

Wole Soyinka as a Nigerian Ecofeminist and an Antipathetical to Globalized Experiences

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Abstract

The major tenet of this research is to understand to what extent Wole Soyinka is seen as an ecofeminist playwright alienating globalized concepts. Ecofeminism is one of the most remarkable movements that was developed by a group of women during the period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (specifically; from the early 1870s to the early 1980s). Most prominent among those women was the French feminist activist Françoise D'Eaubonne. D'Eaubonne explains how the concept of "Ecofeminism" was primarily applied by a few feminists who dedicated their efforts to analyzing the mutual relation between male-dominated social institutions and deteriorated injured environments. In this paper, the researcher attempts a comprehensive analysis of Soyinka's remarkably famous play, *A Dance of the Forests* (1963). This analysis engages the non-Nigerian reader to the core of the Nigerian natural society where Soyinka criticizes the deterioration of the morals of his society; a decay which coincided with the ruin of nature itself.

Key Words: Soyinka- Ecofeminism- Nigeria

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1. Introduction

African forests have always been rich in plants and animals for a long time. However, the present century witnesses unprecedented environmental deterioration. This degradation threatens the African forests making them vulnerable to extinction. This is the controversy of Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*. Wole Soyinka is a prominent playwright who emphasized the interconnectedness between women and nature, and their urgent need to get rid of the subjection imposed by a male-dominated regime. In 1986, Soyinka received Nobel Prize for his achievement in the arena of African literature. He is considered as a "prolific writer and genius" in Africa. William McPherson comments, "Though raised in a colonial, English-speaking area, Soyinka's ethnic heritage was Yoruba, and his parents balanced Christian training with regular visits to the father's ancestral home in Isara, a small Yoruba community secure in its tradition" (1). His work, accordingly, depends on the Yoruba community, culture, tradition and politics in Africa. Basically, Yoruba is a Nigerian ethnic group (the greatest of the most popular three groups there) who inhabit the southwestern lands. Yemi D. Ogunyemi explains: "The Yoruba people inhabit a world of myths, allegories, poetry, and the love and wisdom of the Ifa divination system. They serve to remind the Yoruba of a past that has survived through oral tradition. From that foundation have Yoruba philosophy, religion, and literature developed, all of which blend ancient truths and divine moralities with reason" (2). So far, the Yoruba people may be depicted as primitive groups who have a very strong bond with myths and superstitions. Most popular among these myths is the myth of Ogun. It is about how they were

created. It resembles, in different ways, the ancient Greek myth of Zeus.

Soyinka (as a dramatist) enriches his plays with innovative and realistic scenes that depict the African life in a very precise manner, fashion and characters. His literary works reveal his unambiguous and creative establishment of African traditions, legends and history. He observed that the qualities inherent in most of the rituals, beliefs, festivals and ceremonies in West Africa may be depicted in theatrical works. K.P. Sudha writes:

The Yoruba cosmology has always been central to his works and has provided incentive for growth to his artistic development. His works do succeed in emphatically asserting that he values the traditional system which functions as a sort of frame work to all his plays. This traditional system allows him to explore creation and existence from a philosophical base.(73)

Accordingly, Soyinka may be judged as an ecofeminist who supports the potential interconnectedness of woman and nature and abhors the blind belief of the phenomenon of globalized transculturalism. Soyinka has been a vocal of the Nigerian political regime whose members were just "dictators" striving to achieve private interests. He has been attacked by many people and activists for this hostility and pessimistic views to the degree that the Nigerian critic Biodun Jeyifo asserts that Soyinka yields to "typically conventional Western notions and practices of rendering historical events into tragedy" (27).

However, an evaluation of the situation from a different perspective proves Soyinka's views. He is a Nigerian citizen who

witnessed the severe English colonization and humiliation of his people and homeland; a painful experience that was a sufficient excuse for his tragic view of events and his hatred of all those movements that supported openness. He believed that the process of globalizing experiences was an excuse for imperialist nations to seize and exhaust weaker ones. These themes are most applicable to his prominent play, *A Dance of the Forests*.

2- Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* (1963): The Lost Golden Age of Nigeria

A Dance of the Forests tells the story of a dead couple from the past. They come back and emerge from the ground suddenly, causing a strange awe for the reader. Their speech reveals the reason for their resurrection. They have been summoned from the past to the present time so that they can offer their case in front of the Forest Head in the forthcoming festival of the gathering of the tribes. Simultaneously, the reader is introduced to a carver named Demoke, who has just finished carving a giant tree, transforming it into a wonderful effigy. Unfortunately, such artistic work sparkles a sever war; because the tree is dedicated basically to Eshuoro (Ogun's rival). The play moves on in a series of episodes which reveal the past of the dead duo (mentioned as the Dead Man and the Dead Woman) who have come to avenge their cold-blooded murder.

Soyinka does not announce his ecofeminist tendencies plainly. Instead, he employs the diverse elements of drama to create an exceptional and untraditional socio-political tragedy tackling multiple ecological and feminist problems related to his home land.

Accordingly, the interconnectedness between nature and woman in Soyinka's drama is implicit in the diverse components of this tragedy. Hence, a pensive critical analysis of these components unveils Soyinka's ecofeminist passion.

After a century of the British colonization, on October 1, 1960, Nigeria became an independent country. However, this independence was pictorial by all accounts. For the Nigerians (like any colonized people), it was uneasy to get rid of the beliefs and the system that tortured them many years ago. The colonists had gone, but their impact lasts. On the surface, Soyinka's play depicts the annual gathering of the tribes which is constantly marked by a special dance. It is an embodiment of the celebration of the independence of Nigeria. However, a pensive look makes clear that the play is an aesthetical and political masterpiece exposing the postcolonial Nigerian authorities and leadership. In a 1993 interview, Soyinka painfully tells Biyi Bandele-Thomas about the corruption that he discovered in the Nigerian ministers. He writes, "It was clear that they were more concerned with the mechanisms for stepping into the shoes of the departing colonial masters, enjoying the same privileges, inserting themselves in that axial position towards the rest of the community. And then I realized that the enemy within was going to be far more problematic than the external, easily recognizable enemy" (Maja-Pearce 145).

The playwright of *A Dance of the Forests* re-envisioned the bitter past and the deformed future of his homeland. In addition to exposing the environmental deterioration which threatens the African forests, Soyinka shows how the post-colonial rulers followed the same pattern of administration as the occupiers. These painful subjects are

the essential reasons for showing the play as a pessimistic tragedy. It looks like a warning to his people.

During this process, Soyinka employs untraditional and exceptional elements that expose his nativism. He violates most of the traditional rules for the structure of the Western play. This consequently caused a great controversy especially as it was written in English. By this, Soyinka intentionally or unintentionally aims at attracting the attention to his implied themes and presenting a special form of drama that characterizes his own native culture. In addition, unlike the post-colonial Nigerian leadership, he alienates himself from everything related to the colonizer.

Unconventionally, the structure of the play is divided into two parts enriched with abnormal and supernatural events. In the first part, the reader is gradually introduced to the four living characters of Rola, Adenebi, Demoke and Obaneji through their adventures in the forest on the gathering of the tribes. The four are manipulated by the Forest Father who covertly conducted them to the Gathering despite their attempts to avoid it. Then, the Old Man, Demoke's father and a council elder, appears with Agboreko trying to find Demoke and save him from Eshuoro (the spirit of revenge). Within these events, the Two Dead ancestors (who are summoned for the trial by the Forest Father) are totally ignored and part one ends up with the most painful and horrific scene in the play (from the researcher's viewpoint). It is the scene of the chimney toppling everyone around it, whether resident in the forest or other expatriates. Those chimneys caused the merciless death of many innocent people and animals that inhabited the forest.

