). Hence the political prisoners' act of writing is endowed with a power which could pose a threat to the authorities and could even remove them from the positions adorned by them. Their writings also served the purpose of unifying the common people in their struggle against the injustices of the regime.

Wole Soyinka, the widely acclaimed African author and activist, was imprisoned for 27 months by the Yakubu Gowon's regime from 1967 to 1969, for being suspected of participating in activities promoting the Biafran war. Prior to this, his attempt to take over the Ibadan radio station as a protest against the elections in Nigeria rooted in violence, also led to his arrest in 1965 and was later acquitted. The disputes began with Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu's declaration of south-east Nigeria as the independent Republic of Biafra. Soyinka's role as a political negotiator to end the conflict between the federal government and Biafran separatists culminated in his arrest. He was against Biafran secession and he actually went to talk with Ojukwu to end the war. Unfortunately, he was misunderstood to be involved in the espionage activities with Ojukwu against the Federal Military Government. *The Sunday Post* reported that Soyinka tried to assist Ojukwu in the purchase of jet aircraft for the rebels and that, along with Victor Banjo, he tried to overthrow the government of Nigeria. Soyinka firmly believed that war was not a solution to erase the inequalities in the society. He was not an intellectual with pseudo socialist sentiments; rather, he stood for the collective cause and proved it through his deeds.

Solitary Confinement is a kind of imprisonment where the prisoner is held in a single solitary cell, denying contact from the prison population as well as from the outside world. It is a punitive tool in the Maximum Security

Prisons intended for the high risk or dangerous prisoners. Nelson Mandela has described solitary confinement as “the most forbidding aspect of prison life” (494). It is also used as a means to induce confession from the prisoner. Soyinka underwent solitary confinement twice for 22 months and he stood adamantly in his views without making a confession. In his solitary confinement, he tries his best to retain his physical and mental health by not allowing himself to be overpowered by depression and disappointment. As Oscar M Maina notes, imprisonment is “a psychological contest” which can be manifested in creation, rejection and representation of realities (71). It is up to the prisoner to accept, subvert or reverse the realities of incarceration so as to make his survival easier.

Compared to Lagos, Soyinka couldn't easily adjust with the solitary confinement at Kaduna. In such a situation, he attempts to come to terms with it by going against the reality (*The Man Died* 130). He tries to convert the hostile space of prison into his benefit and further records that “I wanted eyes of hate and fear around me to keep me constantly alert” (226). When the number of police vehicles accompanying him as escort was reduced considerably, he says, “I protested at this loss of status, threatened not to cooperate unless my rating as a dangerous man was raised to its earlier level” (288-89). He employs a mocking tone in saying that “it was sad no longer to be considered a dangerous man” (289). He was cautious of the fact that the acceptance of his fate and the sympathy of others would have a devastating effect on him. He was trying to boost up his comfort or confidence in the adversities of prison or in other words, in the status of dangerous man imposed by the officials upon him. What makes Soyinka dangerous is definitely his power of writing characterized by bravery and courage to bring about drastic changes in the administration.

### **Strategies for Survival**

To pass the time is indeed a herculean task for the prisoners. Soyinka tries to overcome the solitude by reading books and by establishing contact with the outside world. He conveys the monotony of prison life in Kiri-Kiri by emphasizing the “routine of read-stroll-read-eat-read-sleep” (69). He asks the warders to bring the fattest book so that he could engage with it for a long period and distance himself from the loneliness of prison life. When the regime changed, bringing books to him for reading was stopped. Proper medical treatment was denied for the political prisoners and the authorities used to make false medical reports. Soyinka also finds difficulty in consulting a doctor for his eyes and the officers remain unheeded to his demand. He purposefully raised his health issues so that he

