

❖ Dramaturgy

- Wole Soyinka: b. 1934, Nigeria
- *Kongi's Harvest*: performed 1965, published 1967
- Soyinka was arrested in 1967, held as a political prisoner until 1969
- received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986
- Personal Philosophies
 - “A tiger is not forever shouting about his tigritude”; a duiker antelope does not have to “prove his duikertude; you will know him by his elegant leap.”
 - anti-cultural parochialism (anti-negritude – negritude rejects white culture as a form of pollution)
- Nigeria
 - independent from UK in 1960
 - most populous country in Africa
 - Yoruba kingdoms of Ife and Oyo (AD 700-900, 1400), among many others in the region
 - Nigerian Civil War: 1967-1970
 - caused by attempted secession of southeastern provinces as the republic of Biafra (spurred by series of military coups starting in 1966)
 - starvation, claims of genocide.
 - eventually the Biafran forces fell, they sort of tried to work out a reconciliation
 - now: Federal Republic, 36 states, plus capital: each state has a House of Assembly and an elected governor, who appoints an executive council
 - government is still corrupt, full of bribery and in bed with the military

❖ Theatricality

- verse vs. prose
 - what effect does switching between verse and prose have on the scene? What tone does each style evoke?
- music
 - more songs...what's their effect this time? How does Soyinka use them, and why?
 - Does having some songs in Yoruba and others in English change their effect? How does the language barrier shape the audience's sense of this world?

❖ Politics

- old vs. new
 - modern dictatorship vs. traditional hereditary system
 - are either really effective anymore? How does Soyinka play with our perceptions of both? Where does the younger generation come into play? Is there a sense of a system that would actually work, or just an expression of some that definitely don't?

- who is more legitimate? How does Kongi try to cement his legitimacy? Is it just for show? How do you not just have the appearance of having power, but actually have it, be able to exercise it and have the people fully believe it and believe in it?
- External implications about universal politics
 - “This play is not about Kongi, it is about Kongism. Therefore, while it has been suggested with some justification that there are some resemblances between the character of Kongi and that of ex-president Nkrumah ... it must be emphasized that Kongism has never been dethroned in Black Africa. There are a thousand and more forms of Kongism – from the crude and blasphemous to the subtle and sanctimonious. A current variety may be described as neo-Peronism, the cult of plaster-cast sanctity. All roads lead in the same direction, and down this hill, striking sparks from careless skulls, Kongi rides again.
- ❖ Satire
 - how does Soyinka use satire, sarcasm to make a point, what kinds of conclusions are the audience left to draw about what exactly they’re seeing?
 - this often felt to me like a parody of politicians (what with the PR and spin doctoring, the ridiculous characterizations, etc.), but at times it distinctly leaves the world of comic satire and gets ugly – Kongi is not an especially gripping character, but during his speech at the harvest festival, he becomes this horrible unnatural creature foaming at the mouth – what effect do these tone changes have, or does this even really change the tone or is it just bringing out what’s underneath the surface of the entire play?
- ❖ Women
 - sex clearly has a larger role in the more traditional society (Donlola likes having his hair below the navel ruffled, etc.) – why? Are the new leaders so separate from the world of living, breathing people that they are rendered virtually asexual, sterile?
 - Segi seemed to me like a rather enigmatic character – why is she the only female we could really see? She clearly wields a great deal of power (primarily through her sexuality), but is that the only reason everyone has such strong reactions to her?