As for the events in part two, it may be considered as one of the best and most interwoven and complicated sequence of events that a reader may witness. This is due to Soyinka's employment of the unconventional overlap of different worlds (realms): the world of the living, the world of the dead, the world of the jinn and the world of the animals; all are unexpectedly mixed to serve Soyinka's intention. It initiates with a travel in time through which the reader is accompanied (through a flashback) to the court of Mata Kharibu. There, the reader identifies the sufferings of the Two Dead (a brave warrior and a faithful wife) through the role of Mata Kharibu and the involvement of present living characters in their tragedy. Following to the case of this duo is a sequence of numberless complaints by other spirits, the ants and the masque of the triplets. This creates a sense of worldwide chaos and injustice that is in parallel with the real world of the playwright. The closing pages of the play expose Eshuoro, who is disguised as a story teller, as he tries to steal the half-child and kill Demoke. However, the former fails and the play ends with Demoke restoring the child to his mother, then proceeds to perform the purification rituals (the expiation) and climb the totom pole. This plan is intended by Eshuoro to avenge Demoke. However, Eshuoro's scheme fails and Demoke cheerfully unifies with his father who has been looking for him for so many years.

It is a unique sort of dramatic structure where Soyinka mixes the sweet with the bitter and the material reality with the unseen metaphysics. *A Dance of the Forests* mingles "moments of dark caricature [with] electric caves of tensions yielded to open planes of laughter and celebration" (Maja-Pearce 48). Through this play, the

reader is invited to rethink of his surroundings; the visible and the invisible.

The whole incidents revolve around the case of the Two Dead as the outcome of the clutches of patriarchy (the main concern of ecofeminists). Soyinka tracks the origins and the branches of this tyrant regime through this case hoping it may sound in reality. He tries to show its effect on people and their destinies and how far this may destroy great empires and shed the blood of countless innocent souls. The two characters of the Dead Man and the Dead Woman are said to symbolize the Nigerian injured past. They are introduced as full of ancient bitterness and resentment towards the living people who treated them (the dead duo) as obscenities. For this, the play's dynamic is the tensions between the desire of the dead to avenge from the living people as well as the desire of the latter to avoid it.

Despite Soyinka's schemes for better future potentials, the play has aroused the anger of many Nigerians, who regarded it stigmatizing the glorious African past. Soyinka, however, was attempting to warn those people. He explains:

Nigerians' and all Africans' energies should be spent trying to avoid repeating the mistakes that have already been made. The African writer needs an urgent release from the fascination of the past. Of course, the past exists... it is co-existent in present awareness. It clarifies the present and explains the future, but it is not a fleshpot for escapist indulgence." (Soyinka, *Art* 19)

It is an explicit alert that defies the traditional drama that stresses the view of art for art's sake. He supports a realistic view that may enhance a better future. For this, "*A Dance of The Forests* shows

that the modern society is in no way better than the ancient society, for, in the past as well as in the present, the plight of the artist as well as the common man remains unchanged” (Sudha 145). Soyinka calls for a revolution in thought and manners as it is the only path for his people’s salvation

In addition to the *Two Dead*, Soyinka’s play includes most of, if not all, the types of characters that a person may encounter in his/her life: the strong, the weak, the loved, the outcast and the one who is destined for a tragic downfall from a case to another humiliating one. For this, each character has a vital function in the dramatic plot all together. However, the researcher’s main focus will be on the past character of Mata Kharibu and the present character of Eshuoro. Both, in different ways, represent the regime of Patriarchy as the thesis’s main concern.

Meta Kharibu is considered the flame that fired all the following painful events. Through him, the sufferings of the Warrior and his wife found their way. Due to Mata’s greed, many innocent lives were taken and several states were collapsed. He is the demagogue who is blindly driven by a lust for lawless and immoral power. The playwright presents Mata Kharibu better in the second part when the former takes his readers on an unexceptional journey using the flashback technique. There, the reader finds himself an eyewitness to the past of the dead duo. Also, the reader becomes more acquainted with the truth of the living characters that have been presented in part one. All of them are doubled up as new ones. Rola is Madame Tortoise, Demoke is the court poet, Adenebi is the Historian and Agkboreko is the Soothsayer. All of them are discovered to be servants working for

Mata Kharibu and blindly obey him. Their blind obedience is best revealed in their involvement in the tragedy of the Warrior then his pregnant wife.