might get a chance to communicate with the outside world, when he was taken to the hospital. When Soyinka announced fasting until his death or until the withdrawal of the forgery of confession by the government, he was moved to the Maximum Security Prison under 24-hour surveillance. He made up his mind to deal with even the worst experience in the prison. Even in the Maximum Security Prison, he tries to establish contact with the people outside. Soyinka extracted news from outside through his faithful men, Dan and Sojo. These spies drank with the soldiers, initiated conversation with the prison warders and inmates engaging in jobs outside the prison in order to collect the secret information. This news was later passed to an army officer called G. It is through these people that Soyinka came to know about the plan of officers to liquidate him while transporting him via plane. They conspired to give the explanation that they shot him in his attempt to take over the control of the plane. The faithful men even advised Soyinka to avoid it by means of eruption or riot. Consequently, Soyinka insisted on seeing the superintendent and attacked him for plotting his murder. As a result, the officers canceled their plan to shift him. In this manner, getting connected with the outside world became a lifesaving effort for him.

Writing itself becomes an act of resistance for the political prisoners like Soyinka. During his solitary confinement, Soyinka developed an unquenchable desire for reading and writing. Being an intellectual, he can't imagine a life without books. Pen, books, writing material, and the like are so valuable to him that he keeps on demanding them in his letter to the prison authorities. In spite of all the odds in the prison, he prepared his mind to dwell upon his own thoughts. He wrote fragments of his literary compositions including poetry, novels, plays, prison notes, and so on inside the bars and hid them between the books like Paul Radin's *Primitive Religion* (1937) and his own *Idanre* (1967). He has used "soy-ink" for writing these literary pieces. Here, he has skillfully derived the term out of his name and uses it in the context of referring to the writing process to deal with the unfavorable conditions in the prison.

As Benabed argues, it is a pun referring to the ink made of soybeans (296). He did not even spare the spaces between the lines of these books for penning down his thoughts. The cigarette carton's lining too became a writing material for him. Now that his tendency to read and write was unstoppable, he plucked out a pen from the pocket of the doctor cunningly. It was in fact a sweet revenge by Soyinka since the doctor told him that the issue with his eyes was due to over-reading and advised him to give rest to his eyes. He also got the feather of a crow accidentally and he used

it for writing. Soyinka was so concerned about the amiable officers that he deliberately avoided mentioning their names or the titles of other six volumes containing his scribbling. He admits the role they have played in his survival in spite of the strict instructions given to them for denying him contact with the books and the outside world. Soyinka writes, "Books and all forms of writing have always been objects of terror to those who seek to suppress truth" (xxvii). The authorities were well aware of the role of intellectuals in organizing the masses against them and of the fact that the denial of books could easily result in the breaking down of their will since they are irresistible to reading and writing. Soyinka underscores the importance of writing in his prison days by quoting George Mangakis:

Self-defence. That is why I write. That is how I manage to keep my mind under control. If I let it loose, unsupported by the frame of written thought, it goes wild. It takes strange sinister by-ways, and ends up by begetting monsters. (12)

This necessity in fact gave birth to his book *The Man Died*. According to Benabed, "In prison, writing acts as a therapy for the psychic distress of the convicts, particularly because in their isolation, they are transformed into objects by the gaze and torture of the prison system" (295). He makes this clear by using Suzette Henke's concept of "scriptotherapy" which involves the writing of traumatic experience for a therapeutic purpose. Revisiting the trauma occurs mainly by means of remembering and narrating the unpleasant experiences. Through the act of writing, the trauma is revisited and can contribute to the healing of the prisoners. Forgetting the painful past or repressing the bitter experiences will not help in the survival of the victims as these events pop up in their minds repeatedly. In the words of Judith Herman, "the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma" (Nair 16-17). It can be inferred that solitary confinement for a long period of time had its psychological impact on Soyinka to some extent. Stuart Grassian observes that solitary confinement causes extremely vivid hallucinations in multiple sensory modalities such as visual, auditory, tactile and olfactory (1450-54). It is given in his memoir that Soyinka had hallucinations in the prison and he saw the faces of Hitler and Albert Schweitzer. Also, the ghosts of his grandfather, Christopher Okigbo, Adekunle Fajuyi, Banjo, and Alale used to haunt him during his term of imprisonment.

