



The Road Is Made by Crossing: Cultural Knowledge and the Making of Postcolonial Identity

This project examines how cultural knowledge is created, transmitted, and transformed in the plays of Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka. Rather than treating culture as a fixed body of knowledge that can simply be recovered or passed from one generation to another, I ask what happens when knowledge is encountered through performance, lived practices, discursive frameworks, and hermeneutic lenses. This question is particularly important in postcolonial contexts, where cultural traditions have often been disrupted, translated, categorised, or represented through external systems of knowledge.



I develop a four-part framework: resonance, enactment, mediation, and opacity to explore these processes alongside Peter Paul Ruben's Four Studies of a Head of a Moor. Through close readings of Death and the King's Horseman, A Dance of the Forests, and The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite, I examine how Soyinka represents knowledge as something experienced through sound and affect, produced through ritual and performance, transformed through writing and adaptation, and ultimately resistant to complete explanation.



The fourth head turns away... The face remains visible, but only in profile. One eye disappeared. Nothing has been removed from the face, yet less of it is available to the viewer. This is where the four studies reach the limit. Resonance showed that knowledge can be encountered before it is explained.

Enactment showed that identity can be produced through action. Mediation showed that knowledge changes as it moves between forms. Opacity asks whether everything that remains must become completely clear.

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