The Dead Man and the Dead Woman in part one are discovered to be a duo from the past that had to suffer due to their morals and principles, “WARRIOR: It is an unjust war. I cannot lead my men into battle merely to recover the trousseau of any woman. / PHYSICIAN: Ah, But do you not see? It goes further than that. It is no longer the war of the queen’s wardrobe. The war is now an affair of honor/ WARRIOR: An affair of honour? Since when was it an honourable thing to steal the wife of a brother chieftain? If the king steals another’s wife, it is his affair “(DF 54).¹

So far, it is evident that there is a great contradiction between the king’s desire and the warrior’s conscience. The king is charged with irresistible lust for power and wealth. Ironically the warrior declares, “Mata Kharibu thought, hoped that the dishonoured king would go to war on her account. There he was wrong. It seems her rightful husband does not consider that your new queen is worth a battle. But Mata Kharibu is so bent on bloodshed that he sends him a new message. Release the goods of this woman” (DF 55). From this point began the tragedy of the two men, one of the most wonderful stories plotted in terms of meaning and content. It simulates many realistic issues that Nigeria lived through and after the occupation.

A Dance of the Forests depicts patriarchy and its ability to control and influence the greatest men by turning some to hypocrites and others into traitors. The former type is reflected in the king’s

¹ *Dance of the Forests*(1963).

retinue who blindly obey him to the degree that the Physician declares, “regarding the case of stealing another king’s wife, Mata Kharibu asks what is rightly his. The dowry of a woman he takes to wife” (DF 54). In addition, he labels the Warrior as a traitor. The matter did not stop at the physician, but continued to involve the Historian, the Soothsayer, the court poet and Madame Tortoise. Insinuatingly, the Historian fabricates clues from the history justifying the king’s decision on one side as well as condemning the warrior on the other. He says, “War is the only consistency that past pages afford us. Patriots are grateful for wars.... This man [the Warrior] is a traitor” (DF 57). As the historian justified the king’s deed with evidence from history, the Soothsayer fabricated his false prophecy about the warrior’s future. He underestimates the Warrior and sarcastically questions, “Why this concern for the health of traitors condemned to a fate worse than death?” (DF 61) After the failure of the numerous attempts of the king’s court, it was the turn of his wife (the stolen wife). She tried seriously to seduce the Warrior (the future Dead Man) with her beauty. She promised him that she would make him the new king if he participated in those wars declaring, "Mata Kharibu is a fool. You are a man and a leader, a soldier. Have you no wish to sit where Mata Kharibu sits?" (DF 64) Bravely, the warrior could overcome all those attempts to force him to join the war; an act that provokes the queen’s anger, so she ordered to rob him of his manhood and kill his pregnant wife.

As mentioned previously, the main occasion of *A Dance of the Forests* is the gathering of the tribes on the annual Yoruba festival to give sinners a new chance to repent. For this, the Dead duo is

summoned by the Forest Father with the attendance of some living personalities to help them take revenge on those who destroyed them. Unexpectedly and unfortunately, the Dead man and the Dead woman are neither welcomed nor celebrated by any of the living people. They are called “obscenities” by Rola and “creatures” by Obaneji. They discover that summoning them was as experiment that proved to them that no one of their people appreciated their sacrifice. The Dead Man painfully announces, “That is hardly the sound of welcome” (DF 5). They were the victim of a greedy king. However, despite making them marginalized, they receive all the attention at the conclusion of the play.

After experiencing a painful fate to satisfy the tyranny of Mata Kharibu, the duo found themselves facing a new enemy that was not very different from Mata Kharibu. It is a turning point through which Soyinka hints at his hidden theme that (from the researcher’s viewpoint) ‘the past repeats itself’. In this new fabricated world, they have fallen as victims to a vengeful character like Eshuoro who may be called ‘the Spirit of Vengeance’ (also from the researcher’s viewpoint). Since the start of the events, Eshuoro seeks revenge with all his energy. First, he seeks revenge for the killing of Oremole on the hands of Demoke. Secondly, he tries his best to spoil the trial that was prepared by the Forest Father to avenge for the Dead Captain and his Dead Pregnant Wife.