Besides this, Soyinka testifies that he suffers from Claustrophobia. He also talks about the condition of an army detainee who loses his control

over his mind during detention and develops the symptom of speaking to himself. Wu also argues that remembering becomes an ethical act for the political prisoners (22). She considers embittering and remembering as the essential factors facilitating the healing process (23). As any other prisoner, Soyinka is also haunted by the memories of the past and it becomes apparent when he says "but still the past intrudes" (131). Remembering or the inability to forget his hardships is further emphasized when he tells his interrogator Mallam D, that "some things one must forget. But you can't expect me to forgive or forget the fact that I was framed" (217). Moreover, Soyinka bravely mentions the name of his opponents like Kem Salem, Yisa Adejo, and Giwa Osagie in his prison notes and calls them "evil triumvirate" (287). He is sure that they are behind the ill-treatment in his detention. Remembering the opponents and attacking them in his writing could enhance his survival and thus mitigate the trauma caused by imprisonment. Hence writing becomes the venue to share and confront his agonies.

With immense care, Soyinka has used language as a medium of his resistance. In his prison memoir, he maintains that "Language needs to be a part of resistance therapy" (xiv). He further agrees that the language used in his *The Man Died* not only represents his dissenting voice but also re-appropriates the language of the oppressed people as part of his liberation therapy. His language endows the characteristics of sardonic and scathing tone. Even if he was physically away from the setting of war, at the same time being confined in the prison spaces of Lagos and Kaduna, these were well capable of reflecting his state of mind. According to Rachel Knighton, Soyinka's communicative features of his writing are a form of rehabilitation (93). She also associates his mythopoetic style in his prison memoir with the indigenous aesthetics. Knighton tries to identify Soyinka's manipulation of indigenous aesthetics in the creation of language resisting oppression and imprisonment (94). She further claims that "Alongside his poetry, Soyinka's prison memoir is of therapeutic value to Nigerian citizens and survivors of the war because of its engagement with violence" (100).

Ioan Davies in his book *Writers in Prison* (1990) has located the central theme in prison writing as violence (16). He goes on to argue that:

[t]he beginning of the sense of violence is the awareness of death. Prison writing, more than most, is contemplation of death, our own deaths, the deaths we impose on others, the deaths imposed on us by others, the great gamble between our deaths and theirs. It

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is therefore not for nothing that most of the theology of incarceration is coupled with the theology of the afterlife, that the concepts of heaven, hell and purgatory are bound up with our concepts of otherness, separation, discipline and judgement. (16)

Likewise, Soyinka describes prison as an “evil place” (130) and compares prison with hell (196, 276). In his prison notes, he also considers the warders as the gatekeepers of hell. Moreover, he represents Grand Seer as one of the Guardian angels with flaming batons (275). Soyinka also considers the feather as a gift from heaven (262). He alludes to Dante’s *Inferno* (1308-1321) and to the myth of Orpheus by deploying the motif of journey through hell. He has undertaken the hellish journey as a quest for socio-political and economic justice through various prisons like Lagos, Kiri-Kiri and Kaduna. Knighton calls Soyinka’s prison as the “transitional fourth space” on the basis of the prison’s purgatorial status between freedom and the crypt or grave and its material impact leading to the struggle between life and death, freedom and confinement etc (95).

Anne Whitehead tries to locate the similarities and differences in the description of hell by Dante and Soyinka. She identifies that Soyinka’s portrayal of hell consisting of various layers with varying modes of punishment echoes Dante’s hell. She says that the howling harmattan wind in Soyinka’s prison cell resembles the icy punishment in the lower layer of hell in Dante’s hell (19). According to her, the punishments in Dante’s hell were based on divine justice whereas those in Soyinka’s cell were unpredictable and arbitrary. Soyinka was in a way incorporating the western myth into Yoruba tradition. For her, the trope of katabasis, a Greek word referring to the descent into hell, not only represents his painful prison experiences but also signifies the encounter between western and non-western cultures (15).

