

## THE INTERPRETED WORLD'S RESISTANCE TO PERISHING IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *AKÉ*

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and the resourceful creatures see clearly  
that we are not really at home  
in the interpreted world (Rilke, *Duino Elegies* I: 11-13).

That which this way never lapses into the flux of perishing, overcomes from the start all perishability. What has merely passed away is without destiny even before it has passed (Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought).

### ABSTRACT

Wole Soyinka's works are little read or researched in Nigeria and a degree project report on his works is increasingly a rare event, which is surprising for an author who has won the Nobel Prize for literature. The common complaint is that his works are difficult. His third novel *Aké* seems to have fared worse than the two before it. In addition to the charge of difficulty, *Aké* is also said to be autobiography, as if the appearance of facts of personal history – or any kind of history – in a novel necessarily disqualifies the work for consideration as art. Careful reading of the work, however, reveals characteristic patterning of art. It may even recall James Joyce's *The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, which remains one of the great works of Modernism, despite elements of personal history in it. In this paper, some of the artistic patterns of *Aké* are discussed, but the focus is on the ways culture-based interpretations of reality resist perishing under the onslaught of new modes of being in the world which Christianity and colonization have made possible. The unveiling of 'people power' and the 'General Will', in opposition to traditional and colonial power systems, in the context of the cultural upheaval which captures and reduces the autobiographical sequence, throwing up at the same time a character with heroic stature on the one hand gives the work identity as a *historical novel*, but also it posits another mode of perception and being in the world which more than matches the old system, before which that system loses self-certainty.

**KEYWORDS:** *Aisthetikos*, Art, Cultural Upheaval, Genre, Historical Novel, Interpretation, People Power