Eshuoro is a wayward cult-spirit who simply may be called “the corrupted spirit of Revengeance”. He has unlimited negative energy that is totally directed at spoiling others’ lives. Murete, a tree demon, tells Eshuoro, "You...mucus off a crab's carbuncle. You stream of pus

from the duct of a stumbling bat" (48). In a similar manner, in the trial that held to avenge for the duo, Forest Head furiously tells Eshuoro, "You came here to bathe in blood" (67). Eshuoro admits this fact when he declares, "Aroni's little ceremony must be made into a bloody sentence. My patience is at an end" (*DF* 46). Eshuoro may also be called "a shape shifter" who uses this ability in his quest to avenge Oremole (Demoke's apprentice who was loyal to Oro). He accuses Demoke of deliberately killing Oremole by dropping him down from the roof of the totom (the araba tree previously) of the Yoruba festival. This shape of shifting ability causes a lot of anxiety in the hearts of various characters in the play. On one hand, The Old Man (Demoke's father) suspects that Eshuoro is disguised among the crowd of the four living people so that he can kill his son, Demoke (who was a member of the group). On the other, Demoke's crime increased Eshuoro's hostility to humanbeings and this justifies his insistence on stealing the half-child. He carries tyranny for humans generally and not for a person in himself. He considers himself responsible for taking revenge from people for what they have inflicted in the forest (and nature generally) of acts of aggression and sabotage because "the whole forest sinks. Sinks of human obscenities" (*DF* 46).

One may say that this exceptional play revolves around two main axes, each of which centers on the theory of patriarchy. The first centers on the case of the dead duo, especially the dead woman. This woman had to suffer in life and after death due to a decision made by another person (her husband). The second axis or the second issue discusses the destruction that overwhelmed nature due to the greed of some people who abused and destroyed it instead of preserving it. From

this point we can highlight the similarity between woman and nature in Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*. Both of them have unjustly been persecuted due to others' crimes.

African women are constantly communicating with their environment, speaking to it, shaping it, relying on it and believe in its sustainable capabilities. Non-contaminated rural women rely on the land to provide food for their families; she depends on the water of rains for the plants and her life is blooming; she makes benefit of the forest's trees and herbs. It is a such romantic and spiritual relationship in which woman endeavors in many ways to regain nature's glorious past. This is mentioned in Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* when she says:

We have been perceived for too many centuries as pure nature, exploited and raped like the earth and the solar system; small wonder if we now long to become culture: pure spirit, mind. Yet it is precisely this culture and its political institutions which have split itself. In so doing it has also split itself off from life, becoming the death culture of qualifications abstraction, and the will to power which has reached its most refined destructiveness in this century. It is this culture and political abstraction which women are talking of changing, of bringing into accountability in human terms. (285)

The Dead Woman of *a Dance of the Forests* is compared to Nigeria. The present Dead Woman is the Dead Man's past wife. Before her murder, she was pregnant. However, her husband's fate drove her as well as her unborn child to their demise. Due to a dispute between her husband and the ruler, her husband was sentenced to death. Just like