It is well manifested in Soyinka’s identification with the myth of Ogun than the myth of Orpheus. Similar to his patron deity Ogun, Soyinka performs both the role of a destructor and creator in his literary enterprise. He has loaded his prison memoir with the theme of death and its impact on his mind. He was disturbed by the thoughts of the deaths of his fellow inmates, the deaths of his friends who worked against the Biafran war, the massacres of the Ibo people etc. Soyinka not only presents the theme of death in his memoir but also recounts how the prisoners handled it. The prisoners engaged in self- deception when the confirmation of the death sentence was received and for such prisoners, going to the dispensary for medical examination was a sort of relief. In his prison memoir, Soyinka

movingly captures the procedures and the emotions of the warders and doctors while hanging the prisoners. The thought of death arrives to Soyinka especially when he hears the marching sound of the inmates to be hanged. Soyinka also highlights the case of the postponement of hanging due to some unavoidable reasons and the plight of the inmates awaiting death every moment. Another horrifying incident mentioned in the memoir is the strangling of the prisoner who has refused to walk to the hanging place by the guard named Polephemus. Hence for the prisoners to be hanged, death was certain and it would happen by one or another way.

Furthermore, Davies's remark on the theme of violence in prison memoirs gets validated when Soyinka recounts the events during 1983 elections in Nigeria and says that here the nature of violence is obscene (xxi). In the preface of the memoir, Soyinka provides a heart-breaking description of the assassination of the members of the opposition party known as UPN (United Party of Nigeria), where the assassins move from one house to the next calling the names of the victims and shooting them in front of their families. Soyinka also exposes the intention of the ruling party behind this violent act by saying that it is strived to make the president use the emergency powers and cancel the election, leading to his own administration and to warn the opposition. In the memoir, he provides another instance of violence with the arrest of Seinde Arigbede, a medical doctor, after the elections in 1983. He was hung up and left dangling in the prison by the authorities. He lost the movements of both the hands after the ordeal. Alongside must be read the case of Dr Adeyemi Ademola who was shot dead in his home. Soyinka was also threatened when he talked about the murder of Adeyemi, after his release. Apart from this, Soyinka fearlessly talks about the violence and terror which have been unleashed by the Gowon regime. It is evident in the imprisonment of Gogo Chu Nzeribe for some undisclosed offense, subjecting him to flogging on a daily basis. Gowon also ordered to flog people involved in drafting the address of welcome for him in his visit to the Ikom division.

Soyinka was in a way recounting the violent acts of the regime in *The Man Died* as part of his resistance, aiming to disclose their hidden motives to the public. He realized the fact that confronting the violence could make his mind stronger for the struggles ahead. He was not trying to escape from the painful realities but was preparing himself to deal with it. Soyinka thus relies on the themes of violence in his prison memoir as a means of finding his own ways of survival. At the same time, he adhered to the principles of non-violence. On the very first day itself Soyinka's legs were chained and he launched a hunger strike in protest. Here, he testifies that

the hunger strike has helped him to bring his rage under control. He clarifies it with his statement, "I have learnt to starve my violence into calm" (41). Fasting is a non-violent form of protest and Soyinka re-starts fasting after the signs of his release are canceled. Here he fasts in a pattern of denying food in a day in the first week, two days in the second week, three days in the third week and so on. Soyinka finds that fasting is the best method to thwart his mental weakness and hallucinations. He also claims that he has regained his sense of humour through fasting (215). He also tries to overcome the temptations during his detention. During fasting, the stomach devils tried to tempt him with food but he overcame it by drinking only a glass of water. Soyinka reveals the lassitude which permeates in his being through the refrain "I need nothing. I seek nothing. I desire nothing" (257). Later Soyinka overcomes lethargy and describes himself as a "prisoner-fox" (279). His transformation or the use of cunningness can be viewed as an outcome of fasting.