any faithful wife, she pleaded for her husband's life the court of Mata Kharibu but she failed. Furthermore, she had to encounter the same destiny of her husband. The reader is not informed how she was killed, but certainly she was manipulated and tortured. She may be regarded as a striking example of the faithful woman who sacrifices her life for her family, specifically, her husband. Her husband is mentioned in the play as the Dead Man who served in the army as a soldier in his previous terminated life. He was humiliated and castrated for his refusal of the implementation of the order to attack an innocent tribe for a motif he could not believe in. Accordingly, the soldier and his pregnant wife were abused (in different ways) to death. Certainly, this unfairness deprived that innocent family of their souls and their dream of seeing their children who were sentenced to death before being born. Just as the Warrior was deprived of his masculinity, his wife was deprived of her motherhood which represents the most precious property for a woman. During the trial, the Dead woman painfully cannot remember her ancient entity and painfully tells the Questioner, "I am certain she had no womb, but I think it was a woman" (*DF* 68). This comparison between the Dead woman and Nigeria highlights the assumption that the African woman is undoubtedly part and parcel of nature with whom she shares the characteristic of "Motherhood". Arrey-Ngang explains: "the African Woman is exploited and ravished in the same manner as the earth which she so much strains to protect. Such despoliation is encountered at all facets of her life; she is manipulated by men, discriminated against by patriarchs and severed from the same ecological foot points which she strives to shield" (221).

The reader of this play is introduced to Nigeria as a victim who is, like the Dead woman, is abused to death. Nigeria has witnessed multiple ecological challenges in recent times. After oil discovery in Nigeria and independence later, Nigeria was engaged in the nation-building project which caused a severe environmental crisis. For example, “in the process of oil production, Nigeria is contributing to the global warming and the resultant climate change which is the most serious in scope of all the ecological challenges” (Onyinoyi 2).

Due to colonization and its selfish intentions, Nigeria had to suffer from the loss of its true identity and this was reflected in its adherence to the adoption of European culture and language, which were obscure for them. For this, in *A dance of the Forest*, “Soyinka displays his obsession with truth by talking about death, despair and disillusionment that await this new-born nation at a time of the highly joyous occasion of its independence” (Sudha 72). Soyinka’s play is like an alert that the present mirrors that past and repeats it. Indirectly, this is reflected in the four living characters introduced in part one. Exceptionally, the four were major past personalities at the court of Meta Kharibu and each of them participated in the painful tragedy of the Warrior and his wife (the Dead duo later). Showing these characters guilty and corrupted as they were in the past (but differently) echoes the continuity of the corruption of the occupation even after the independence. Present Nigeria is a no better world than was the ancient Nigeria. Rola, Demoke, Adenebi, and Obaneji were Madam Tortoise, the court Poet, the Historian and the Forest Father respectively. Rola, the spark that flamed the war in the past, denies her participation in the death of two of her paramours. Demoke lies about killing his apprentice, “And one man fell to his

death. ... I was beneath him at the time. He fell right past me. I could have touched him if I wished” (DF 7). Adenebi is the Forest Father who is in disguise to cunningly drive them to the trial. As for Obaneji, he denies his involvement in the lorry accident which caused the death of seventy innocent souls. Instead, he blames a government official for the accident and deceptively says to Adenebi, “You see. I want to close my files on this particular lorry_ the Incinerator. And my records won’t be complete unless I have the name of the man who did it _you know, the one who took the bribe. Do you think you can help me there?” (DF 17) This continuity of corruption and tyranny practiced by humans; especially against nature, irritates Eshuoro and increases his desire for vengeance.

Soyinka indirectly attempts to attract the attention of his reader to the real ancient value of the nurturer mother nature which is currently corrupted and abused by the claws of technology and colonization. He struggles to regain the past glorious Nigeria; the rural land of innocent people respecting each other and glorifying women. Africans generally, and Nigerians (represented by Soyinka) in particular, “perceive nature as being part and parcel of them. They cannot be separated from their natural environment because nature is inescapably interwoven into the economic, social and metaphysical world of the African woman” (Arrey-Ngang 223). In *A Dance of the Forest*, the Dead Woman and Nature suffer simultaneously due to their involvement with men.

Soyinka employs the character of Eshuoro to articulate the chaos that is imposed on the forest due to man’s interference. This is revealed in Eshuoro’s conversation with Murete when the former expresses his resentment from the assemblage ordered by the Forest Head for the

privilege of humans, “Eshuoro: This great assemblage of theirs is an affront. And I have suffered the biggest any son of Forest Head has ever experienced from the hand of a human insect. / Murete: Ask for justice from Forest Head. / Eshuoro: Am I his son or am I not? I have asked that he pass judgment for [...] the totem, my final insult. The final taunt from human pigs” (*DF* 47).