One of the guards encouraged Soyinka to write everything he wanted during the time of Gowon's wedding. The guard disclosed the secret that everyone would be busy with the wedding and therefore the chances for a raid in the prison would be less. He helped Soyinka by providing envelopes, papers etc and to smuggle his letters and poems. When the authorities questioned Soyinka to identify the person who helped him, he was determined not to provide any details about the guard. Soyinka makes use of this situation to avenge the denial of the treatment for his eyes. He told them that he couldn't identify the person because of his issue with his eyesight. He never tried to betray those who helped him and never uttered a word causing them harm. Soyinka was cunning enough to answer in a generalized way that it was the night patrol man who helped him. He neither furnished the physical details of the man nor his name. He protected the man by saying that he could not recollect when this happened as one loses all his senses while in prison. Soyinka has learnt that survival becomes possible only if he is unaffected by the hardships in the prison and if he could maintain his control over his body and mind as before.

Soyinka's resistance is strictly grounded on the idea of collectivism. It is evident in his devotion to Ogun, the God of soldiers and hunters. He follows the mythical figure Ogun on account of his love for the community in contrast to Orpheus's self-centredness. In the same vein, Soyinka becomes a spokesperson not only for himself but also for his fellow inmates, people of Nigeria and friendly warders. His prison memoir thus concentrates on several other stories running parallel to his own experiences (Jahan and Attri 59). The earlier title of the memoir was *A Slow Lynching* and

later Soyinka changed it when the message "the man died" arrived. The title implies the death of the journalist Segun Sowemimo, who has been brutally beaten as per the order of the Military Governor of the west. The title is broader in its approach since it points out the predicament of the people of Nigeria rather than merely referring to the torments of Sowemimo. Soyinka also describes the condition of an ailing fellow inmate during midnight and the officer's cynical response to it. When Soyinka enquired about the man's condition the next morning, the warder delivered him the message "The man died" (200). In this way, the title of his prison memoir replaces particularity by embracing the plight of the oppressed people in Nigeria. He later asserts that "the man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny" (13). This shows his indomitable spirit to fight against the hegemonic aspects of power. The act of writing enables him to boldly assert his voice against the authorities. *The Man Died* was not free from the censorship issues.

In order to keep it unaffected by censorship and to pass it to the common people, Soyinka tries not to provoke the government and he says that the title of the book "reappeared in more than a hundred guises" (xvi). Soyinka also tries to look at the mental state of guards in the prison. Some of the warders told him that they were looking for transfer as they do not like to serve in the solitary confinement cell. When Soyinka was asked to fill the form owing to Gowon's passing of the circular saying that every detainee must be paid, he returned it without filling in defiance. According to him, it did not consider the case of self-employed detainees and therefore, he was not willing to fill it. Another instance is when he raises his voice for the rights of Ibo prisoners. Ibos were the most vulnerable sections subjected to various kinds of tortures in the prison. They were denied soaps, blankets, beds and they had to sleep on the bare floors. Their cells were often overcrowded and they could not wash their clothes. The cells were opened only for thirty minutes per day. The recreational facilities available to the Army and civil detainees were also denied for them. Soyinka presents the pathetic condition of Ibo prisoners taking turns to get fresh air from the window in their cell. They had to defecate in the pails in the cells and the doors were not open for them to receive food. The bowls were often slid or tilted under the doors. The two Army detainees who were responsible for the murder of Ibo photographer Emmanuel Ogbona were treated as VIPs in the prison and later they were released.

This incident prompted him to raise his voice for the Ibo prisoners and sent a note to the Red Cross for the betterment of conditions in the prison. Another letter written by him to his political colleagues discussed the

genocidal activities of the Gowon regime. One of the Academic staff in Ibadan came to know about the letter and he handed over the photostat of the letter to the authorities. This resulted in the postponement of Soyinka's release. The privileged prisoners often eavesdropped and reported the incidents in the Ibo cells to the authorities. This too worsened the plight of Ibos in the prison. They were tied to the posts for flogging. Soyinka also describes the discrimination prevailing within bars among the prisoners. The army detainees enjoyed many privileges whereas the Ibo detainees were prone to discrimination on racial and social grounds. Like the ladder of social status, the rich thieves of the old NNDP government were placed on the upper floors whereas the civilian and Ibo prisoners belonged to the lower floors of prison. Here, the prison architecture itself follows the hierarchy of social status and deviates from the idea of equality before law guaranteed by the constitution. The fact that Ibos suffered discrimination both inside and outside the bars made Soyinka to call them "twice victims" (177). Soyinka emotionally takes part in the song of Ibo prisoners recalling the violent massacres of their community in the north.