Eshuoro’s angry words reflect in different ways the distasteful deeds of humans towards nature. He refers to them as “pigs”. Man’s tyrant regime, as it did with the innocent pregnant Dead Woman, abused and tortured nature to death. This torment took the shape of a false disguised modernization represented by the Totem which replaces the natural scene of the tree. Not only plants were deformed and destroyed by humans, creatures of the forest also had to witness the same destruction. This was reflected in the many complaints that followed the Dead Duo’s trial. It included complaints by Spirit of the Palm, Spirit of Darkness, Spirit of Precious Stones, Spirit of the Rivers, Spirit of the Sun, Spirit of Volcanoes and Ant Leader. They gathered demanding and calling for justice.

The Forest Head, on the other hand, acts as the judge who is responsible for avenging for all these creatures and the Dead Woman who has been tortured before her death and was prevented from her baby. Unlike Eshuoro who trades violence for violence, The Forest Head or the Forest Father tries to quietly understand the case and justly solve it. It is one of the crucial moments in the play that reveals the ecofeminist assumption that nature and woman have to ally because they are interrelated in different ways. In Soyinka’s play, the Forest Head cares about the Dead Woman’s case as if it were his own, and

deals with it seriously to the degree that he disguises in the shape of Adenebi to bring the living characters to the trial and later orders the Crier to summon all the creatures to the welcome of the dead, “To all such as dwell in these Forests; take note, this night/ Is the welcome of the dead. When spells are cast. /And the dead invoked by the living, only such/ May resume their body corporeal as are summoned.../ We hold these rites, at human insistence. / By proclamation, let the mists of generations/ Be now dispersed. Forest Father, unveil, unveil” (DF 50).

The final ritual dance of the play includes the battle to own the unborn child of the Dead Woman. When the Half-Child reappears during this dance, Eshuoro tries his best to steal it to present it as a sacrifice to the Triplets. Fortunately, Demoke fights Eshuro and succeeds in regaining the Half-Child to his mother peacefully. The battle ends with the Dead Woman’s triumph with the child. However, from the researcher’s viewpoint, it is very hard to regard such event a cheerful one that deserves our celebration. This child is employed by Soyinka to symbolize Africa generally, and Nigeria specifically. A future which Soyinka is not satisfied with. This may be noticed from these words of the Half-Child. He painfully declares, “I who yet await a mother. /Feel this dread, feel this dread. / I who flee from the womb. / To branded womb, cry it now. / I’ll be born dead, / I’ll be born dead” (DF 74).

Though returned to his mother, the Half-Child feels incomplete. He still regards himself unborn and dead; a symbolic of the deformed future of the playwright’s home land. Corruption of those in authority still grows and peace can be achieved only if people stopped following the colonizer’s policies. Moreover, the Forest Head’s fulfillment of

justice through his decision to restore the Dead Woman's child is a symbolic of Soyinka's theme of the reformation of nature (symbolized by the Dead Woman) as the sole guarantee for a brilliant future. To ensure his future, man must modify the chaos and pollution he has done to nature. If he did not, he will be forced to face nature's revenge. This is revealed in the spirits' prophecy of humans' doom:

Let no man then lave his feet
In any stream, in any lake.
In rapids or in cataracts.
Let no woman think to bake
Her cornmeal wrapped in leaves.
With water gathered of the rain.
He'll there his eyes deceives.
Who threads the ripples where I run.
In shallows. The stones shall seem.
As kernels, his the presser's feet.
Standing in the rich, and red and cloying stream. (DF 75)

Soyinka therefore warns his Nigerian people from neglecting their past identity, without which they will not have a future. They have to unite to abolish all the traces of the British Colonization. In doing so, they will be able to draw their own future. Just as Demoke decided to climb the Totem (on the Yoruba Festival) as a purification ritual and an indication for a new better life, Nigerian need to purify themselves from the dirt of the occupation and make the independence day a new beginning for a new life. Accordingly, *A Dance of the Forests* is a symbolic play offering an analogy for nation rebuilding. It is a striking

example of “the kind of unsuccessful early work out of which several successes can be carved” (Soyinka, *The Man* 89).

Soyinka’s play follows a non-linear timeline. Soyinka describes a present event which is the Gathering of the Tribes, then takes the reader back to the death time of the Dead Man and his wife, then returns to the Forest Head who evaluates the situation to avenge for the dead duo. He brings together the past (the dead duo), the present (the mortals) and the future (the child). Despite this non-linear time line and Soyinka’s exceptional dramatizing of the events that does not adapt with traditional drama, Soyinka’s characterization looks like an amazing and well-woven piece of art. Every character is pivotal. Soyinka introduces his readers to various characters that call in mind numberless questions regarding countless past and future events. Just as the living people are important, the dead are.

The play, hence, challenges Aristotle’s unity of time. This non-linear timeline contributes, in different ways, to Soyinka’s lack of support to the principles of movements like globalization and transculturalism. Concepts of exchanging knowledge and overriding the boundaries of nations were a chance for many imperialists to impose power on other weaker people, steal their wealth and erase their true identities. In his article, “The Negative Impact of Globalization on Nigeria”, Adesina highlights the bad influences of globalization on science, technology and environment in Nigeria. He complains of the Nigerians’ blind imitation (planned by those in power by limiting the sort of technology that they introduced to Nigerians) of the Western culture; neglecting their own. He states: “There is a need for a reassessment of how Nigeria has fared in the era of globalization. Science in a globalizing

world has benefits that Nigeria can and should take advantage of. The era of computers, revolutionized telecommunication and the Internet is what the country cannot shy away from, but the positives of the times should be properly harnessed for the country to appropriately benefit from globalization” (200).

3- Conclusion

Soyinka believes in the importance of every member of the social construction in the process of national enlightenment and progress. He started by himself first when he defined his role as a dramatist thinker, hoping that others may rise and do the same. The play is an invitation to reform the past and move forward to the future. Destiny’s inevitability is dependent on one’s deeds. Either you follow the path of success, or you follow the path of failure and blindness. The way you choose always draws your destiny in addition to your nation’s destiny. Soyinka stresses the need of the people of Nigeria to terminate their total and blind reliance on what the west hands them and start their own technology instead. It is the only guarantee for a better honourable life. They should respect their own identity and exploit their own raw materials to make their own industries and build a country with present and future generations proud of their heritage. Accordingly, this play or this patriotic allegory represents a reminder for the Africans of the gloomy past and a warning of a future worse than it. It is a masterpiece for Woman, Nature and Identity.

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ملخص

المبدأ الرئيسي لهذا البحث هو فهم إلى أي مدى يُنظر إلى وولي شوينكا على أنه كاتب مسرحي داعماً للنظرية النسوية البيئية ومستبعداً لمفاهيم العولمة. النسوية البيئية هي واحدة من أبرز الحركات التي طورتها مجموعة من النساء خلال فترة القرنين التاسع عشر والعشرين (على وجه التحديد ، من أوائل سبعينيات القرن التاسع عشر إلى أوائل الثمانينيات). ومن أبرز هؤلاء النساء الناشطة النسوية الفرنسية فرانسواز ديوبون. تشرح ديوبون كيف تم تطبيق مفهوم النسوية البيئية بشكل أساسي من قبل عدد قليل من النسويات الذين كرسوا جهودهم لتحليل العلاقة المتبادلة بين المؤسسات الاجتماعية التي يهيمن عليها الذكور والبيئات المتدهورة. يحاول الباحث إجراء تحليل شامل لمسرحيته الشهيرة ، رقصة الغابات (١٩٦٣). يصطبب هذا التحليل القارئ غير النيجيري إلى قلب المجتمع الطبيعي النيجيري حيث ينتقد شوينكا تدهور الأخلاق في مجتمعه؛ والذي يتزامن مع تدهور الطبيعة نفسها.