In addition to writing and fasting, Soyinka relied on various strategies to confront the oppressive prison environment. Killing time by engaging himself with anything was the first step towards it. He resorted to craft making and designed a wind turbine, mobile Chinese prayer scrolls, envelopes etc. He was preoccupied with the mathematical operations during day time and with the scribblings during night. Finding solace in observing nature or the living creatures was also a means of his survival. Soyinka tries to divert his attention from the adversities in the prison by lending his eyes and ears to nature. He keenly becomes an observer of cats, spiders, lizards, birds, flies, butterflies etc. Soyinka groups the red ants and the black ants into Biafra and Nigeria respectively (245).

He also feeds baby ants for the lizards and witnesses the mating of lizards in the prison. He observes the mosquitoes with their bellies containing the blood of the inmates. Soyinka was very keen to identify the voices he hears and he used this as a coping strategy. He presents prison not exclusively as the site of death but he links it with the place of birth. He listens to the cry of a newborn baby coming out from the nearby women's prison at night. Soyinka used to hear the tormenting cries of the inmates, wail of flagellants, cries of hyenas, wolverine howls, mumbled dialogue with spirits etc at night. The sound of a stuck record, the threatening and the appeasing sounds of the warders also disturbed him. He also listens to the sound of the procession of the chained inmates taking to the scaffold. Soyinka tries hard to neglect the mourning voices of the victims by recol-

lecting and paying attention to other sounds which delights him. Another strategy adopted by him for self-preservation was to demand the basic needs for a decent existence in the prison.

Even in prison, he sticks on to his rights as a human being and could not tolerate its violation. He demanded an extra blanket and mosquito net to meet the basic requirements of a prisoner. For him, these demands are not about procuring any privileges but these have become a necessity (140). The detention order was not given to him by the authorities. Obtaining a detention order is also a basic right of every prisoner. Since he was not provided ointments by the authorities, he used margarine to prevent the skin from drying during winter. For him, the filthy smell in the prison, treachery between the prisoners, callousness among the warders etc were unbearable and he reacted against such events. Overcrowding in the cells also had its share in making the prison life intolerable and unpleasant. Even in solitary confinement, Soyinka feels difficulty in withstanding his own smell. The smell of sweat and urine in the prison would be very disgusting to the new inmate. It would be extremely difficult to cope with such circumstances in the case of overcrowded prisons. He somehow adjusted to the prison environment gradually and decided to opt for a neutral stand as part of his resistance. Henceforth, he was determined not to demonstrate any feelings, not to ask or reject anything. Soyinka had a strong aversion to eating oranges but he prepared his mind to go with his dislikes. This attitude was also behind his readiness to deal with the long stay in the prison. In these ways, he was trying to adapt to the environment of prison and thereby make himself fit for survival.

## **Conclusion**

Carceral spaces are the sites of resistance where the prison authors continue their struggle via the writing process in order to achieve their basic human rights and to eliminate the system of oppression. Even though confined, they succeed in extending their struggle outside the bars through their literary compositions. Prison authors have well exploited this space to a great extent by means of their imagination. Being a political prisoner, Soyinka has devised his own strategies to resist and survive in the midst of troubles permeated by the system. The power of words which are penned in prison is apparent in its portrayal of the brutalities of the authorities and in the resulting disturbance it creates in the state machinery. Apart from raising voices against the officials, Soyinka attempts to ensure his own survival through various means. Besides writing, he relied on different strategies which enabled him to retain his ideology and peaceful state

of mind. Each strategy followed by him was an innovation and a new experience for him. Similar to the process of literary production, creativity, intelligence and observation are also needed for such strategies.

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